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Climbing over Fences: Transnational Perspectives in the work of Mina Arndt (1885-1926)

Abstract

Hermia (Mina) Arndt (1885-1926) belongs to a the generation of New Zealand born artists who established early patterns of professional art practice in New Zealand. The events of her life show how Arndt followed career strategies similar to other New Zealand artists of her generation, but transnational cultural, social and political contexts shaped the trajectory of her career in a way that set her apart from her contemporaries. An extended period of study in Britain and Germany saw her exposed to an artistic community of a cultural complexity unmatched by anything she previously encountered in her home country and, perhaps most significantly, re-established her connection with her German-Jewish heritage. This paper will argue that throughout her brief career, and especially while living and working in the remote Nelson region, her landscape and figure work was informed by the transnational perspectives generated by her training in early 20th century Berlin. Her versatility and her preferences in terms of subject matter, developed during the early days of her training abroad, contributed to her problematic reputation as an artist working off 'the beaten path,' and set her apart from those New Zealand painters whose regionalist work was informed by nationalist tendencies.

The New Zealand artist Mina Arndt is best known to her New Zealand audiences for just a handful of paintings, such as *The Blue Blouse* (n.d., Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki,)¹ or *The Red Hat* (c1914, Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington).² Both works clearly demonstrate what it is about her work that has attracted most scholarly attention thus far. Displaying the traces of her training with moderate exponents of European modernism, and especially the influence of German proto-expressionist painter Lovis Corinth, they support the notion that Arndt should be counted as one of New Zealand's own generation of pioneering modernists.³ This paper will argue that Arndt's work also reflects shifting transnational perspectives; that for much of her career she was climbing over metaphorical fences marking the boundaries of perceived national traditions in the visual arts within the various countries in which she lived and worked. In other words, for much of her career, she had to reconcile her own multi-cultural sense of personal identity with artistic discourses shaped by notions of cultural nationalism. Moreover, in the 19th and early 20th century, the

¹ For a reproduction, see <http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/the-collection/browse-artwork/2957/the-blue-blouse>

² For a reproduction see http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bd/Mina_Arndt_-_The_red_hat_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

³ See, for example Docking, 1990; Dunn, 1991; Kirker, 1993.

debate on New Zealand cultural identity was informed by a multitude of transnational, and indeed, interdisciplinary perspectives. Although this debate was dominated by the traditions and values of the British colonial parent culture, artists of Arndt's generation had no secure perception of nationhood or national traditions of creative practice to which to attach their work. In New Zealand, then and now, the term 'nationhood' represents a state of permanent immanence, a fact which could have further encouraged Arndt to introduce an element of individualistic experimentation in her work, but also to pursue and communicate what she believed were the enduring standards of Western art.

Mina Arndt's links to 19th century Germany were, in the first instance, indirect and linked to her family's origins. These, in time, influenced the nature of her training in Europe and specifically her years spent in Berlin. Arndt was born at a rural estate near Queenstown, then a remote location in the South Island of New Zealand. Her parents, Hermann and Marie Arndt (nee Beaver), were of German-Jewish descent. They both hailed from the north-east of the German speaking part of Europe. Her father was born in Pomerania in 1831⁴ and her maternal grandfather, Hirsch Biebergeil (who, following his immigration to England, called himself Henry Beaver), was a native of Schwetz, near Gdansk. Marie Arndt's mother, Bertha Beaver (nee Kuehlbrandt) was born in Poland. It was this branch of the family tree which produced some of the well-known German artists she later met up with, namely the painter Julie Wolf (later Wolfthorn) and her brother, the sculptor Georg Wolf (or Woolf).⁵

Mina Arndt's father (in whose memory she was named) died a month before she was born.⁶ Marie Arndt moved the family away from the rural estate her husband had managed for Bendix Hallenstein and shifted to Dunedin. There they survived in genteel, but restrained, circumstances by pooling resources with Marie Arndt's sister Laura Newman and her brother Alexander Beaver.⁷ (Their only remaining relative on Hermann Arndt's side, his brother George, was perceived as a threat to the family and their modest inheritance, and therefore had little contact with the family.) Mina Arndt's perspective on German culture was therefore almost entirely framed by the family history on her mother's side.

