PAINTING THE WAR:

The Intentions and Motivations of the Official Australian War Art Scheme of the First World War

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DECLARATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIF   Australian Imperial Force

AWM   Australian War Memorial

AWRS   Australian War Records Section

CWMF   Canadian War Memorials Fund

CWRS   Canadian War Records Section

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Introduction

The horror and tragedy which men experienced in the First World War, 1914 – 1918, was preserved in writing, music and the visual arts both during and after the war. Painting and drawing were a central part of remembering the experience of war and official war art fits into an international trend of preserving the war in the memory of the nations involved. Official war art is art commissioned by governments to express war and often depicts nations' actions in conflict and as a result is open to propagandistic and nationalist sentiments in its depiction of war. This thesis explores the subtleties and complexities of the official Australian war art scheme from its inception in 1917 through to the 1930s and particularly focuses on the intentions behind the production of the official war art both during and after the war. In taking the British and Canadian official schemes as a point of comparison, the thesis argues that the Australian official war art scheme was distinctive in its approach and aims. Through tracing the intentions and motivations behind the Australian scheme, the thesis calls into question the assumption that the official art was a premeditated construction of a national myth and proposes that this was not the administrators' intended outcome. Indeed, the thesis suggests that the answer is more complex and nuanced than historians have previously presented and that, in order for historians to enhance their understanding of the place of official Australian war art in the overall memory of the First World War, a more considered analysis of the evidence of the scheme's objectives is required.

In the First World War official war art was an important form of visual record of the war. Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig stated in 1917 that 'the conditions under which we live in France are so different from those to which people at home are accustomed, that

no pen, however skilful, can explain them without the aid of the pencil'.[1] Though

photography was used in the First World War to document the conflict, the bulky

equipment proved cumbersome and awkward at the front. In addition, photographs needed

a long exposure time which made recording the events and conveying the action of the war

to the home front difficult.[2]   There was also a belief at the time that photographs would

deteriorate after twenty-five years.[3] Sketches and paintings of the war made by artists who

were exposed to the conflict were more easily able to capture the spontaneous action of the

battles and document the experience of the soldiers for posterity. Therefore, in visually

communicating the war to those at home and in documenting it for future generations, art

provided a simpler and lasting solution.

Official war art schemes were developed in all the nations fighting the war.

Germany was the first country to send artists to the front in an official capacity in 1915.

The French also had official artists sent to the front under the sponsorship of the Mission

des Beaux-Arts, in 1916.[4] The British sent their first official war artist, Muirhead Bone, to

the front in 1916. C.F.G. Masterman (1873-1927), a liberal politician, managed this early

version of the scheme which emerged from Wellington House, a branch of the British

government responsible for disseminating pictorial war propaganda. In 1918 Wellington

House became part of the Ministry of Information under the management of Max Aitken

(1879-1964), later Lord Beaverbrook, the head of the Canadian official war art scheme

who took control to revive the flagging British war propaganda.[5] However, under the

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[1] Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig in Muirhead Bone, *The Western Front: Drawings.* London: War Office, 1917.

[2] Laura Brandon, *Art and War.* London: Tauris, 2007, p. 40.

[3] Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, p. 23.

[4] Richard Cork. *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 139.

[5] Meirion and Susie Harries. *The War Artists: British Official War Art of the Twentieth Century.* London: M. Joseph, 1983, pp. 1 – 90.

direction of Beaverbrook, the Ministry of Information also began collecting and commissioning official war art as a record and memorial of the war. Similarly, the Canadian scheme, under the direction of Beaverbrook, was established in 1916 and was part of the Canadian War Records Section (CWRS) which was responsible for documenting through film, photography and writing the Canadian experience in the war. Beaverbrook initially used art to supplement the other records when no other documentation of events of the war was available. However, he also saw the value of war art as a memorial to the war and throughout the war amassed a large body of art to commemorate the Canadian involvement in the war.[6] The British and Canadian schemes provide a valuable point of comparison with the Australian scheme. Indeed, the Australian administrators themselves compared and contrasted their own approach to the British and Canadian scheme during the war and this comparison highlights the distinctive nature of the Australian scheme.

The Australian scheme diverged from the British and Canadian schemes. It was comprised of two different components. The first came under the supervision of John Treloar (1854-1952) who also oversaw the Australian War Records Section (AWRS). The second was under the control of the Australian High Commission and was managed from the London office by H.C. Smart. The first component comprised artists who were active soldiers within the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and emerged after the publication in 1916 of the *Anzac Book,* a collection of sketches and writings from the AIF at Gallipoli.[7] This book brought to light talented artists who were serving within the AIF and C.E.W. Bean (1879-1968), the editor of the *Anzac Book,* recognised the potential for these soldier artists to sketch what they saw of the war from their personal involvement and in this way to contribute to the broader visual record of the war with their artwork. Bean's vision was

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[6] Tippett, *Art at the Service of War.* pp. 17 – 35.
[7] C.E.W. Bean, ed. *The Anzac Book.* Cassell: London, 1916.

to collect war records and relics to memorialise the AIF's experience of the war and he was involved in the larger AWRS project to preserve war papers, diaries, artefacts and photographs. He saw the appointment of soldier artists within the AIF as a way of producing art which would visually complement and illustrate the other war records collected during the war. The artists appointed included George Benson (1886-1960), Frank Crozier (1883-1948), Will Longstaff (1879-1953), Louis McCubbin (1890-1952) and James Scott (1877-1932) who were asked to sketch their unit's actions whenever they could be spared from military tasks.[8]

The second component of the Australian scheme comprised eminent Australian artists and was established in 1917 after Will Dyson (1880-1938), a renowned cartoonist, wrote a letter to the Australian High Commissioner, Andrew Fisher, requesting permission to travel to France to sketch the AIF.[9] In 1916 Dyson wrote: 'the precise nature of my work in France would be to interpret in a series of drawings, for national preservation, the sentiment and special Australian characteristics of our Army....My drawings would be such studies of Australian soldiers and their neighbours as would be suggested to me by personal contact with our men in their European surroundings'.[10] He was granted permission to do this in 1917 and became the first official war artist under the High Commission. In late 1917 the acclaimed landscape artists Arthur Streeton (1867-1943), himself already an official war artist under the High Commission, wrote to H.C. Smart suggesting that other celebrated Australian artists be included in the scheme. Subsequently, this component of the scheme expanded to include artists such as George Bell (1878-1966), Charles Bryant (1883-1937), Henry Fullwood (1863-1930), George Lambert (1873-

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[8]Australian War Memorial, 'Encyclopaedia: Australian Official War Artists', 2008. http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/war_artists/artists.asp (Accessed 25 August 2008).
[9] Ross McMullin. *Will Dyson: Australia's Radical Genuis.* Carlton: Scribe Publications, 2006, p. 155.
[10] Letter from Dyson to High Commissioner, 12th September 1916, AWM93 18/7/5 Part One.

1930), Fred Leist (1878-1945), John Longstaff (1862-1941), H. Septimus Power (1877-1951) and James Quinn (1869-1951).[11]

These artists were employed in an official capacity for three months in which time they spent several weeks at the front sketching and taking notes so that they could paint up larger works on their return to London.[12] During the war the artists were free to depict the scenes they saw in whatever medium they felt appropriate but the administrators anticipated that the artists would work within their specialist genres.[13] The artists were generally expected to produce twenty five small works and two larger canvases all of which were the property of the Australian Government. After the war the schemes came under the administration of the Australian War Memorial and artists from both components of the scheme were commissioned with further works. Other artists who had been prevented from painting during the war because of military duties such as George Coates, who had been a stretcher bearer, and Charles Wheeler, who had been serving in the British Army, were commissioned with works to expand the Memorial's official war art collection.

This thesis is largely based on my original research of the official files relating to the war art scheme which are held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. These files contain correspondence between the administrators and advisors of the scheme and the correspondence between the administrators and the official artists. In addition to this, I have also viewed and analysed the majority of the war art created under the scheme from the First World War as well as the interwar period, examples of which are included in the Appendix. The administrators' meticulous approach to producing a visual record of the

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[11] Australian War Memorial, 'Encyclopaedia: Australian Official War Artists'.

[12] Cablegram from High Commissioner's Office to Department of Defence, 16th January 1918, AWM93 8/2/23.

[13] Jacqueline Strecker, 'Australian Artists Paint the War', *Battle Lines: Canadian and Australian Artists in the Field, 1917 – 1919*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 2001, p. 20.

AIF in the war, which is evident in the official correspondence, is an area of research which has been largely unexamined. Historians have tended to focus on the iconic artworks produced under the scheme during and after the war as evidence of the administrators' construction of a masculine digger myth. This interpretation of the art is based solely on the artworks themselves and does not consider the intentions of the scheme. In considering the evidence for the administrators' and artists' intentions to create an accurate and comprehensive record of the AIF's experience in the war, the argument for a premeditated construction of an Anzac myth in the official art becomes less convincing.

Through tracing the intentions and motivations of the Australian war art scheme both during and after the war, the thesis suggests a different perspective on the interpretations of a constructed image of the Australian war experience. Bean's close involvement as advisor of the art schemes both during and after the war has led historians to see this as yet another means at his disposal for disseminating his myth of the bronzed and stoical digger. However, Bean was one among many who were a part of the scheme and his influence needs to be understood in the broader context of the overall intentions and motivations of the scheme and its other officials. This is not to deny the place of official war art in the construction of an Australian national myth but to suggest that this construction was not the intention of the scheme and was instead an outcome of their conscious effort to visually document the precise details of the AIF in the war.

In addressing this largely unexamined area of research in Australian war art, I have considered the international context of the memorialisation of the First World War and used the British and Canadian war art schemes as a point of comparison to highlight the distinctive nature of the Australian scheme. Chapter One discusses the context surrounding the official war art and argues that art holds a significant place in the nation's memory and understanding of the war. It also considers the problem of finding a mode of expression

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appropriate for documenting the war. Chapter Two argues that during the war the Australian scheme took a different approach to the production of war art than that of the British and Canadian schemes and that the administrators sought to visually preserve the details of the AIF experience in the war. Chapter Three addresses the challenges the administrators of the scheme faced in expanding the record of the war in art and argues that the administrators were focussed on retrospectively documenting the war for posterity in order to create a fuller account of the experience of the AIF in this conflict.

