

# Naringal

In 1926, Clarice Beckett produced a body of work that was radically different from the prevailing approach of Australian artists to the landscape. These works were painted at Naringal Station, a Western District property south-west of Ballarat, owned by William Rowe, the brother of Beckett's artist friend Maud Rowe. For approximately five months Beckett worked in a dedicated studio, located on the upper level of the property's shearing shed, with views across expansive pastoral fields.

The paintings produced at Naringal are infused with a sense of interiority and quietude: they conjure the reflective, solitary artist working in the near silence of the pastoral setting. Only nine Naringal paintings are known to exist from an estimated 80 to 100 Beckett is thought to have painted during this concentrated period: approximately thirty were acquired by the Rowe family and destroyed in the fire that engulfed the property in 1944.

In the few extant Naringal works that we can see today (five of which are exhibited here), Beckett infused the silence and solitude of the pastoral setting into a remarkable series that adds thought-provoking aesthetic and conceptual complexity to her oeuvre. Decades after they were painted, Geelong-born artist and critic Ian Burn stated (in 1990) that the Naringal works 'remain unique within Australian art', while art historian Terry Smith identified Beckett's layered tonal gradations as precursors to the 1950s–60s abstraction of American artist Mark Rothko.