Her parents and grandparents had migrated to New Zealand via England, and in her father's case, Canada,⁸ in their search for a home where they could enjoy freedom from persecution on any grounds. Most of the Jewish settlers who arrived in New Zealand from England originally hailed from the low countries and the Baltic region, which they left to escape Napoleon's empire and his anti-Semitic policies.⁹ Towards the middle of the 19th century the Ashkenazi Jews of central Europe were experiencing renewed political and social discrimination, which encouraged them to join their British counterparts as these migrated to the New World. Arndt's understanding of her German heritage was therefore of a conflicted nature,

⁴ Lake Wakatipu Mail, 1885, (n.p.)

⁵ MAFA, genealogical research.

⁶ Lake Wakatipu Mail, 1885, (n.p.)

⁷ MAFA, taped interview between Rae Arndt and Patricia White (n.d.)

⁸ Lake Wakatipu Mail, 1885, n. p.

⁹ Rosenthal, 1991, p. 8.

coloured by her awareness of the marginal position Jewish communities occupied in central European societies.

Given the circumstances of her family's immigration to New Zealand, it is not surprising that Arndt's family sought to integrate as fully as possible into the polite society of late 19th century Dunedin. At the time, Dunedin was a prosperous community offering exceptional educational opportunities for both girls and boys. Marie Arndt, who could proudly point to a well-educated, upper-middle class family background, was determined to provide her children with the best educational opportunities her modest means allowed for. In that sense, it can be argued that Marie Arndt cultivated in her children an acute understanding of educational achievement as a signifier of social status, which in Germany had afforded her family as much social recognition as their wealth. She encouraged her daughters to become part of what the Germans call the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the well-educated middle-class. (Perhaps she hoped that this would also increase her daughters' prospects of an advantageous marriage to suitors from a similar, educated Jewish background.) It is this perspective which shaped not only Mina Arndt's expectations of her professional opportunities, but also prepared her for her later engagement with Berlin's art world.

Arndt spent all her school years in an education system for Gentiles (Scottish Presbyterian or Anglican), in line with the generally high level of integration of Jewish settlers in the wider community of the district.¹⁰ Accordingly, Arndt's family was firmly rooted and actively involved in communal life in Dunedin, but the importance they attached to their Jewish background is borne out by the fact that none of Arndt sisters married outside their faith. Therefore her upbringing already engendered transnational perspectives in the young Mina Arndt, introducing her to a sense of being the same, but also different, in relation to her wider social context. That sense of shifting perspectives (or multiple markers of identity) was further deepened by the nature of her professional training.

In 1905, Marie Arndt moved with her three daughters to Wellington, to be near her only son, Charles Henry Arndt. For the next two years, Mina studied art and design at Wellington Technical School, focusing on drawing and some aspects of design.¹¹ In 1907, Marie Arndt and her daughters travelled to England.¹² It is not clear why the family left New Zealand, but in the spring of 1905, Charles Henry Arndt had died in mysterious circumstances while travelling on business.¹³ It is likely that the family was seeking solace and new beginnings by embarking on a 'grand tour.'

¹⁰ Beale, 1995. From 1892 to 1897, Mina Arndt attended George Street Public School, before she enrolled at Girton College for Girls in 1898, a private school which prided itself in 'thoroughness of understanding in all subjects taught.' This, in Mina Arndt's case, included additional tuition in Latin and while at Girton College she also developed an enduring interest in poetry. An inclusive vision of the arts, and interdisciplinary understanding of the arts therefore formed an essential plank of her earliest, educational experiences.

¹¹ ATL, MS Y23.

¹² New Zealand Freelance, 1907, p. 1.

¹³ New Zealand Freelance, 1905, p. 1.

Following her arrival in London, Mina Arndt sought to complement the utilitarian nature of her training in Wellington (designed to support the economic aspirations of colonial New Zealand) by enrolling in the teaching studios of well-known and moderately progressive British artists such as Frank Brangwyn and Elizabeth and Stanhope Forbes. On all accounts, Arndt was a conscientious student. She was appointed the class monitor of one of Brangwyn's senior classes¹⁴ and also impressed her Newlyn teachers, where she was one of the more consistent in a constantly changing group of international female art students.¹⁵

The Forbes especially, and their restrained interpretation of the French Impressionist style, had a lasting influence on Arndt. Initially, much of her time in London and Cornwall was taken up with drawing lessons, including life drawing from the nude and clothed model. This points to an early and enduring interest in figure based work, which was a less popular subject in New Zealand. There, landscape painting dominated the annual shows of local art societies, as it was thought to be a genre more befitting a country with limited access to art education and few public art collections. The broader perimeters of European art practice, and ready access to the examples of European figure painting, allowed Arndt to further develop her competence in figure-based work, and to utilise the expressive potential of portraiture in particular. This aspect of her work was further encouraged by her later German teachers.

