

TONI BURTON

New collection acquisition: Clarice Beckett, *Evening*, 1923

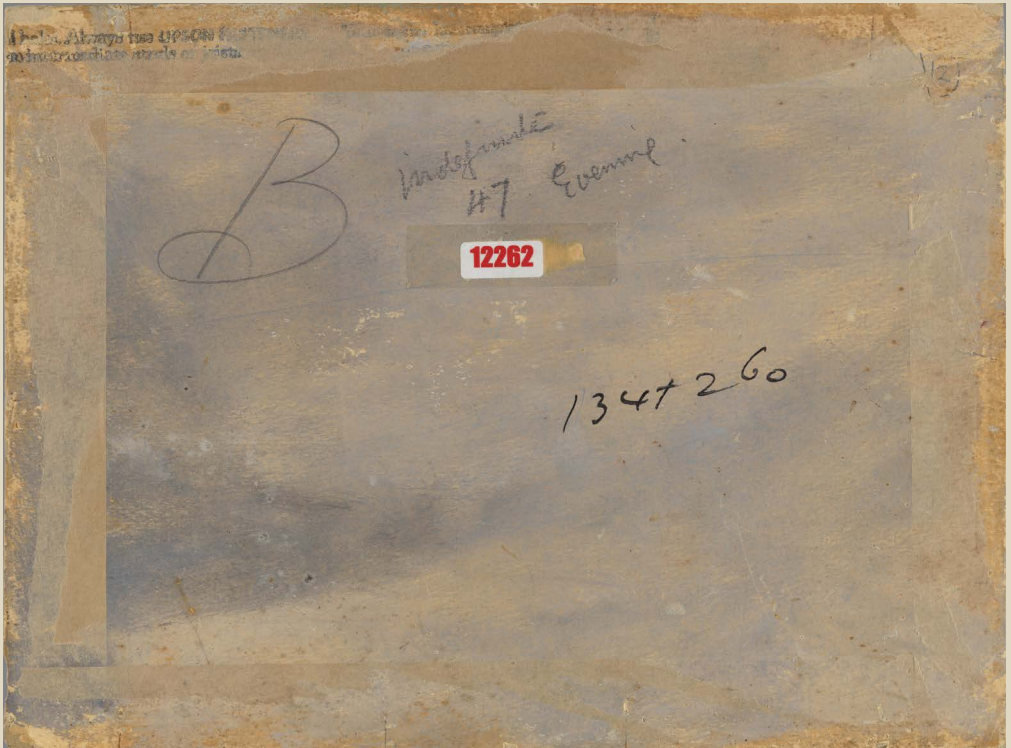
State Library Victoria purchased the painting *Evening* by Clarice Beckett at the end of 2022, adding to the Library's collection of significant female Victorian artists. The purchase was generously supported by the Vera Moore Foundation. The painting depicts Beach Road in Beaumaris, a block from the Beckett family home, St Enoch's, located on the south-eastern corner of Dalgety Road and Tramway Parade.

Clarice Beckett's paintings draw on her immediate environment: the bayside suburb of Beaumaris where she lived with her parents, and the city streets of Melbourne. Her paintings are highly valued for the way they capture streetscapes and atmospheric vistas in a variety of light and weather conditions.

Working with a restricted palette, her paintings are small in scale and understated. She often painted on materials readily available to her and was known to use cereal boxes and paper bags.

Beckett developed a personal style that helped give rise to modernism in Australia and she was a student of both Frederick McCubbin and Max Meldrum. She found herself largely disregarded by the art establishment during her lifetime and after her death from pneumonia at the age of 48, but she is now considered one of Australia's greatest artists.

Beckett's *Evening* and the reverse of the picture showing Max Meldrum's grade. Clarice Beckett, *Evening*, oil on board, 30.5 x 41 cm, 1926, H2022.184. Purchased with the assistance of the Vera Moore Foundation, 2022.



In addition to *Evening*, the Library is fortunate to hold another of Beckett's paintings in the collection. In 2006 the Library purchased *Princes Bridge* with the support of the State Library of Victoria Foundation. This painting has recently been on loan to Geelong Gallery for their exhibition *Atmosphere*.

During the cataloguing research for *Evening*, Librarian Fiona Jeffery discovered some interesting details about the painting. The painting is likely listed as no.47, titled 'Evening', exhibited at the Athenaeum Hall in 1923 in *Catalogue of paintings by Miss Clarice Beckett*. This title and exhibition number is inscribed in pencil on reverse of the painting along with a notation, possibly by the artist's sister Hilda Mangan. Also inscribed on reverse is a large black 'B', this is likely a grading mark made by Max Meldrum. Beckett would take her works to Meldrum for his feedback and appraisal and many of her canvases bear his assessment marks on the back.

As of late 2023, the painting is on display in the Library's Cowen Gallery and can be viewed whenever the Library is open. The gallery houses a permanent exhibition of selected artworks from the Library's Pictures Collection.



Clarice Beckett, *Princes Bridge*, oil on pulpboard, 29.5 x 39.7 cm, circa 1924–1926, H2006.176. Purchased with the assistance of the State Library Victoria Foundation, 2006.