

# From the collection: Minnie F. White, Australian Landscape, c.1950

Though not as well known as Lois White, the Art Deco painter who was her cousin, Minnie Francis White (1891-1984) also had a long and successful art career. The youngest of eight children, Minnie White grew up in Huntly Lodge in Grafton, and was apprenticed as a dress designer and seamstress before enrolling at Elam School of Fine Arts in 1910.

There she studied commercial art, including advertising media and ticket writing, but also pottery, which had been introduced by Elam Director Edward Payton.

Later in her life she made and sold glazed ceramics which matched the rugs she had designed. This small painting was purchased for the University collection from the 1979 retrospective exhibition organised at the Pumphouse Gallery in Takapuna by Betty Curnow and Genevieve Becroft.

At Elam, Edward Fristrom was Minnie White's tutor in drawing, and encouraged an Impressionist technique. Minnie's mother was convinced that figure drawing from life would corrupt her young daughter's morality and forbade her attendance until Fristrom suggested that a family chaperone might accompany her to classes where the male nude model was posed.

Awarded the South Kensington Art Teachers' Certificate in 1912, she chose not to teach but instead worked for Chandler Advertising. Her specialty was fashion drawing and she did piece work for George Courts until 1922 when the head of the studio suggested that she go down to Christchurch and study painting at the Canterbury College School of Art.

Olivia Spencer Bower and Russell Clark were in her classes at Canterbury, and Rhona Haszard, Evelyn Page and Rita Angus preceded her.

Moving back to Auckland in 1925, she returned to Elam as a mature student, exhibiting "free and

imaginative" landscapes at the Auckland Society of Arts.

Marrying Frederick Gash in 1935, she lived in Opoho, Dunedin for six years before again returning to Auckland, where her husband died in 1946.

The Elam School of Fine Arts Archive contains the many sketches she made during an extensive trip to

Australia in 1948, travelling from the Whitsunday Islands to Hobart in Tasmania.

Concentrating on the characteristic Australian stone farm buildings and eucalypts with large patches of the sky left unpainted as bare support, this work epitomises her assured style.

Linda Tyler



MINNIE F. WHITE, *Australian Landscape*, 1950, The University of Auckland collection