Mina Arndt and her family arrived in Berlin in the European autumn of 1909. They had come to Berlin to renew contacts with Marie's extended family, and Mina's oldest sister Jenny found work teaching elocution and 'reciting masterpieces of English literature' at the University of Berlin.¹⁶ While the rest of her family appeared to greatly enjoy life in Berlin, Mina was not so sure at first:

I must say, but honestly the atmosphere here doesn't appeal a bit to me. I'm not prejudiced a bit either, cos have been around too much for that & every nation though quite dissimilar in sentiment & everything else has its strong points. But the [Fritzes] in the streets the pictures in the shops, the modern trend in art, in living, it doesn't give one that feeling of freshness & cleanness. I'd rather live in Wellington any day than in Berlin I still say and one can be jolly proud of life in the colonies.¹⁷

It is not surprising that Arndt, following her sheltered upbringing in Dunedin and later Wellington, was challenged by her encounter with early 20th century Berlin, described by Walter Rathenau in 1899 as the 'Chicago on the Spree'.¹⁸ The city's population had in the previous fifty years more than tripled, from 633000 inhabitants in 1864, to an astonishing 2071000 in 1910. It was home to Germany's most advanced technological enterprises and featured the country's first underground railway system. The city centre, the commercial heart of imperial Germany, boasted hundreds of opulent stores, theatres, cinemas and cabarets. Its reputation of being

¹⁴ The British-Australian, 1909, p. 19.

¹⁵ MAFA, Mina Arndt, letter to her family, February 10, 1913.

¹⁶ ATL, Nathan papers, MS1880.

¹⁷ MAFA, Mina Arndt, letter to her family, October 21, 1909.

¹⁸ Lenman, 1997, p. 5.

a place open to innovation in an otherwise conservative country attracted many young artists to the German capital, most notably the Expressionists associated with Die Brücke, who arrived there from Dresden in 1911. Nevertheless, public opinion as to the status of Berlin as a cultural centre of Europe was divided and constantly debated until well into the 1920s. Even within Germany, Berlin was only one of four main artistic centres, the others being Munich, Dresden and Düsseldorf. Thus, while continuously looking over its shoulder to mark its progress in comparison with London and Paris, Berlin was also jostling to become the cultural capital of the newly unified imperial Germany.

As indicated by her remarks in her letter home written in 1909, Mina Arndt, as a young woman of 24, struggled to 'read' Germany (and the German capital) as it presented itself to her at the time. Her fall-back position was that of applying a transnational perspective, that of a native New Zealander, to the urban complexity that was Berlin at the time. She expresses a connection to and defence of the latent possibilities offered by a frontier, colonial society, as compared to the densely occupied and hotly contested cultural landscape of the German capital. She also remained mistrustful of the most radical aspects of modernist art practice, and continued to align herself with artists who sought personal expression in a manner authorized by some of the innovations of late 19th century French art. In that sense, her attitude falls in line with those voiced by the few regular commentators on New Zealand art at the time, of whom Dr. George McKenzie Lester was one of the most progressive:

All progress in art away from the great centres of civilisation is slow, but the comparative isolation of the art world in a colony has this advantage that it compels the artist to independence and real effort. New Zealand has this further advantage that the tradition of great painting which has come down to us through men like van der Velden has not yet been blurred by the passing fashions in art, which in Europe do most damage to the most promising students. The point of view which is characteristic of the time and which some call modern, is influencing and will influence our art, but only insofar as it is truly assimilated by the sturdy and independent spirit of the New Zealander.¹⁹

The idea, voiced by Lester as late as 1926, that modernism represented a potential threat to or contaminant of a national school or style of art, was one widely shared in the early 20th century, and especially so in Europe.

Indeed, Arndt, whether consciously or not, picked up on an important point of public debate in Berlin at the turn of the century. Within the wider debate as to whether Berlin's artistic culture matched or contributed to its standing as one of Europe's leading capitals, the public's perception of the visual arts was the least secure. It was in a climate of general uncertainty about the value and 'true' nature of German art, or more precisely, art as it manifested itself in Berlin, that Mina Arndt orientated herself in the local art scene. There she encountered extremes of practice which arguably exceeded those she had witnessed elsewhere, and which she judged from the perspective of a potential student:

¹⁹ George McKenzie Lester, 1926, p. 13.