Chapter 1: The Memory of War

This chapter outlines the context of the memory of the First World War and argues that official war art plays a crucial role in the remembrance of this conflict in Allied nations. In comparing the intentions of the British and Canadian war art schemes, this chapter shows the distinct motivations of the Australian war art scheme which intended the art to be used to document the experience of the AIF in the war. This chapter discusses the cultural climate surrounding the war and argues that as a result of the administrators' objective to create a visual record in the art, they chose a traditional mode of expression for the war art as they believed it was more suited to documenting a factual truth.

The Memory of War

The memory of war is present in memorials and monuments built to honour those who fought and fell in the conflict. Jay Winter states that in Allied countries across Europe 'remembrance is part of the landscape'[1] where monuments commemorate those who went to war are commonplace in the geography of cities and rural towns. Antoine Prost and Daniel Sherman have made studies of the commemoration of France's war dead in the numerous memorials built both during and after the war in almost every community across the country.[2] Sue Malvern notes that in Britain 'making memorials to the absent dead was a constant preoccupation in every locality...focussing [on] local and personal grief and

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[1] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995, p.1.
[2] See Antoine Prost, 'Monuments to the Dead', in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past.* Edited by Pierre Nora and translated by Arthur Goldhammer. New York: Columbia UP, 1997, pp. 307-330 and Daniel J. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

bereavement'.[3] Laura Brandon, one of the leading experts on war art in history, has made similar studies of the remembrance of Canada's losses also present in buildings, such as the Canadian War Memorial, as well as in commemoration monuments across the nation.[4] In Australia, there is a similar landscape of remembrance and Janice Pavils has considered the commemoration of the war in public spaces of towns where park gates and oval stands commemorate the men who fought in the First World War.[5] Similarly, Betty Churcher highlights the profound effect which the war had on Australia evident in small country towns where local memorials remembering the dead stand as a testament to the way the war deeply affected the whole nation.[6] One of the most comprehensive studies of memorialisation in Australia is Ken Inglis' *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (1998) which explores the importance of memorials in Australian communities' remembrance and commemoration of the war dead.[7] In his history of the Australian War Memorial, *Here Is Their Spirit* (1991), Michael McKernan has outlined the significance of the Memorial in Canberra, officially opened in 1941, and its commemoration of the nation's involvement in the First World War through the architecture of the building with its prominent position facing Parliament House as well as through the relics and records it houses.[8] The First World War had a deep impact on the Allied nations and the memorials erected throughout these countries are a constant reminder of the sacrifices made in this war.

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[3] Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony and Remembrance*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2004, p. 151.
[4] Laura Brandon, Art *or Memorial? The Forgotten History of Canada's War Art*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006, pp. xiii – xxii.
[5] Janice Pavils, 'Anzac Culture: A South Australian Case Study of Australian Identity and Commemoration of War Dead', PhD thesis, The University of Adelaide, 2004.
[6] Betty Churcher, *The Art of War*. Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004, p. 4.
[7] Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*. Carlton: Melbourne UP, 1998.
[8] Michael McKernan, *Here is Their Spirit: A History of the Australian War Memorial 1917-1990*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press and Australian War Memorial, 1991.

Yet, while the memory of the First World War is a part of the physical landscape of nations evident in memorials to the dead, it also forms part of their cultural landscape. War art is a very specific component of the memory of the war and the official war art of the nations involved forms a crucial aspect in the remembrance of this conflict. Indeed, Susan Sontag, an American essayist states in an essay on photographic images entitled 'Looking at War: Photography's View of Devastation and Death' that 'to remember is, more and more, not to recall a story but to be able to call up a picture'.[9] This is what Maurice Halbwachs, the father of memory theory, terms 'collective memory' where various communities have constructed distinctive memories which the individual members of a particular community share. Collective memory involves a communication of a shared memory and James Fentress and Chris Wickham state that 'to be transmitted, a memory must first be articulated' and images form a crucial part of the articulation of memory.[10] This is where the various images of the official war art articulate Australia's collective memory of the experience in the First World War. For example, Lambert's *Anzac, the Landing 1915* (1920 – 1922) (Figure 1) allowed veterans who survived the Gallipoli landing to remember their experience but also adds to the nation's broader memory as later generations associate this painting with an understanding of the war. Brandon argues that war art can serve as a shared 'site of memory'.[11] Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton state that 'it is through these collective...memories that we structure our world and understand our past'.[12] Thus, the Australian official war art of the First World War forms a fundamental and significant part of the nation's collective memory of the conflict and is crucial to the nation's remembrance and understanding of the war.

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[9] Susan Sontag, 'Looking at War: Photography's View of Devastation and Death', *The New Yorker*, 9 December 2002, p. 94.

[10] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p.47.

[11] Brandon, *Art and War*. p. 119.

[12] Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, *Memory and History in Twentieth–Century Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1994, p. 2.

The term 'war art' covers a wide ranging field of art both in subject and form which in its broadest sense means art influenced by war.[13] This art is often created as a reaction or protest to the horrors of war and is evocative in its form and content. For example, Gaudier-Brzeska's carved design on the butt broken off an enemy rifle, Léger's cubist paintings where soldiers become synonymous with the machines of war, and Otto Dix's *Der Krieg* etchings are all influenced by war and express a reaction to the conflict whether in embracing its dynamism or rejecting its carnage.[14] For official war art the influence of war produces art that is essentially nationalistic and propagandistic in its character because it records the actions of a nation in combat and endorses and memorialises their position and experience in the conflict. Official war art often has a political or social purpose and through recording and memorialising war in a particular way forms a crucial part of the foundation for the construction of a nation's memory of war.[15]

Within this context of the place of official war art in the memory of the war, we can explore the intentions behind the British, Canadian and Australian schemes. In the case of the British, the intentions behind the production of war art were largely propagandistic, though the officials also understood the use of art as a record. The motivations for official war artists is summed up in a statement by Masterman where he commented in 1916 that 'accurate information about the war [could be conveyed] through the eye of the artist' and that he had employed Muirhead Bone, the first official British war artist, 'to make appropriate war scenes at the Front and in this country for the purpose both of propaganda at the present time and of historical record in the future'. [16] Indeed, over the war years the British official war art scheme continued to be motivated to produce art which could serve

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[13] Brandon, *Art and War.* p. 3.

[14] Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p, 9.

[15] Official war art has contained these qualities since for centuries seen in examples, such as the Assyrian reliefs depicting the battle of Til-Tuba, Trajan's Column and the Bayeux Tapestry. See Brandon, *Art and War.* pp.14-25.

[16] Masterman cited in Tippett, *Art at the Service of War.* p.23.

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both as pictorial propaganda and as a memorial of the war in art which suited their interests in endorsing Britain's involvement in the war in the collective memory of their nation.[17]

Similarly, the Canadian official war art scheme intended war art largely for propaganda as well as national record. Beaverbrook was the head of the CWRS which was responsible for the publicity and propaganda of Canada's involvement in the war. Anne-Marie Condé has noted that he 'was not above creating and indeed, fabricating records in order to promote the story of Canada's achievements in the war'.[18] This trait is evident in 1916 where he commissioned the British artist Richard Jack to produce a painting of the gas attack on the Canadians at the Second Battle of Ypres which had occurred in May 1915 of which there were no other records. Jack created a work on a large scale entitled *The Second Battle of Ypres, 22 April to 25 May, 1915* (1916)[19], yet Maria Tippett notes that 'it was clear that [Jack] had not witnessed the event' as all the details of the painting were incorrect.[20] However, Beaverbrook thought it was a success and this venture convinced him that art was 'the most permanent and vital form in which the great deeds and sacrifices of the Canadian Nation in the war could be enshrined for posterity'.[21] This inspired Beaverbrook to make art a part of Canada's visual record and made him value art as a memorial of the war and to commemorate Canada's involvement in the conflict. Maria Tippett, in her seminal book *Art at the Service of War* (1984), has outlined Beaverbrook's intentions in the producing Canadian official war art to serve the nationalistic ends of a country attempting to establish its identity as a new nation. Indeed, in her book, *Art or Memorial? The Forgotten History of Canada's War Art* (2006), Brandon discusses the

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[17] Meirion Harries and Susie Harries. *The War Artists: British Official War Art of the Twentieth Century.* London: M. Joseph, 1983, p. 142.

[18] Anne-Marie Condé, Condé, 'John Treloar, Official War Art and the Australian War Memorial', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 53, No. 3 (2007), p. 456.

[19] Richard Jack, *The Second Battle of Ypres, 22 May to 25 May 1915*, painting as reproduced in Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*, p.52.

[20] *Ibid.* p.26.

[21] Beaverbrook cited in *Ibid.* p 23.

intentions of the official war art scheme to construct a Canadian nationalism through official war art. She compares the civic, or dominant, memory of the war and its political and social intentions with the actual historical events of the war and analyses the role of the official war art in this construction of the memory of the war.

In contrast, the intentions driving the administrators of the Australian official war art scheme were different to the British and Canadian as the art was intended solely as a visual record. In 1917 Bean announced that 'a national record of the Australian Imperial Force is...in the process of being obtained from the Australian artists'.[22] The intention of this official war art scheme was to create a record which accurately documented the AIF experience in the war. This was part of the larger visual record of the war, including photographs and film, which Bean anticipated would complement and illustrate the other collected records of the war, such as war maps, diaries, photographs and battlefield relics. In contrast to Beaverbrook's 'sanctioning of doctoring and faking photographs'[23] the administrators of the Australian scheme did not agree with this treatment of photographs. Indeed, Bean noted that as a visual document of the war photographs were a 'sacred record – standing for future generations to see forever the plain, simple truth'.[24] Where war artists became another way for Beaverbrook to fabricate records, for the administrators of the Australian scheme artists were sent to the war zone 'for the purpose of making pictorial records of the AIF'.[25] These records were to be housed in the future Australian War Museum which Bean had conceived of in late 1916 where he and the other officials in charge of the collection of records, like Treloar, believed the records of the war experience

[22] Charles Bean, 'Australia's Records Preserved as Sacred Things: Pictures, Relics and Writings', *The Anzac Bulletin*, No. 4, 10 October, 1917. http://blog.awm.gov.au/awm/2007/06/12/australias-records-preserved-as-sacred-things/. (Accessed 19 October 2008).

[23] Condé, 'John Treloar, Official War Art and the Australian War Memorial', p. 456.

[24] Bean, 'Australia's Records Preserved as Sacred Things: Pictures, Relics and Writings'.

