

Sunsets and reflected lights

Clarice Beckett painted at various times of the day and worked in constantly changing climatic conditions. Invariably it was the visual and atmospheric effects of light, air, cloud, mist, and rain she sought to capture. Beckett had an exceptional eye and painted quickly, making small immediate sketches and studies, some of which would be translated upon her return home into larger finished compositions at the kitchen table where she worked.

The resplendent, saturated colours of early morning and early evening captivated Beckett, and as we see throughout this exhibition, her oeuvre is rich in depictions of spectacular sunrises, sunsets, and moonrises. They reflect Beckett's psyche, her emotions, and her profound connection to Nature and its cycles, and suggest 'a sense of the eternal', as Art Gallery of South Australia curator Tracey Lock has stated, 'making visible the imperceptible shifts in the flow of time.'

Works like *Evening calm* and *Sunset* are absorbing meditations on light and transience. While deeply evocative of quietude and stillness, *Sunset* pushes its subject—the last light of day over the Bay—almost to complete abstraction, and prefigures, as various art historians have noted, the hovering, luminous colour fields of Mark Rothko.

The fluid and the fugitive are similarly at play in Beckett's repeated motif of reflected lights cast across water. Beckett's light sources and their shimmering, ephemeral reflections are flickering, seemingly minimal fragments that she composes carefully to craft aesthetically and conceptually refined pictures that powerfully evoke the mysterious atmospheres of dusk and the onset of night.