



Geelong Gallery welcomes Clarice Beckett painting into collection



Clarice Beckett
Boats at sunset 1930
oil on canvas on composition board
Geelong Gallery
Gift of Rosemarie Kiss in
loving memory of her husband
Conrad O'Donohue, 2024



Boats at sunset on display in *Clarice Beckett—Atmosphere*, Geelong Gallery 2023, Photographer: Andrew Curtis

Through the exceptional generosity of Dr Rosemarie Kiss Geelong Gallery has welcomed into the permanent collection a remarkable painting by the acclaimed modernist Clarice Beckett (1887-1935).

Boats at sunset was exhibited in Geelong Gallery's 2023 exhibition *Clarice Beckett—Atmosphere*. The provenance of the work is exceptional. It was purchased by Beckett's friend, artist John Farmer from her 1930 exhibition at the Athenaeum, Melbourne: one of many annual exhibitions Beckett staged at this venue from 1923. The painting was gifted by Farmer to McClelland Gallery in 1971. In August this year it was deaccessioned from the McClelland collection and sold at auction. This encouraged one of Geelong Gallery's long-term donors, Rosemarie Kiss, to ensure the painting remained in a public collection. Her generous gift is in memory of her late husband Conrad O'Donohue. *Boats at sunset* is a fine companion to Beckett's *Rainy day* 1930 purchased by Geelong Gallery in 1973 from one of Rosalind Hollinrake's ground-breaking exhibitions of Beckett's work.

Boats at sunset is one of Beckett's superbly evocative images of the quietude of evening.

Atmospheric effects caused and conditioned by light were the defining and enduring characteristics of Clarice Beckett's imagery. She affirmed as much in 1924, expressing in her only recorded artist statement, her intent 'to show the charm of light and shade'.

As her works reveal to us, Nature was Beckett's inspiration, and she returned again and again to familiar locations to capture them at different times. Rickett's Point in Beaumaris (close to the artist's

family home on Dalgetty Road) was one such location and is the setting for *Boats at sunset*.

While her style can lend a mystical air to the diffusion of light, it is difficult to look now at Port Phillip Bay reflecting a grey sky, to see the near dissolution of the horizon into sea and sky, and not think of Beckett's truth to Nature, to her painting of the reality of what she saw. Sunrises, dusks, and sunsets. Wet suburban roads reflecting their surrounds. Lights across the Yarra. Rosalind Hollinrake reflects that the 'truth of Beckett's tonal register and colour is so accurate that the atmospheric effects in her paintings can convey the exact temperature and the experience of being in the present moment'.

This work is now on display at Geelong Gallery.

Free entry.