[25] Letter from AIF headquarters to Bean, 8th of May, 1918, AWM38 3DRL 6673/322.

of the AIF would be preserved and memorialised for posterity.[26] While the Australian

scheme was similar to the British and Canadian in the sense of producing a national record

of the war in art, the scheme was unique in its aim to create a precise visual record so that

future generations would understand, as Bean put it, the plain and simple truth of the AIF's

experience in the war.[27]

There has been much criticism levelled at Bean by scholars who believe that he was

influential in manufacturing and promoting the myth of the Anzacs. Bean was closely

involved with the war art scheme and, while not a head of either the AWRS war art scheme

or the High Commission scheme, acted as advisor to both. The idea of art as playing a part

in Bean's construction of the Anzac myth originates from his involvement with the

publication of the *Anzac Book*. Joan Beaumont, brings these criticisms of Bean together in

her book *Australia's War, 1914-1918*, where she discusses the way historians have

accused him of including only 'those entries which promoted the image of the digger he

favoured' and excluding from the book any art 'that conveyed the danger, the brutality, the

suffering, the fear and cowardice within the AIF'.[28] Beaumont also notes that while Bean

had a 'passion for factual accuracy', he has been heavily criticised for 'sanitising his

account of the war'.[29] Historians, such as Peter Hoffenberg and D.A. Kent, interpret the

iconic images produced under the Australian art scheme as supporting evidence for their

argument of the construction of an Anzac myth.[30]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] McKernan, *Here Is Their Spirit*. p. 6.

[28] Joan Beaumont, *Australia's War, 1914 – 1918*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995, p. 151-157.

[29] *Ibid*. p. 157.

[30] D.A. Kent. 'The Anzac Book and the Anzac Legend: C.E.W. Bean as editor and image-maker', *Historical Studies*, 21. No. 84, (April 1985), pp. 376-390 and Peter Hoffenburg, 'Memory and the Australian War Experience, 1915-18' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 36, No. 1 (2001). pp. 111-131.

Though the motivations were nationalistic in making a record of the AIF in the war, the administrators did not have a preconceived notion to construct a myth of the Australian digger in the art. The administrators were concerned with recording the facts of the AIF in war in the art. In this undertaking to preserve the details of war, artists were given the duty of 'making sketches and drawings in connection with AIF operations'.[31] In concentrating principally on the AIF in the war, the outcome of the record was nationalistic and to some extent constructed or sanitised as it did not represent every aspect of the war, such as atrocities and the gore of death. However, in documenting the AIF the administrators intended the record to be encompassing of their experience and during the war artists were instructed to sketch the scenes they experienced at the front.[32] Thus, in exploring the administrators' intentions behind the production of the art, it becomes evident that they were motivated by a desire to preserve a precise and detailed visual record of the war to articulate and explain this momentous event to future generations. This intention influenced their choice of an artistic style and they sought a mode of expression which would allow them to document and describe the details of the war in art.

Official War Art: Modes of Expression

In comparing the style which the British and Canadian schemes chose with that of the Australian scheme, the distinct nature of the Australian scheme as well as the administrators' emphasis on the art as a record of war is evident. The developments in technology significantly impacted on the form and style of official war art. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, official war art had depicted a frozen moment which consisted, as

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[31] AIF Headquarters note concerning Streeton, 11th September, 1918, AWM38 3DRL 6673/322.
[32] AWM54 492/12/3 items relating to the AWRS artists.

the poet Charles Baudelaire noted, 'merely [of]... a host of interesting little anecdotes'.[33]

Indeed, it was difficult to observe conflicts in the nineteenth century and battle paintings of this time depicted a narrative moment of historic significance largely made up of, as John Hale notes, 'visual clichés' drawn from a repertoire of conventional iconography.[34] However, with advances in military technology battles became harder to capture in a single narrative. This was because wars sprawled over the land and many smaller battles of a larger offensive took place at one time. A journalistic style of recording warfare developed where artists recorded the spontaneous action of war from their firsthand exposure to the conflict. This trend in official war art can be dated to the Crimean War, 1853 – 1856, where the French painter Constantin Guys 'reported visually' on the conflict along with several British artists, such as Edward Armitage, Joseph Crowe, Edward Goodall, and William Simpson.[35] In the First World War this new style was consolidated as official artists from all nations were sent to the theatres of war to paint the conflict from their experience and signifies a break with the traditions of the narrative style of the heroic frozen moment in nineteenth century battle painting.

The changes in the technology of warfare affected the form and content of art but it also affected the choice of the style of official war art. The struggle to find a visual language which would adequately convey the war was a problem faced by the administrators and artists of the official war art schemes. Scholars who argue that a new mode of cultural expression emerged during the First World War see the war as the catalyst which propelled the twentieth century into modernism. Paul Fussell's book, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), deals with this new aesthetic in the culture of the time evident in the prose and poetry of the soldiers at the front who described their

[33] Charles Baudelaire cited in Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Use of Images as Historical Evidence.* Cornwall UP, 2001.p. 147.
[34] John Hale cited in *Ibid.* p. 147.
[35] *Ibid.* p. 148

firsthand experience of the war in their writing. These were the writers, such as Wilfred Owen, who describe the 'guttering, choking, drowning'[36] sounds of men dying from gas. The modernist form of conveying the devastation seen at the front was a reaction to the conflict. It was confronting in its description of the destruction and desolation of the war. Jay Winter notes that the modernist aesthetic 'describes the creation of a new language of truth telling about the war in poetry, prose, and the visual arts'.[37] Artists, like the British official war artist, Paul Nash (1889-1946) who also painted in an official capacity for the Canadian scheme, considered that their mission was to bring back a message from the men at the front, no matter how 'feeble' or 'inarticulate', which would 'have a bitter truth'.[38] Nash worked in a vorticist style, a style which drew on Cubism and Futurism and embraced the dynamism of the modern machine age. This style differed from Cubism's focus on space and Futurism's emphasis on movement and represented the world through bold lines. This style worked well in conveying the general feeling of desolation and destruction of the war. Nash's painting entitled *We Are Making A New World* (1917-1918),[39] uses bold outlines to depict the stark contrast between the yellowed mud of the battle field and the harsh stalk-like bodies of trees. In its depiction of this destroyed landscape the painting indicates the horror of war. Many of the British and Canadian war artists worked in a modern style, for example, Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson's (1889-1946) futurist studies of soldiers draw on a futurist style.[40] This is not to suggest that there was no representational official war art in Britain or Canada but that the aesthetic favoured in depicting the war was a modernist one.

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[36] Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce et Decorum Est', *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1963, p. 55.
[37] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* .p. 3.
[38] Paul Nash cited in Sue Malvern. *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War: Witnessing, Testimony and Remembrance*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2004, p. 20.
[39] Paul Nash *We Are Making a New World,* painting, as reproduced by Malvern in *Ibid*. p. 20.
[40]*Ibid*. p. 21.

Although scholars such as Samuel Hynes and Paul Fussell have argued that there was a radical discontinuity and rupture in the modes of cultural expression as a result of the need to find a language to convey the futility and devastation of the war, more recent scholarship has noted that there is in fact a strong continuity in the conventional modes of expression and that more traditional aesthetics persisted both during and after the war. Rosa Maria Bracco, David Englander and Jonathan Vance argue that 'conservatism and tradition' persist in the culture of the war period.[41] These scholars argue against Fussell's idea of a rupture in culture. Indeed, Vance notes that 'where Fussell identified the forces of change, [other scholars] have found continuity; in opposition to the shock of the new, they have found an old order that is much more resilient than *The Great War and Modern Memory* allows'.[42] This aesthetic depicted the war through nineteenth century 'classical, romantic or religious' images.[43] This aesthetic has been criticised because it is seen to lend itself easily to 'the sentimentality and lies of wartime propaganda'.[44] Winter argues that 'traditional modes of seeing the war, while at times less challenging intellectually or philosophically, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses and perhaps to leave them behind'.[45] The official Australian war art with its academic style fits into this traditional mode of expression of the war.

While much of Western art embraced the avant-garde in the early twentieth century, the influence of the Heidelberg School still had a firm hold on the aesthetic taste in Australia. This was a style of painting in the tradition of French Impressionism except that while the Impressionists studied optical theory, the Heidelberg School were impressionists only in the sense that they painted *en plein air* often completing small

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[41] See Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997, p.5.
[42] *Ibid.* p. 5.
[43] Winter, *Sites of Memory*. p.3.
[44] *Ibid.* p.2.
[45] *Ibid.* p. 5.

studies of the outdoors in half an hour.[46] In an exhibition catalogue to the *9 by 5*

Impression Exhibition in 1889 held in Melbourne, there was a note to the public from the

artists, including Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder, stating 'in these

works, it has been the object of the artist to render faithfully, and thus obtain first records

of the effects widely differing, and often of a very fleeting nature'.[47] This style of painting,

made famous by the likes of Roberts and Streeton, was a break with the colonial art which

had previously been favoured in Australia. In the Heidelberg School's 'truth to

observation'[48] it pioneered a style which attempted to capture accurately the Australian

landscape and the heroes of that landscape. This typically Australian subject matter

captured impressions of everyday, familiar subjects. The impressionistic treatment of the

Australian subject matter evoked a particularly Australian essence in the works of the

Heidelberg School and as a result it was embraced as a national style of painting.[49] The

Heidelberg School, with its devotion to painting from the scene and 'deliberation and

passion for the visual facts of the Australian landscape' promoted a documentary approach

to art.[50] This was still an academic and representational style of painting and, though in the

1910s many Australian artists travelled abroad and were exposed to modernist art

movements, they were still heavily influenced by this aesthetic.[51] This academic art

afforded a documentation of surroundings on canvas was a desirable artistic style for the

Australian war art scheme which sought to document the factual truth of the war.