We are gradually settling down. Though for my part am not. Have been going to all the different studios here to see where to work in but still cannot decide, it's frightfully hard to know what to do... You can't imagine the Corinth School I went to, I wish you could only see it. Corinth is a marvel but the students as far as I can see are the most poisonous productions. One sees faces painted in a sea of green and purple. Then I went to a show Fritz Burger, he has just opened a school. Am considering that. Yesterday I went ganz allein to a studio in Lutzowstrasse a Hans Baluschek, well known, it's a school for women, but sort of ladylike place where one worships the master & does mostly tidy work. I hate those schools. Then I had an awfully nice not from a well-known artist here, Joseph Oppenheimer, he had given me a few lessons in London about 6 or 8 months after we came to England.²⁰

Oppenheimer in particular modelled for Arndt the transnational life style she may have very well slipped into, had she been of independent means (and a man). A German artist of Jewish origin, he divided his time between Germany, England and Canada. But what all of the artists she considered most closely as possible teachers had in common was their association with the Berlin Secession, meaning they worked outside the narrow, imperial and blatantly nationalistic parameters of the Berlin academy.

On all accounts, Arndt picked one of the best known of all teaching studios for women, that of Lovis Corinth, who in 1909 was at the height of his reputation, before he suffered a debilitating stroke in 1911. His teaching style was not very different to the one practiced by Stanhope Forbes, 'offering firm but encouraging counsel, impatient only toward those who sought to impress him with technical virtuosity or wilfully nurtured stylistic peculiarities.'²¹ His own painting style at the time was characterised by a lightening of the palette and looser handling of paint. As late as 1907, he had been studying the work of Frans Hals and Rembrandt in Kassel, appreciative of the standards communicated by the old masters, but also insistent on his individuality. From there, Corinth's paintings began to gain colour and expressive intensity, and he increasingly concentrated on fleeting impressions of his subjects – his painterly style and subject matter reverberating in a number of Arndt's works.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, Arndt did not master the very genre Corinth (or Oppenheimer and Burger for that matter) excelled at, and that was portraiture of (young) fashionable, urbane women. Arndt seemed to have been incapable of exercising that particular gaze, instead she was most successful in her study of so-called character heads. Her identity as an artist, and the perspective she sought when communicating a sense of place, remained tied to such genre pieces for the remainder of her career.

In terms of style, Arndt followed the German expressionist trend perhaps most closely in her still-lives, so often the vehicle of experimentation for painters anywhere in the Western world. Arguably, her sense of independence, her insistence of a particular

²⁰ MAFA, Mina Arndt, letter to her family, October 21, 1909.

²¹ Uhr, 1990, p. 133.

range of subjects, was encouraged by the two other artists who shaped Arndt's transnational perspective on art, albeit at a different level. Linking her professional aspirations with personal circumstance and issues of personal identity were Julie Wolfthorn and Hermann Struck, also well-known members of Berlin's intellectual and artistic elite.

Wolfthorn was the daughter Marie Arndt's cousin Louise Wolf (nee Neumann), and a prominent artist in her own right. She was, for example, included in the 1905 Hodder and Stoughton book 'Women Painters of the World', in which she was described as 'a Berlin painter of note, and a follower of the modern school of psychological portraiture.'²² Arndt was certainly attracted to Wolfthorn's work: 'What I want to do while here is to work with Julie... I love her style, it's so rational & beautiful in tone & colour. She has been a Paris student & has never altogether lost the influence of both Whistler and Aman-Jean'.²³ Wolfthorn, in terms of her public recognition, was something of an exception to the rule in the art world of imperial Berlin. Not only was she a female, she was also French trained, which, given the patriotic tendencies in German art and art criticism at the time, could have (further) marginalised her position. But Wolfthorn's work was seen by contemporary critics as proof that her training in France had not diminished her ability produce art that was truly German in character. In reference to *Abend in der Mark* (location unknown), a painting portraying a group of rural children, one critic wrote: 'This picture is of such true German sentiment, that the concern that Julie Wolfthorn could have lost something of her German character during her intensive study of the French is completely unfounded.'²⁴

Wolfthorn, a painter of mainly portraits and landscapes, had then learned to frame her work not only within certain aesthetic conventions, but also the nationalist tendencies so evident in Western discourses on art at the time. In New Zealand, the search for a national style in art did not gain full momentum until the 1930s, but already provided a point of discussion well before then – even if that debate, as alluded to above, was somewhat dominated by the British academic position. For Wolfthorn, the deeper truth she sought in any of her subjects was best communicated in informal compositions of everyday locations and 'character types', as had already been the case with some of Arndt's teachers beforehand. She also worked across a range of media, choosing what she thought would best fit any given subject matter, an interdisciplinary approach she maintained throughout her career. Comparatively few of Wolfthorn's works survived the Third Reich, but her

²² Sparrow, 1905, p. 298.