While many historians and art historians believe that a traditional mode of

expression was chosen solely on the basis of taste, the administrators were conscious that a

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[46] Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia.* Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1970, p.54
[47] Exhibition catalogue cited in Andrew Sayers, *Australian Art*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001, p. 83.
[48] Hughes, *The Art of Australia.* p. 75.
[49] *Ibid.* p. 67.
[50] Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788.* 2nd ed. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1979, p. 172.
[51] Sayers, *Australian in Art.* p. 122-123.

representational style in the war art would afford a more accurate documentation of the AIF's experience in the war. Indeed, this was an aesthetic desired in the official war art of the Second World War even after the nation had been exposed to modernism. When chosen as an official war artist Donald Friend stated that he did not think his modern style was suitable as war art. He commented that his work had 'none of the 'journalism'...which makes it useful as a record. And...they want records, not painting'.[52] While Hynes states that 'to represent the war in the traditional ways was necessarily to misrepresent it, to give it meaning, dignity, order, greatness',[53] Bean considered the vorticist or futurist style of the British and Canadian official art to be 'freak [art] more than a record of war'.[54] The modern styles of the period were seen to distort the reality of the war and therefore the style which the official war art of Australia took was representative. Bean and Treloar believed that returned servicemen and the public would be seeking 'inspiration and consolation'[55] in the art and therefore chose a style which was not confronting but descriptive. This suited the intention behind the official Australian war art which was to explain the war so that those who were at home as well as future generations would understand the immensity of this event and appreciate Australia's involvement in this historic conflict but not have to relive its horrors. The administrators of the scheme believed that through understanding Australia's part in the war the actions of those who fought and fell would appropriately be commemorated. Bean thought that modern modes of artistic expression were 'formless and meaningless'[56] and, as Dudley McCarthy notes,

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[52] Donald Friend cited in Paul Hetherington, ed. *The Diaries of Donald Friend*. Vol 2, Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2003, p. 241.
[53] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. Bodley Head: London, 1990, p. 108.
[54] Bean cited in Condé, 'John Treloar, Official War Art and the Australian War Memorial', p. 457.
[55] *Ibid*.
[56] Bean cited in *Ibid*.

he believed they were 'insulting to the relatives of those fighting at the front'.[57]

Consequently, the administrators of the Australian war art scheme chose a traditional, representative aesthetic. While this inoffensive style lent itself to a later sanitised interpretation of the war art, the administrators' chose it at the time because they believed it was more suited to documenting the factual truth of the war and thus more appropriate as a record for posterity.

The Australian official war art scheme fits into an international trend of remembering war which occurred during and after the First World War. Images hold an important place in the cultural expression of the memory of war and the British, Canadian and Australian official war art schemes drew on the remembrance and understanding which the art afforded. The British and Canadian schemes chose a modern mode of expression for their official art. In contrast, the intentions of the administrators of the Australian scheme to preserve a record of the war in art led them to choose a traditional aesthetic which afforded a documentary style and allowed them to record the details of the of the experience of the AIF in the war for posterity.

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[57] Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: The Story of C.E.W. Bean.* John Ferguson: Sydney, 1983, p. 362.

Chapter 2: Painting the War, 1917 – 1919

This chapter focuses specifically on the motivations of the Australian war art scheme during and immediately after the war and provides a comparison with the intentions of the British and Canadian schemes. In doing so the chapter highlights the unique nature of the Australian scheme and the steps the administrators took to obtain their objective of producing a visual record in art of the AIF experience in the war. The chapter argues that in the administrators' pursuit to preserve such an accurate and encompassing record, the war artists became essentially 'pictorial journalists' who were sent to various arenas of war to document the details of the AIF experience from their personal exposure to the conflict. It also addresses the complexities involved in the administrators' desire to continue documenting the war after it was over in a case study of the Gallipoli Mission of 1919 and suggests that the reconstruction of the facts evident in this example were indicative of a concern which was to characterise the administrators' motivations throughout the interwar period.

While Beaverbrook was interested in war art for its archival use, especially where photographic documentation or other records were scarce, his intention for both the British and Canadian art schemes from 1917 onwards was to produce war art which would form the basis of a national memorial of the war.[1] During the war Beaverbrook worked with a sense of urgency to realise this plan because, as he noted in December 1917, 'by securing these pictures at the present time' the British and Canadian collections would benefit from 'the flood of patriotism now existent...which inspires the highest efforts'.[2] He began to

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[1] Meirion and Susie Harries, *The War Artists: British Official War Art of the Twentieth Century.* London: M. Joseph, 1983, p.118.
[2] Beaverbrook cited in Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, p.37.

amass major artworks which would form the basis of a collection for the Canadian memorial gallery as well as the British Hall of Remembrance which he was planning, but which were never realised. In January 1918 Paul Konody (1872-1933), a Hungarian born art historian and art critic who became the art advisor for Beaverbrook's official war art scheme in 1916, stated that the Canadian war art collection would 'eventually be housed in a gallery specifically built for this purpose on a prominent and suitable site in Ottawa'.[3] The commissioned works for the memorial galleries were to be massive in scale, measuring around 3 x 3 metres. Brandon notes that 'while the intention was to create a legacy of achievement in war, the goal was also to use the most talented people to reflect the best art of the day'.[4] Indeed, when unsuccessfully wooing the prolific Australian artist, George Lambert, to paint the war for Canada, the Canadian officials wrote that Lambert could not afford to pass over this opportunity, as it was to be 'the biggest thing in Art that has ever been done'.[5] Konody, who was responsible for selecting the official artists for Canada, chose 'only artists of the greatest eminence and of universal reputation'.[6] In 1917, there were forty-five artists employed by the Canadian War Memorials Fund. The British painter William Orpen commented that 'the Canadians have robbed every artist of distinction in England'.[7] Indeed, Konody commissioned a diverse range of celebrated British artists, many more than were chosen from Canada, whose work ranged from an almost descriptive style to those with the most modern.

In their aim to create a memorial of the war in art the British and Canadian schemes sought to give their artists exposure to the war as the officials believed that this experience would stimulate the artists to produce work of a highest aesthetic quality which would

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[3] Konody cited in *Ibid*. p. 32.
[4] Laura Brandon, *Art and War*. London: Tauris, 2007, p. 40.
[5] CWMF letter to Lambert cited in Amy Lambert, *The Career of G.W. Lambert, A.R.A.: Thirty Years of an Artist's Life*. Society of Artists: Sydney, 1938, p. 73.
[6] Konody cited in Tippett, *Art at the Service of War*. p. 32.
[7] Orpen cited in *Ibid*. p. 34.

depict the realities of the war through a modern mode of expression. Konody believed that the First World War was unique and significant in the technology of modern warfare and would stimulate artists to produce art which related the harsh realities of the war. He believed that this could only come from the artists' 'actual impressions whilst they were fresh on the mind, whilst emotions and passions and enthusiasm are at their highest'.[8] Beaverbrook himself commented on the artistic merit of those artworks produced by artists who had witnessed the front stating, for example, that 'Mr. Nevinson's work could never have been produced....unless he had spent months in France. It was the actual contact with the fighting which had given him that appreciation and realization of the realities of war'.[9] In sending their artists to the front, the officials of the British and Canadian schemes intended to produce works of art which expressed the artists' reaction to what they saw at the front. This was a more subjective truth than the documentary one which the Australian administrators pursued in the war art. However, it also allowed for a shared site of memory of the war for these nations.

In contrast, the administrators of the Australian war art scheme intended the art primarily as a visual record. Bean himself commented on the differences between the Canadian and Australian schemes and the distinct motivations driving each one. He stated that

> The Canadians have spent I suppose...twenty times as much as we – and yet they have been on the wrong lines. They have got English artists of the fashionable sort to paint their national pictures – we have employed Australian artists only. Their artists had no real feeling for their work – each wants to make a hit *for himself*. Ours were mostly enthusiastic young men doing their best to help their country's record. The result is that while the Canadian pictures fill the Royal Academy with a very interesting exhibit of curious styles of contemporary art, the Australian pictures are a far more interesting set, and a suitable memorial –

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[8] *Ibid.* p.31.
[9] *Times,* 2nd March 1918, cited in *Ibid.* p. 34.

about 1, 000 sketches and small pictures of what the artists
actually saw at the front.[10]

The Australian scheme, in contrast to the British and Canadian, intended the art as a means

of documenting the war to complement the other relics the AWRS was collecting to create

an enduring national record. However, their concern with the art as a document negated the

artistic merit as well as the diversity of the war art, as art historians such as Sayers, have

noted. Indeed, their pursuit of an accurate representation of the war in art was driven by

their intention to explain the AIF experience by showing the minute details of their war

experience in the art which meant that artistic merit came second.

The very nature of the employment of Australian official artists shows the

difference in intention of the schemes in their use of art as record. The Australian artists,

especially those attached to the AWRS, were closely involved in preserving the visual

details of the war and worked closely with other members of what was essentially a

records collecting team. The artists' part in documenting a record of the war is evident in

July 1918, when Bean and the artist John Longstaff, accompanied by the official

photographer Hubert Wilkins and Syd Gullett went to Villers-Bretonneux, a site of heavy

Australian fighting, in an attempt to save a room which they wished to later reconstruct in

the war museum. Dudley McCarthy, Bean's biographer, notes that 'Wilkins took

photographs of everything the way it was; Bean and Gullett made sketches to supplement

the others' records' and 'Longstaff took as his subject the outside of the house so that the

original colours could be faithfully reproduced'. [11] At the end of the war after the hostilities

had ceased official artists were further involved in recording the details of the war. For

example, Bean reported to the Memorial Board in 1919, that the official artist Louis

McCubbin and the sculptor Web Gilbert were camped 'on every important battlefield

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[10] Charles Bean, emphasis given, cited in Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: The Story of C.E.W. Bean.* John Ferguson: Sydney, 1983, p. 362.
[11] *Ibid.* p. 342.

making minute drawings and plans' to capture 'the real impression of the country as it was, the devastation, the sense of danger'.[12] This was to 'get the desolation of a real battlefield into their minds' for the future diorama Bean hoped to create in the War Memorial.[13]

To ensure that the record of the war was precise the Australian scheme chose artists not only for their specialist genre and representative style but for their commitment to a documentary truth. Bean wrote of Dyson and Lambert that 'nothing could have induced either of these artists to swerve a hair's breadth from what he believed to be the truth – their integrity was absolute'.[14] Bean particularly praised Lambert's attitude towards producing war art, stating that 'I received then...the impression that he looked on himself as a soldier fulfilling a directive, and that he would carry it out in every detail'.[15] There is continuing correspondence throughout 1918 between Bean and Treloar about Septimus Power's keenness to go to the front. Bean wrote to Treloar on 4 July 1918 in favour of Power who had expressed 'that he would like to get across to France sometime when the battery is out of the line in order that he might make some sketches'.[16] Bean was also deeply impressed with the artist Charles Wheeler who was serving in the AIF when he was asked to become an official war artist. Treloar notes in his letter to Bean that when approached, Wheeler stated that he had not had any time to make accurate sketches and that his paintings would be based only on his memory of events. He therefore 'declined... on the grounds that it would necessarily be a fake, he has never faked a picture he says and never will'.[17] This greatly impressed both Bean and Treloar and though Wheeler was

[12]Bean cited in Michael McKernan. *Here Is Their Spirit: A History of the Australian War Memorial 1917-1990*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press and Australian War Memorial, 1991, p. 65.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] C.E.W. Bean, *Gallipoli Mission*. ABC and the Australian War Memorial: Crows Nest, 1990, p. 111.
[15] *Ibid.* p. 23.
[16] Letter from Bean to Treloar, 4th July, 1918, AWM38 3DRL 6673/314.
[17] Letter from Treloar to Bean, April 17th 1918, AWM38 3DRL 6673/323.

unable to be spared from his military duties at the front, his attitude to accuracy and his frontline experience meant that he was commissioned after the war.

During the war there was a certain independence granted the official artists as the administrators believed that they would be creating authentic works simply because they were drawing from life. This proved to be the case as the artists did not attempt to depict scenes or aspects of the war they did not witness for themselves. For example, Streeton wrote in a letter to his friend and fellow artist, Tom Roberts, that 'the Commonwealth Government want the work to be descriptive – I don't know how my things will look on my return – but I'm making many pencil studies for larger work in oil – and observing all I can'.[18] Geoffrey Smith states that Streeton's sketch books were like a diary filled with drawings and watercolours of what he saw in France from which he could later work up larger paintings in London.[19] Indeed, while Canadian official artists, such as A.Y. Jackson, searched for a new visual language to express the landscape of war, Streeton obeyed his orders to describe what he saw of the war and chose the simplest pictorial form, visual documentation. His works were, according to Ann Galbally, no less than a 'visual transcription' of what he saw.[20] This is evident in his famous painting entitled *The Somme Valley near Corbie* (1919) (Figure 2) where Streeton describes in a letter the scene he witnessed with the 'view of the valley with a flat covered with lovely trees and the Somme winding through and the towers of the old church of [Corbie as] a grand spread, and in the area of battle a shell burst'.[21] This is exactly as he painted the scene, with the fighting appearing as puffs of smoke on the horizon and the village with the church nestled at the bottom of the twisting Somme valley.

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[18] Letter from Streeton to Roberts, 20th July 1918 in *Letters from Smike: The Letters of Arthur Streeton, 1890 – 1943*. Ann Galbally and Anne Gray. Eds., Oxford UP: Melbourne, 1989, p. 149.
[19] Geoffrey Smith, *Arthur Streeton, 1867 – 1943*. National Gallery of Victoria: Melbourne, 1995, p. 156.
[20] Ann Galbally, *Arthur Streeton*. Lansdowne Press: Melbourne, 1969, p. 79.
[21] Letter from Streeton to Roberts, in *Ibid*. p. 79.

The administrators adopted a journalistic approach towards the stationing of the artists, sending them to all sites of significant AIF involvement in the war to ensure a comprehensive coverage of the war was achieved. For example, the well-known marine painter, Charles Bryant, documented the embarkation and disembarkation of the Australian troops, at the ports of Boulogne and Le Havre seen in works such as *Australian troops disembarking at Boulogne* (1917) or *Hospital Ships, Le Havre* (1917) (Figure 3 and 4). George Lambert, who was attached to the Australian Light Horse Brigade in Palestine and Egypt, covered the aspects of the Australian experience on the Eastern front. Soldier-artists, such as George Benson, Frank Crozier, Will Longstaff, Louis McCubbin and James Scott, drew and painted what they witnessed of Australia's experience in the war as active soldiers in the AIF. Official war artists, such as Will Dyson, Fred Leist, John Longstaff and Septimus Power, were given honorary positions within the AIF and sent to the Western Front to live alongside the soldiers with the purpose of depicting their everyday lives in sketches as well as other elements of the war such as ruined towns and the machinery of war. Others, such as George Bell and James Quinn, who were sent to the front largely to paint portraits of the officers and generals of the AIF, also sketched aspects of Australian soldiers' everyday lives at the front. Arthur Streeton and Henry Fullwood, too old to join the younger artists in the trenches, painted the war from behind the lines producing a record of war landscapes.

This journalistic approach, as outlined in Chapter One, meant that instead of the nineteenth century battle art which depicted a frozen moment, artists produced hundreds of sketches made in situ from their exposure to the war which provided vivid snap-shot images of the AIF involvement in the conflict. During the war the artists produced hundreds of sketches of the scenes they witnessed at the front. For example, Streeton produced one hundred and eighty works over six months in 1918 and Lambert produced

over three hundred sketches across his employment.[22] From their sketches of the war, artists painted up larger works which added to the visual record of Australia at war.[23] In researching this thesis I had the opportunity to view the majority of the works created during the war which are held at the Australian War Memorial. My overall impressions of the works were that the artists were trying to capture all the aspects of the AIF in the war, from the terrible to the commonplace. Individually the artworks appear as disjointed scenes of the various details which made up the Australian soldier's experience of the conflict. However, taken as a whole, these individual scenes form part of a comprehensive account of the AIF in the war. Much of the war art captured the everyday lives of the soldiers at the front. For example, Lambert recorded the work of the light horsemen in Moascar, North Egypt, in sketches such as *With the Remounts* (1918) (Figure 5). Dyson's drawings record the humanity of the men and their experience at the front. Wieland notes that

> the moments he privileges are the ordinary and the
> commonplace. They speak of community and loss: meal
> times, stretcher bearers, a cook lounging in a doorway,
> men asleep, passing a bottle, engraving a cross, resting on
> a shovel, coming out of the line in silent, stunned groups,
> exhausted.[24]

This is evident in works, such as *Coming out in the Somme* (1916) (Figure 6) and *Coming out at Hill 60* (1916) (Figure 7) where Dyson illustrates the exhaustion of the men coming back from battle; *Dead Beat, the tunnel, Hill 60* (1917) (Figure 8), where he depicts soldiers sleeping in a tunnel in full uniform and equipment; and in *Gathering fuel, Delville*

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[22] Smith, *Arthur Streeton.* p. 156 and McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme.* p. 295-297.
[23] Smith, *Arthur Streeton.* p. 157.
[24] James Wieland, 'Winter Witness: Will Dyson's Australia at War and Other War Drawings', *War Australia's Creative Response.* Allen and Unwin: St Leonards, 1997, p.103.

Wood (1917) (Figure 9), where he depicts the small tasks such as a man gathering wood for a fire.[25]

Other artists also recorded the soldiers' experience at the front. Power, a specialist animal painter, sketched the soldiers and their horses. For example, in *Going into Action* (1917) (Figure 10), he depicts soldiers walking across the muddy terrain beside a wagon drawn by horses. Power's sketches from this period also document the men and their horses in battle and resting. Leist's work records the experience of the AIF soldiers on the Western front as well. He shows soldiers setting up camp (Figure 11) and an Australian soldier escorting four German prisoners carrying a wounded man across the mud of the battlefield (Figure 12). One of the most poignant works to come out of this period is *The Search for Identity Discs* (c.1917 – 1918) (Figure 13), by Crozier, himself a soldier serving with the AIF. In this sketch a soldier leans over his dead mate looking to identify him. The two figures are surrounded by the mutilated landscape with the vestiges of war such as ladders and planks strewn through the mud. These studies, and the many others like them, show the everyday aspects of life at the front for the AIF.

The war artists at the front also recorded the machinery of war evident in their specific studies of weapons. For example, Louis McCubbin recorded British six inch Howitzers and artillery pieces in a repair park in watercolour sketches (Figure 14). James Scott sketched the dead bodies of German soldiers near a German machine gun position after its capture by the 1st Brigade AIF, 1918 (Figure 15). Similarly, Benson produced rough sketches of soldiers unloading a wagon full of ammunition at night (Figure 16) and Longstaff drew soldiers with a 9.2 Howitzer (Figure 17). Even Streeton sketched weapons seen in his famous *French Seige Gun* (1918) (Figure 18) where the three soldiers operating the gun give perspective to the immensity of the weapon. The effect of the weapons on

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[25] Will Dyson, *Australia At War: Drawings At the Front.* London: Cecil Palmer & Hayward, 1918.

towns and landscapes was also a subject of the war artists' work. Fred Leist and Louis McCubbin documented the destruction of towns in drawings of the derelict buildings in France (Figures 19 and 20). Streeton and Fullwood concentrated on recording the landscape of war evident in works, such as, Fullwood's *Effect of explosion of munitions train, Solre-le-Chateau* (1918) (Figure 21). During the war the artists' exposure to the various aspects of the conflict resulted in a comprehensive documentation of the war. Through this journalistic approach to the production of war art, the official war artists created a broad, detailed and accurate record of the wide ranging experience of the AIF soldiers in the war for posterity.

The Gallipoli Mission, 1919

The drive of the administrators and artists of the Australian war art scheme to pictorially preserve the war and their emphasis on creating an accurate and comprehensive record is evident in the Gallipoli Mission of 1919. The aim of the mission was to preserve and document the Australian experience of the Gallipoli campaign through writing, mapping, photography and art. The mission lasted one month and consisted of Bean, Lieutenant John Balfour, Staff Sergeant Arthur Bazley, formerly Bean's clerk, Lieutenant H.S. Buchanan, a construction engineer who had been in charge of the Australian Corps' mapping section in France, Sergeant G. Hunter Rogers who was to help correct and make the maps on the mission, Brigadier-General E.A. Drake-Brockman, who was to help with understanding the events of the first minutes of the Gallipoli Landing, Captain George Hubert Wilkins, the official photographer of the war and George Lambert, the official war artist of the Palestine campaigns. McCarthy notes that Bean, with 'his almost fanatical devotion to the determination of factual truth', wanted to understand and record what had happened at Gallipoli in exact detail and so assembled this team of experts to collect and preserve the

facts before they were lost forever.[26] Lambert was included on mission to retrospectively record in sketches and paintings the events of the campaign and specifically, as Bean noted, 'to fuse in his mind the scene of the Landing and the recapitulation of the events of the day'.[27] As Gallipoli was a major theatre of war for the AIF the serious collecting of relics and records had started in late 1916. There was, as yet, no detailed record in the official art of this campaign. This mission was a further example of the primacy of art as a means of visually preserving the war and the administrators made a conscious effort to document the past events at Gallipoli in order to create an accurate, comprehensive and enduring record. Lambert's preparation and attitude to this record collecting mission is evident in the steps he took to his time on the Peninsula.