²³ MAFA, Mina Arndt, letter to her family, October 21, 1909.

²⁴ SMBCA, artist's file, Julie Wolfthorn: L. Schulze-Brück, *Die Malerin Julie Wolfthorn*, (copy of an undated, unsourced article) p. 278: 'Dieses Bild ist von einer so echt deutschen Empfindung, dass die Befürchtung, Julie Wolfthorn möge durch ihre eingehenden Studien der Franzosen etwas von ihrer deutschen Eigenart verloren haben, vollkommen unberechtigt.' (Author's translation.) It was with some sadness that I read these comments, and others like it, in the artist files of the National Galerie, Berlin - for any rights to a German national character and nationhood were stripped from Wolfthorn and her family in the 1930s, and the artist herself died at Theresienstadt in 1944. For a more recently published account of her life and work, see Behling and Manigold, 2009.

approach clearly reverberated in Arndt's treatment of their shared subject matter, such as portraits of children and landscapes.

As a graphic artist, Wolfthorn worked for the periodical 'Die Jugend' and in 1902 also designed a poster for 'Vorwärts', the official publication of the Social Democratic Party.²⁵ Thus she moved in the most progressive circles of the Berlin Bildungsbürgertum, and no doubt she provided the introductions which saw Mina herself attend many informal and formal salons around town. Wolfthorn provided a most compelling role model for Arndt. She was a female professional of mostly independent means (until her relatively late marriage), whose perspective on art and life (and art as life) had been shaped outside prescriptive discourses on national styles and expressed in scenes of rural as well as urban contemporary life.

If Wolfthorn provided then an ideal example of female professional art practice for Arndt, from a European and largely urban perspective, it was a friend of Corinth's, Hermann Struck, who clearly put her in touch with her Jewish heritage. Struck (1876-1944), like Wolfthorn, was a member of the Berlin Secession, and may have met Arndt in London during one of his frequent trips to England. Struck was a friend of Corinth's, and the subject of at least two portraits by the latter. He is considered to be one of the most technically gifted graphic artists working in Berlin in the early part of the 20th century, and he taught his techniques to such artists as Chagall, Liebermann and Corinth himself. From all accounts Struck did not have many female students, but he actively encouraged Arndt's pursuit of printmaking, adding another facet to Arndt's cross-(or inter) disciplinary practice. At the time, printmaking enjoyed a general resurgence in popularity in Europe, and added a string to the professional bow of many of Europe's best known artists. For Arndt, the exploration of printmaking was an obvious choice, as one her obvious strength as an artist was drawing.

Struck, as a teacher, did not work in an outwardly authoritarian way. That said, he insisted that every artist should cultivate an individual artistic expression, as befitting their personal cultural context:

Fashions and vogues always pass, but there are eternal values in the individuality of every artist. If someone sings a song, I don't care how loud or how low it is, but it must be his own song, his own melody; we must receive our law from the soil of our country with its characteristic lines, and from the atmosphere of the sky. Artists must free themselves from foreign influences and 'isms' and seek their material from the soil.²⁶

Struck, the highly educated son of an East German Rabbi, had developed a very clear idea of his own song, focusing early on in his career on images of Jewish culture and heritage. An avid Zionist, he migrated to Haifa in the 1920s. There is no surviving correspondence between Struck and Arndt, but one can only assume that he encouraged her include some Jewish elements in her repertoire while 'singing her own song.' What soil her art should grow from may have been a vexed question for

²⁵ VdBK, artist's file, JulieWolfthorn.