During his time at Gallipoli Lambert went out to the sites of the major Australian battles, such as the Nek, where he sketched the terrain. Lambert wrote of the mission that 'evidence grins coldly at us non-combatants'.[28] His painting of *The charge of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at the Nek, 7 August 1915* (1924) (Figure 22) is one which adheres closely to the details he obtained from Bean and through his personal experience. Bean further commented on Lambert's attitude to his art, stating that he was 'devoted as a religion, to truth as he saw it'.[29] Lambert said that 'if the weather serves...I swat at painting leaves and small pebbles into the sketch of the Nek'.[30] Bean noted that 'in [Lambert's] picture of the charge at the Nek he gave the men exactly the uniform they would have worn – shirts with sleeves cut above the elbow, shorts, slacks'.[31] Bean also discussed the conversations which he and Lambert had concerning how a man might fall when he was shot.[32] In order to record the light and positioning of the men who fell at Gallipoli Lambert asked his fellow

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[26] McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme.* p. 368.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Lambert cited in Lambert, *Thirty Years of an Artist's Life.* pp.103 – 104.
[29] Bean, *Gallipoli Mission.* p. 16.
[30] Lambert cited in *Ibid.* p. 111.
[31] *Ibid.* p. 110.
[32] Letters between Bean and Lambert, 1920, AWM 3DRL 6673/302 Part 1.

trooper, William Spruce, to pose so that he could sketch the scene as close to the way it would have been four years earlier.[33] In Lambert's study of the detail of the light, the landscape and the flora, it is evident that the pursuit to document Australia's experience and involvement in the war continued to be of the greatest importance even at the close of this historic event.

The Gallipoli Mission essentially embodied all the distinctive characteristics of the Australian war art scheme. The emphasis on art as a record of the war, the concern of the administrators' to capture the facts of the conflict, and the journalistic approach to collecting and preserving this record were all traits of the Australian official war art scheme during the war years. In later years historians have interpreted Lambert's works from Gallipoli as promoting and constructing Bean's myth of the Anzacs at Gallipoli. However, in directing the Gallipoli Mission Bean's motivation was to reconstruct the facts of that campaign so as to extend and create a fuller pictorial record of the AIF experience in the First World War. While Lambert worked from the evidence at Gallipoli, his paintings were inevitably going to be retrospective in nature in comparison with the art produced from the official artists' firsthand experience during the war. This was because his paintings began to depict incidents important to the history of the nation rather than visually documenting common scenes of the AIF in the war. This was a growing and developing theme throughout the interwar period as, in the continual expansion of the visual record of war, the administrators had to deal with the fact that the artists were no longer able to paint from life.

Throughout the war, the Australian war art scheme sought to create a visual record of factual or documentary truth in art. This was distinct from the British and Canadian schemes which recorded a more subjective truth based on the artists' reaction to war. In

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[33] Betty Churcher. *The Art of War.* Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004, p. 27.

their pursuit of an accurate and encompassing visual record of the war, the Australian administrators adopted a journalistic process to the production of war art and the artists became pictorial journalists documenting the details of the war for posterity. The Gallipoli Mission saw the beginning of a retrospective reconstruction of the details of war in the art which was to characterise the war art produced in the interwar period.

Chapter 3: Painting the War in Retrospect, 1920-1931

This final chapter explores the challenges which faced the administrators in their aim to expand the visual record of the AIF in the war throughout the interwar period. It argues that they still pursued a record of detailed accuracy in the official war art and considers the careful collaboration which went into retrospectively painting the war. This chapter argues that the administrators' motivations during the interwar years were not to create a legend of the AIF in the war, but to add to and expand the visual record of the war years in order to create a more encompassing record of the AIF experience to preserve and memorialise it for posterity.

During the interwar period the official war art came under the control of the newly established War Memorial's Art Committee which was active from 1920.[1] The Arts Committee oversaw the commissioning of further artworks after the war and consisted of members of the War Memorial Board and included Treloar as well as Bean in an advisory capacity. Unlike the British and Canadian schemes which ended with the war, the Australian War Memorial's Art Committee worked hard to extend the record of the war in art throughout the interwar period.[2] The administrators compiled a list of over one hundred scenes and portraits they thought were needed to enhance the visual record and continued to commission the official war artists to extend the War Memorial's collection into the 1930s.[3] Artists who had not been able to paint for Australia in an official capacity because of military duties were also commissioned with works in the interwar period as a way of further expanding the record of the war in art.[4] The Memorial also bought paintings it had

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[1] Michael McKernan, *Here Is Their Spirit: A History of the Australian War Memorial 1917-1990.* St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press and Australian War Memorial, 1991, pp. 64-72.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] File relating to the terms and conditions of the war artists, AWM93 8/2/23.
[4] File on AWRS artists, AWM54 492/12/3.

not commissioned but believed were a valuable addition to the visual record. This included work by women artists, for example Iso Rae, who drew the war from behind the lines.[5] However, the scenes and portraits on the list came first in terms of funding, as these were specifically the works the Memorial wanted to fill in the gaps of the pictorial record of the war.[6]

Treloar played a significant role in expanding the Memorial's already comprehensive collection of war art during the interwar period. His experience as the head of the War Records Section during the war had given him a keen eye as to the records and relics which were worth collecting and meant he was well suited as Director of the War Memorial, a position he took up in 1920 and occupied until his death in 1952.[7] Treloar's attitude toward the collection of art was much the same as it was towards other war relics and records: nothing was meaningless, though he preferred records with a story. In contrast to Bean, there is no evidence that Treloar attempted to shape or establish a mythic picture of the Australian soldier. Indeed, Anne-Marie Condé, an expert on Treloar, comments that 'he sought and accepted material reflecting all aspects of war: the good and the bad, the hero and the everyman, the general and the private, the sick and the well, the combatant and the non-combatant, the civilian, the enemy, men and women'. She concludes that 'Treloar wanted variety and he wanted to collect for everyone'.[8] While Bean was the visionary behind the War Memorial, Treloar did the hard work. Indeed, this is evident in his extensive commissioning of war art in the interwar period during which time he mediated between the Arts Committee and artists and managed to maintain the desired precision in detail in the expansion of the pictorial record.

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[5] Betty Snowden, 'Iso Rae' in *Artists in Action: from the collection of the Australian War Memorial.* Ed. Lola Wilkins, Canberra: Australian War Memorial 2003, pp. 20-21.
[6] McKernan, *Here Is Their Spirit*, pp. 64 – 77.
[7] *Ibid.* pp. 37-40.
[8] Anne Marie-Condé, 'John Treloar, Official War Art and the Australian War Memorial', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 53, No. 3 (2007), p. 455.

In expanding the record of the war in art, the administrators felt that the art works of the interwar period should focus more on 'incidents in the history of the AIF' rather than focussing on 'illustrating how warfare is waged' which had characterised the art of the war years.[9] In the interwar period, the paintings commissioned were of specific events and actions, such as heroic or tragic moments, which had been impossible to comprehensively document during the immediacy and chaos of the war. These significant events and actions could only be produced retrospectively. Indeed, while the war art created during the war was journalistic in its nature of recording and documenting the scenes artists witnessed, the war art commissioned after the war used a more historical, nineteenth century style of battle painting, depicting frozen moments. However, in painting specific incidents of the war the administrators were still concerned that the art should be a precise and detailed account of the AIF experience in the war. To maintain this accuracy the Memorial provided artists with all the available forms of evidence from which to accurately reconstruct events and details in their paintings. Artists were provided with eyewitness accounts, written accounts, photographs and examples of equipment and uniforms on which to base their works.[10] Indeed, while during the war artists were essentially pictorial journalists, after the war they became, as Lambert noted of his own work on the Gallipoli Mission, 'artist historian[s]' who recorded 'events precious to the history of the nation'.[11] Their primary aim throughout the interwar period was to accurately reconstruct the events of the war which, as yet, had not been documented in the war art to create a fuller pictorial record of the war.

The administrators' intentions to retrospectively expand the record are evident in their continued emphasis on the documentary value of art over its artistic merit. While the

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[9] Letter Treloar to Bean, 27 June 1923, AWM38 3DRL 6673/297.

[10] McKernan, *Here Is Their Spirit*, pp. 64 – 77.

[11] Amy Lambert, *Thirty Years of an Artist's Life: The Career of G.W. Lambert, A.R.A.* Sydney: Australian Artist Editions, 1977, p. 72.

Memorial employed Bernard Hall, a renowned artist and central figure in Australian art in the interwar era, to evaluate the artistic quality of the official war art, the administrators did not take this advice if they believed the painting had value as a record.[12] Treloar writes to Bean, in 1921, stating that Hall 'feels embarrassed because he finds that we are very keen on pictures of which he does not form a favourable opinion...and finds that we have no time for a picture which he considers very good' though 'he of course realises that art is not necessarily the predominant note we aim at in our collections'.[13] This emphasis on record over artistic worth is evident in Bean's letter to A.G. Pretty, Acting Director of the Memorial from 1924 to 1925, informing him of the Memorial's acquisition of Ellis Silas' works. Bean wrote that the sketches 'are very valuable indeed from the point of view of records, but not so valuable as artistic works'.[14] Bean expressed a similar sentiment in a letter to Treloar where he commented that for him, 'Wheeler's picture of Lone Pine seems to be satisfactory from the point of view of historical accuracy' and that the amount of light from the exploding bomb was a matter 'for an artist' as for Bean it did not affect the value of the work as a record.[15]

As with the art produced during the war, the artists' commitment to documenting the accurate details of the war in their works was crucial to the administrators' intentions of expanding the visual record of the war. The artists themselves were also crucial in maintaining the factual accuracy of their works. For example, in 1927, Fred Leist wrote to Bean about his latest commission, a painting of the 'Southland' incident, a ship which was torpedoed during the war, requesting that Bean, 'in sending along any material you think would be of value to me, I would suggest that you enclose a type written account of the

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[12] File Relating to H. S. Power, AWM38 3DRL 6673/314.
[13] Letter from Treloar to Bean, 5th May, 1921, in Ibid.
[14] Letter from Bean to Pretty, 13th May 1924, AWM38 3DRL 6673/323.
[15] Letter from Bean to Treloar, 11 October 1929, in Ibid.

incident in question' (Figure 23).[16] Wheeler was obsessed with factual accuracy and was also constantly requesting eyewitness accounts and specific details of the scenes he was to paint as well as seeking advice and criticism of his works.[17] He regretted not having had the time to make sketches while he had been serving at the front and wrote 'he did not feel justified in attempting to paint the picture[s] without these as it would necessitate a certain amount of faking'.[18] However, after Treloar gave him photographs and eyewitness accounts to work from he was satisfied that he could paint a picture and reconsidered. He often sent sketches of how he had visualised the descriptions of certain events to Treloar and Bean asking for their suggestions and opinions on the level of accuracy he had attained in his works.[19]

In creating a fuller pictorial record of the war the Memorial sometimes accepted works which it had not expressly commissioned, yet even these works were subject to careful collaboration between the administrators as to their value as a record. This is evident in the correspondence concerning Coates' *Casualty Clearing Station,* (1920) (Figure 24). While the painting itself was not commissioned by the Memorial, it attracted the attention of Smart who 'stated that it was as good as any of the pictures of our official artists',[20] and was the primary reason Coates was later officially commissioned by the Memorial. Luke Fildes, an official of the AWRS, suggested that the painting 'would make an interesting addition to the collection the Commonwealth is making to illustrate the events of the late war', though the picture 'is not depicting any particular incident [it] is an abstract idea dealing with the succouring of the wounded'.[21] Treloar was interested in

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[16] Letter from Leist to Bean, 25th March 1927, AWM38 3DRL 6673/304.
[17] Letters between Treloar and Bean relating to the work of Charles Wheeler, 1920 – 1929, AWM38 3DRL 6673/323.
[18] Treloar's notes on Charles Wheeler, 29th December 1919, in Ibid.
[19] Letters between Treloar and Bean relating to the work of Charles Wheeler, 1920 – 1929, in Ibid.
[20] Letter from Treloar to Bean, 19th May 1920, AWM38 3DRL 6673/296.
[21] Letter from Luke Fildes to H.C. Smart, 24th January 1920, AWM38 3DRL 6673/296.

attaining this painting in order to broaden the Memorial's art record stating that 'bearing in mind that we have not placed a commission dealing with the work of the Medical Corps.' it 'would appear desirable that we should purchase this picture'.[22] However, while Bean was also in favour of acquiring the painting, he stipulated that the Memorial should only 'get it... If in the opinion of some medical officer from France it is a truthful representation of a C.C.S.' and that 'it is essential that [this officer] should have been at the front and seen the actual thing there'.[23] The emphasis on the art accurately representing the war was still a concern in 1928 when there was a suggestion that the Memorial should purchase Will Longstaff's *Australian Artillery in Action at Peronne* which Mr Chalk, the owner of the painting, stated was of greater value than the *The Menin Gate at Midnight* (1927) (Figure 25).[24] However, Bean advised Treloar against purchasing the painting, stating 'I cannot connect it (artillery, infantry, and tanks) with any historical incident'.[25] Indeed, in retrospectively expanding the visual record through buying works, the administrators were unable to supervise the accuracy of the paintings' reconstruction of events and therefore only accepted those which it could verify had some level of accuracy in their depiction of the war.

The Memorial's acquisition of Will Longstaff's *The Menin Gate at Midnight* is an exception to the usual emphasis on the record value of art. The painting depicts the road outside the Menin Gate and the ghostly shapes of dead soldiers walking there. It is a work imbued with a spiritualism popular in the interwar period as a means of dealing with grief and loss. This painting is perhaps one of the most widely recognised of the collection. It was inspired by Longstaff's vision of the ghosts of soldiers rising from the dead as he was

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[22] Letter from Treloar to Bean, 19th May 1920, AWM38 3DRL 6673/296.
[23] Letter from Bean to Treloar, 29th May 1920, in Ibid.
[24] Letter from Bean to Heyes, 2nd May 1928, AWM38 3DRL 6673/308.
[25] Letter from Bean to Treloar, 28th November 1928, in Ibid.

walking near the Menin Gate.[26] While the rest of the war art is presented as a part of the displays throughout the War Museum as a means of visualising the facts and details of the war, Longstaff's painting hangs in a separate room even today.[27] Of all the First World War art in the collection this is the only piece which is not a record of the war. The acquisition of this work shows that the administrators were aware that the Memorial's collection of art only provided a visual record and, that while this record worked well as a detailed description of the experience of the AIF in the war, it did not provide the spiritualism the public sought in the interwar period. However, in general, the works the Memorial bought were chosen for their value as a record and the *Menin Gate at Midnight* stands as an exception to this rule.

In their motivation to extend the visual record of the war in the interwar era, the administrators went to great lengths to ensure that the artists had all the evidence available to reconstruct the war in their paintings. Bean often wrote accounts of the parts of the war he had experienced for the artists as well as sending sketches he himself had made of certain battles which he had witnessed.[28] Photographs were also supplied to the artists where possible. As already seen in Wheeler's case, he painted a scene he had not witnessed from photographic records and written accounts. The Arts Committee also arranged for the artists to have uniforms and equipment at their disposal so that they could record these details of war correctly in their art. Treloar arranged for 'a uniform, rifle and full set of infantry equipment' to be loaned for six months from the Defence Department so Leist could paint them into his work.[29] The artists also had access to veterans and Bell, for example, benefited from this contact. Treloar notes that 'so far as record details are concerned, Bell had the assistance of General Foott to get the facts correct in his painting

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[26] Lee Kinsella, 'Will Longstaff' in *Artists in Action,* pp.34-35.
[27] McKernan, *Here Is Their Spirit,* pp.132-133.
[28] File relating to Charles Wheeler, AWM38 3DRL 6673/323.
[29] Letter Treloar to Bean, 16th October 1928, AWM38 3DRL 6673/304.

of the construction of the Eterpigny Bridge'.[30] In 1931, Treloar wrote to Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash asking for his critical evaluation of Power's painting *August 8th, 1918* (Figure 26). Monash replied commenting the one Red Cross figure has a rifle which would be breaking Geneva Conventions. He goes on to comment that he does not 'understand why the two tanks...should be advancing at right angles to each other' and that 'the further tank seems to be advancing across the front of the infantry'. He also noted that he agreed with Treloar's criticisms 'regarding haversacks in lieu of packs, [and] the wearing of the chinstrap behind the head'.[31] As a result Power was asked to amend these incorrect details accordingly.[32] Coates went to Egypt in order to finish off his 1922 portrait of *General Bridges and his staff watching the manoeuvres of the 1st Australian Division in the desert, Egypt, March 1915* (Figure 27). Treloar commented to Bean that this 'would help to ensure getting the picture correct'.[33] Bean agreed and replied that it was a good idea for Coates to go to Egypt as the lighting, shadows and colour of the desert is very unique and worth painting from life and that he would be able to see exactly where General Bridges and his staff would have been positioned.[34]

As a result of striving to maintain the accuracy in retrospectively painting incidents of historic significance, the administrators had a greater participation in the creation of the art. The Memorial's archives hold a wealth of correspondence between Treloar, Bean and the other members of the Arts Committee in the interwar years concerning their evaluation of the artworks' contribution to the pictorial record of the war. Bean and Treloar were critical of the works of art which the artists produced and often commented on the details which failed to deliver the level of accuracy they pursued. There was much concern over the details of Lambert's *The Landing at Anzac* as he depicted all the men with their sleeves

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[30] Letter Treloar to Bean 7th October 1925, AWM38 3DRL 6673/292.
[31] Letter Monash to Treloar, April 1931, AWM38 3DRL 6673/314.
[32] Letters between Power and Treloar, 1931, in Ibid.
[33] Letter from Treloar to Bean, 26th November 1921, AWM38 3DRL 6673/296.
[34] Letter from Bean to Treloar, 28th November 1921, in Ibid.

rolled down when they had been rolled up and all wearing slouch hats, which Bean later

notes is only partly accurate. This did not go unnoticed by the Art Committee and Treloar

wrote to Bean that 'a few have challenged the correctness of this, claiming that the men be

shown as wearing caps'. Treloar notes there is not much satisfactory evidence of whether

caps or hats were worn and ends his letter to Bean by concluding that 'your

photograph...shows men with both hats and caps'.[35] In the end the Memorial Committee

accepted this painting as the members believed that the overall scene was a valuable record

in its depiction of the Anzac landing even if the details were not as accurate as they would

have liked. There was also a lot of anxiety over the length of time which had passed

without Lambert producing a finished piece of art. The Art Committee wrote to Lambert in

1922 stating its grave concerns:

> The members believe that the longer the painting of the pictures is
> deferred, the less satisfactory they will be. The memories of the
> eyewitnesses who will furnish descriptions and help the artists, are
> growing less reliable; and it is only reasonable to suppose that the
> artists' impressions of the atmosphere and colour of the battlefield
> are growing duller.[36]

In the administrators' concern to capture the memory of the war before that memory faded,

their awareness of the fleeting nature of their subject is evident. Indeed, they were

conscious of the limitations and challenges of painting the war in retrospect and in

reconstructing the evidence so long after the event.

Though they were aware of the challenges of documenting past events, the

Memorial's Art Committee was still motivated, where possible, to maintain the correct

details of the war and often asked artists to revise their work if it was found unsatisfactory

in regards to specific facts. As Treloar noted in 1925, the Memorial was primarily

concerned with 'handing down to posterity...truthful portrayals of the subjects depicted'

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[35] Letter from Treloar to Bean, 1922, AWM38 3DRL 6673/302.
[36] Letter from the Memorial Art Committee 1922, in Ibid.

and with creating a 'truthful record' of the war over collecting 'work[s] of art'.[37] This aim is evident in the way Fred Leist's painting of the fighting at Lone Pine was criticised by the public and ex-service men because, as Bean relates to Treloar, 'the figures are far too few'(Figure28). Bean wrote to Treloar telling him that he had asked Leist if 'it would be possible to correct this, and he said that he thought it might'.[38] Even small details were subject to scrutiny if they were not as accurate as the Memorial wished, such as the shape of the smoke from explosions. For example, in Wheeler's picture of Messines, Bean suggests that the explosions which Wheeler was depicting would 'render it impossible to see the sky immediately behind the flash' and also recommends some revisions to smoke-clouds from the explosions which 'were not quite so uniform'.[39] Treloar replied to Bean that Wheeler made the required revisions and that 'his amendments are along the lines which you suggest'.[40] In the case of Coates, his painting of General Bridges and his staff met with heavy criticism from the Art Committee. Bazley wrote to inform him that 'whilst the portraiture is in most instances good, the composition, it is felt, leaves a good deal to be desired. Had you adhered to the more pictorial sketch which was prepared and approved about the time of your departure from Australia, it is considered a better result would have been achieved'. He ends by stating that 'in the circumstances the Committee feels that it cannot accept the picture and has reluctantly to ask you to repaint'.[41] The administrators' meticulous attitude towards the details of the war art in the interwar period shows that, though they were retrospectively painting the events of the war, their aim was still to document a factual truth for a precise record of the war in the art.