²⁶ Rusel, 1994, p. 113.

a young colonial like Arndt, who by 1915 had spent nearly a third of her life abroad. Her study of Struck's depictions of Jewish 'characters' allowed her to transcend such issues, and focus on certain 'types' she considered expressive of national character and values.²⁷

It is not clear how long Arndt may have stayed in Europe had it not been for the outbreak of World War 1, which severely curtailed any further prospects of study or professional opportunities there. In any case, Jenny, following her marriage to Philip Nathan in 1911, had already returned to NZ, along with her mother.²⁸ Edith and Mina left Berlin in the May 1911, to settle for a few more years in England, dividing their time between Cornwall and London.²⁹ Struck remained in regular contact with Arndt during that time, giving her several of his etchings as presents as late as 1914, the year that Arndt began her journey home.³⁰ Arndt arrived in Wellington in February of 1915, where she set up a studio and held a large exhibition of her work in March.³¹ She lived and worked in Wellington until 1917, the year she married Motueka business man Lionel (Leo) Manoy.³² Her house in Motueka featured a studio occupying much of the top floor of the substantial home, signalling her husband's support of her professional ambition.³³

For the remainder her life, Arndt exhibited regularly with the art societies of New Zealand, remained a member of the New Zealand Academy of the Fine Arts (the official title of Wellington's Art Society) and ran summer schools for aspiring painters. The birth of her only son, John, in 1920 dissipated her energies somewhat, but until her death of nephritis in 1926, she produced a substantial number of landscape and figure studies, most of them works on paper. These also included a number of studies of Maori, a subject already well canvassed by the Goldie and Lindauer. Both painters pursued their sitters with the spirit of the ethnologist, but Arndt's images of Maori (in part undoubtedly motivated by her awareness of the popularity of such imagery with the art buying public in New Zealand) lack the markers of 'otherness' usually included in Goldie's or Lindauer's works, such as tiki, patu or moko. In Arndt's works, as seen in *Maori Woman with Pink Scarf* (n.d., Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki)³⁴ Maori serve to communicate the particularities of contemporary life in New Zealand (similar to Struck's unsentimental observations Jews in the Eastern European context). They are integrated into her observations of the people around her, her models, her friends and family.

Arndt's later figure studies in particular seem to suggest that she remained committed to concepts of art practice she had learned abroad, although singing

²⁷ See, for example, works by Mina Arndt held at the Hocken Library, Dunedin or the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. The collections of her descendants contain a number of etchings of Jewish sitters.

²⁸ ATL, Nathan papers, MS 1880.

²⁹ MAFA, Edith Arndt, letter to her family, February 10, 1913.

³⁰ The works Struck gifted to Arndt are still in the collections of her descendants.

³¹ The Evening Post (Wellington), 1915, p. 9.

³² MAFA, obituary, Lionel Manoy (unsourced, undated newspaper clipping)

³³ The house, at 9 Poole Street, Motueka, still features the studio space.

³⁴ For a reproduction, see

<http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/search?searchTerm=Arndt+red+hat&scope=all>

'her own song' in the face of much anti-German sentiment post 1914 would not have been as honest or unrestricted an experience as perhaps anticipated. She furthermore followed the example set by Corinth and more notably Wolfthorn by capturing her immediate environment in informal compositions, avoiding the grand view, the iconic vista dominating much of 19th century New Zealand landscape painting. Motueka and its surroundings became her soil, and in that sense she can be considered one of New Zealand's earliest Regionalists. She also was one of the few female artists of her generation to retain an interdisciplinary approach, maintaining her commitment to drawing, printmaking, pastel and the more experimental technique of the oil wash.

In addition, she sought an international audience for her work, (showing her work in Melbourne and Sydney, 1921; Adelaide and Sydney 1922; Wembley, 1924; Paris, 1926)³⁵ and did not restrict herself to the ambition of being a nationally significant artist only. Her years abroad had taught her that art could serve as the perfect vehicle of constructing a transnational, multifaceted artistic identity. In the end, the complexity of her background contributed to Arndt being positioned on the margins of New Zealand art history, especially as local scholars tried to make the case for a national style in art or attempted to connect New Zealand to the broader narrative and specific goals of modernism. Arndt's story, however, reveals not only some of the diversity of New Zealand's cultural heritage, it also adds to our understanding of the complexity of the social and cultural forces shaping the perspectives of New Zealand artists every step of the way.

Biographical statement

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³⁵ See exhibition catalogues of the *Australian Painter-Etcher's Society*, Sydney 1921, Melbourne 1921, Adelaide 1922, Sydney 1922, Sydney 1924. See also the *Catalogue of the Palace of the Arts – British Empire Exhibition*, Wembley, 1924 and *Catalogue of Salons, Société des Artistes Français*, 1912-1926.

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