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[37] Letters from Treloar to Power, September to December 1925, cited in Anne Marie-Condé, 'John Treloar, Official War Art and the Australian War Memorial', p. 458.

[38] Letter from Bean to Treloar, 9th February 1927, AWM38 3 DRL 6673/304.

[39] Letter from Bean to Treloar 20th June 1927, AWM38 3DRL 6673/323.

[40] Letter from Treloar to Bean, 29th June 1927, in Ibid.

[41] Letter from Bazley to Coates, 22nd March 1924, AWM38 3DRL 6673/296.

In retrospectively painting the war the administrators were concerned that the art of the interwar period should be as precise as the art produced during the war in order to add to and extend the account of the AIF's experience for posterity. The administrators' focus during this period on the art as a means of reconstructing and documenting incidents of historic significance in the experience of the AIF in the war has drawn criticism from historians who have interpreted the art as evidence for the construction of a digger myth. Indeed, while the careful reconstruction of significant events in the art lends itself to a reading of this nature, this was not the intention behind its creation. The administrators' motivations in the interwar period were to add to the record which was 'designed to visualise as far as possible all aspects of the AIF's participation in the world's greatest conflict'.[42]   In focussing solely on the incidents of historic significance in the AIF's experience in the war, the art has been criticised by historians, like Kent and Hoffenberg, as presenting a sanitised or partial truth. However, when viewed with the art produced during the war, as the administrators intended, it is evident that the art of the interwar period fills the gaps in the visual record of the First World War. Indeed, the administrators' intentions were that the art would add to and expand the record produced during the war and in this way provide a fuller and more encompassing visual record of the AIF experience in the war for the preservation and memorialisation in the nation's memory.

During the interwar period the administrators of the official Australian war art were motivated to expand the visual documentation of the AIF in the war and to add scenes of historical significance to this record which had the artists had been unable to capture during the war. In this retrospective reconstruction of the events of the war, the administrators were concerned with maintaining the accuracy of the details of the AIF war experience in the art and ensured that the artists had all the available evidence from which to create their paintings. Their aim to reconstruct these events demonstrates that the art was

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[42] File containing Gullet's notes on Information on Publicity, 1922, AWM40 107.

not intended as the construction of a myth but as a means of creating a more encompassing visual record for posterity.

Conclusion

Through tracing the intentions of the Australian war art scheme both during and after the war, this thesis has argued that the primary motivations behind the Australian scheme were to visually document the precise details of the AIF in the First World War. The Australian scheme intended the war art to complement the other collected relics and records of the war in order to comprehensively preserve and memorialise the experience of the AIF. In comparison with the British and Canadian schemes which intended their art to be a reaction to the war, the Australian scheme was distinct in its motivation to create a record rather than a reaction in the art which would visualise the details of the war for future generations. In the administrators' pursuit to produce this visual record, they chose a traditional mode of expression and chose artists who were dedicated to recording a documentary truth as well as artworks which contained a satisfactory standard of accuracy.

In basing the thesis largely on an analysis of the primary material of the Australian war art scheme, such as the correspondence between the administrators and their correspondence with the artists, the official files and an analysis of the collection of art, the thesis has shown that the administrators felt compelled to meticulously preserve an accurate record of the war in art to explain the experience of the AIF to those who were not there and to future generations. It has argued that during the war the administrators took a journalistic approach to the production of the art in order to create a comprehensive visual record of the war. It has also shown that during the interwar period the administrators were motivated to fill the gaps in the record and commissioned further works which retrospectively reconstructed the war in paintings to create a more encompassing account of the AIF experience in the war.

In the analysis of this largely unexamined evidence this thesis has focussed more on the process behind the production of the war art than on the subsequent interpretations of scheme. In considering the administrators' intentions to create an encompassing visual record, the thesis has suggested that there were more complex motivations behind the Australian war art scheme than myth making. The traditional mode of expression of the official war art lends itself to a sanitised interpretation and account of the war and historians have used the art as evidence for the construction of a masculine digger myth. While the iconic images of the collection certainly add to this myth, this is a reading which scholars have interpreted from the art rather than this being an intention of the art. Indeed, in analysing the Australian war art collection as a whole this thesis has argued that the conscious effort of the administrators was to create a precise and detailed record of the AIF experience in the war. Their primary intention was to create a record which was as detailed and as encompassing as possible. Overall, this thesis has argued that if a fuller understanding of the place of war art in Australia's memory of the war is to be better understood, and indeed the broader complexities of the remembrance of the war, the administrators' intentions and motivations in creating a full and detailed visual record for posterity need to be taken into account.

Appendix: Examples of the Australian War Art

The following images are courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.

Figure 1: George Lambert, *Anzac, the Landing 1915*, 1920 – 1922, oil on canvas, 190.5cm x 350.5cm.

Figure 2: Arthur Streeton, *The Somme Valley near Corbie*, 1919, oil on canvas, 153cm x 245.5cm.

Figure 3: Charles Bryant, *Australian troops disembarking at Boulogne*, 1917, oil on canvas board, 37cm x 53cm.

Figure 4: Charles Bryant, *Hospital Ships, Le Havre*, 1917, oil on canvas board, 20.2cm x 25.4cm.

Figure 5: George Lambert, *With the Remounts, Moascar*, 1918, oil on cigar box lid, 16.6cm x17.6cm.

Figure 6: Will Dyson, *Coming Out at Hill 60*, 1917, charcoal with pencil on wash paper, 45.7cm x 59cm.

Figure 7: Will Dyson, *Coming out on the Somme*, 1916, charcoal, pencil, brush and wash on paper, 58.2cm x 47.4cm.

Figure 8: Will Dyson, *Dead Beat, the tunnel, Hill 60*, 1917, brush and ink, charcoal on paper, 50.8cm x 44.8cm.

Figure 9: Will Dyson, *Gathering fuel, Delville Wood*, 1917, lithograph on paper.

Figure 10: H Septimus Power, *Going into Action*, 1917, watercolour with charcoal heightened with white, 47cm x 60.6cm.

Figure 11: Fred Leist, *Camouflaged Tents, Dickebusch,* 1917, charcoal with watercolour and bodycolour, 48.2cm x 62.5cm.

Figure 12: Fred Leist, *Craterland, Belgium*, 1917, watercolour with charcoal heightened with white, 55.4cm x 78.2cm.

Figure 13: Frank Crozier, *Search for Identity Discs*, c.1917-1918, oil on canvas, 71.5cm x 91.8 cm.

Figure 14: Louis McCubbin, *Gun Repair Park*, 1918, watercolour pencil on paper, 26.6cm x 38cm.
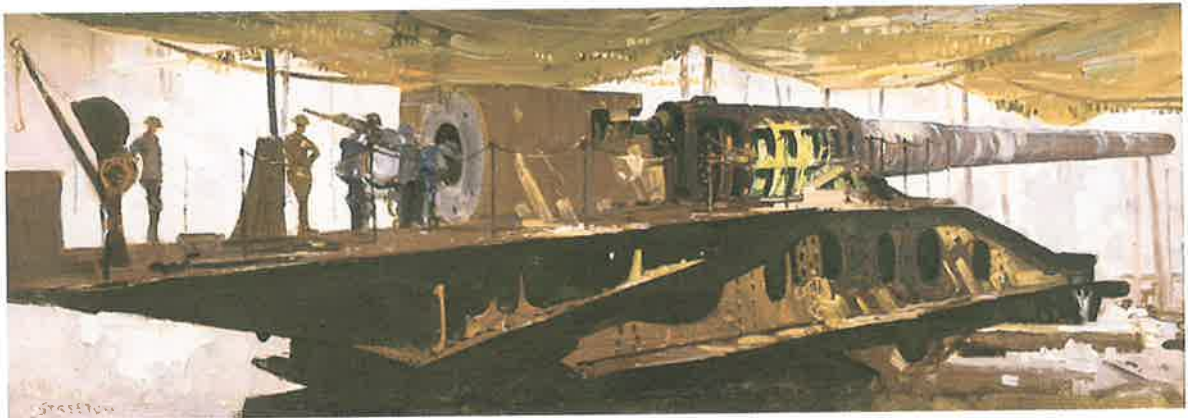
Figure 15: James Scott, *Enemy Machine-Gun Position*, 1918, watercolour over pencil, 25.4cm x 35.5cm.

Figure 16: George Benson, *Unloading 18-pounder ammunition at night*, 1918, water colour with pastel over charcoal, heightened with white on carbon, 25.7cm x 44.6cm.

Figure 17: Will Longstaff, *Australian 9.2 Howitzer*, 1919, oil on canvas, 92cm x 153cm.

Figure 18: Arthur Streeton, *French Seige Gun*, 1918, oil on canvas, 40cm x 112.2cm.

Figure19: Fred Leist, *Interior, Dickebusch Church*, 1917, watercolour and charcoal, 51cm x 40.3cm.

Figure 20: Louis McCubbin, *Peronne. Heavy artillery advancing through town*, 1918, oil on linen canvas, 50.8cm x 60.6cm.

Figure 21: Henry Fullwood, *Effect of explosion of munitions train, Solre-le-Chateau,* 1918, watercolour and gouache with charcoal, 39cm x 57cm.

Figure 22: *The charge of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade at the Nek, 7 August 1915,* 1924, oil on canvas, 152.5cm x 305.7cm.

Figure 23: Fred Leist, *Sinking of the Southland*, 1927, oil on canvas, 71.4cm x 102.2cm.

Figure 24: George Coates, *Casualty Clearing Station*, 1920, oil on canvas, 141.8cm x 212.4cm.

Figure 25: Will Longstaff, *The Menin Gate at Midnight*, 1927, oil on canvas, 137cm x 270cm.

Figure 26: H. Detail from Septimus Power, *8th August, 1918,* 1930, oil on canvas, 153.5cm x 235.5cm.

Figure 27: George Coates, *General William Bridges and his staff watching the manoeuvres of the 1st Australian Division in the desert in Egypt, March 1915*, c.1922-1926, oil on canvas, 116.9cm x 160.3cm.

Figure 28: Fred Leist, *The Taking of Lone Pine*, 1921, oil on canvas, 122.5cm x 245.5cm.

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      File 3DRL 6673/302 Part 1 items relating to George Lambert.
      File 3DRL 6673/304 items relating to Fred Leist.
      File 3DRL 6673/308 items relating to Will Longstaff.
      File 3DRL 6673/314 items relating to H.S. Power.

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