CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE: THE LIFE AND ART OF MOYA DYRING

Gaynor Patricia Cuthbert

Batchelor of Arts (Hons.) Department of Social Science, La Trobe University
Graduate Diploma of Arts Management, School of Creative Arts, University of Melbourne

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SYNOPSIS

Changing the Landscape: The Life and Art of Moya Dyring

This thesis brings back into focus the life and art of Moya Dyring 1909-1967, who for a time played an important role in Australian art history. From 1937 she lived mainly in France and during her lifetime produced a substantial body of work, most of which was sold at exhibitions throughout Australia.

Dyring’s early work was figurative, her style strongly defined by the George Bell School and an early foray into Cubism. After settling in France the figures gave way to the constantly changing landscape as she travelled throughout the countryside of France, Spain and Italy. She recorded the life of the country villages the seaside towns and the vistas of Paris. But as her life slowed down in the late 1950s and early 1960s and she travelled less, the figures of children, playing in the parks and gardens blending with the cityscape of Paris, took over from the predominate landscape of earlier years.

This thesis is presented in two parts. The first part takes the form of a biography, reconstructing the life of the artist from letters and interviews. Fifty six letters were sent to John and Sunday Reed by Dyring, over a period of thirty years and are now held in the archives of the State Library of Victoria. These letters and other relevant archival material have been used to reconstruct the life of the artist in consultation with family members and friends. Secondary sources, including catalogues and relevant art historical texts have provided additional knowledge of significant people and events that have had an impact on the artist’s life, such as John and Sunday Reed, Sam Atyeo and Herbert and Mary Alice Evatt. The second section studies her work and the critical reception it received. It places the artist in the context of her own history, her art practice and art history as it relates to Dyring’s gendered experience, politically and personally.

Lack of knowledge of the artist’s life and work has contributed to her being almost completely disregarded in exhibitions of women artists working in the thirties, forties and fifties. Her contribution to the emerging modernist scene in Melbourne and the part she played in the circle surrounding John and Sunday Reed at Heide, has been reduced to a few lines in art historical texts, yet a studio in Paris bears her name in homage to a great supporter of fellow artists. She had a rare gift for friendship and extended generous hospitality to a large circle of friends and young artist visiting Paris from Australia. Like so many women artists of her generation her place in history has been ignored and her art forgotten. This thesis tells her story and places Moya Dyring and her art and life, back into the landscape.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that –

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work except where indicated in the preface,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the thesis is 30,000 words in length, inclusive of footnotes but exclusive of tables, maps, appendices and bibliography.

[Signature]
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Heide Museum of Modern Art has been particularly generous in lending material and inviting me to give public lectures about my research over the past two years. Thank you to Rosalie Dance, the Education Officer and Heide staff for your help and support.

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Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends who have given me so much support while I undertook this research thesis. To my husband Graeme who has accompanied me on all my trips interstate and overseas to gather information, and my daughter Amanda who constantly irons out technical problems, proofreads and advises, I most definitely could not have done it without you.

Guy Cuthbert
Melbourne, October 22nd, 2002
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SECTION I

Changing the Landscape
The Life and Art of Moya Dyring
FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Moya Claire Dyring was born on the 10th February, 1909 in Coburg an inner suburb of the city of Melbourne. She was the third of four children, her younger sister Pat was born 11 years later, her conception interrupted by the World War I. Dyring's mother Dagmar was a descendent of the Cohn family in Bendigo, a family whose name became a household word in Victoria for over a century, and was the first brewing company to produce lager beer in Australia. Her father, Carl, a doctor, had been a family friend before marrying Dagmar Cohn, his second wife. His father had travelled to Australia from Denmark with the Cohn brothers in 1853, in search of fortune on the Bendigo goldfields and ultimately took on a new life in Australia.

Dyring's family tree had Danish roots on both the paternal and maternal sides, as the original Cohn, Isaac Brehrend, was part of the Jewish wave of migration from Germany to Denmark at the end of the Eighteenth Century. Several hundred Cohns are listed and many pictured in the Cohn family record and they share two characteristics; strong Christian names and strong facial features. Matilda, Moritz, Bertha, Julius, Leo, stare out from their old fashioned black and white photographs with a direct, piercing gaze under wide, high brows, within broad faces. Features, that no amount of marrying out has been able to genetically disperse.

Reading some of the background details of past generations of the family reveals that artistic ability seemed to proliferate and architects, designers, horticulturists, and musicians were an important part of the family history. Dyring's aunt, the sculptress Ola Cohn, converted an East Melbourne Cobb and Co. coach house, into a studio residence in 1931, giving lessons and offering meals and a bed to many of Melbourne's artistic community. It was here possible that Dyring was introduced to the artistic ambience that she herself was to establish in Paris twenty years later.

1. Dyring on the right with Rosa and Carl.

Early family photographs of Dyring, by herself or with her brother and sister, are conventional poses, the girls in white lace dresses, long white socks and floppy white hair ribbons. Figs. 1. & 2. It is obvious that they lived a privileged lifestyle though it was not quite conventional in some ways. When World War I broke out Dyring's father served as an officer in the Australian Medical Corp in Egypt. Dagmar decided to join him there and was appointed matron at an AIF hospital in Cairo. Five year old

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2. Dyring with long plaits before she cut them off. ‘Bub’ was the family nickname for Dyring.
Moya, brother Carl and sister Rosa, were left with relatives in Bendigo for the duration of the War. After the War they moved to Brighton where Dyring attended Firbank Girls Grammar, firstly as a day girl, then for a period as a boarder when her parents took Carl, Rosa and Pat on an extended trip through the Australian outback. She was a good all-round student excelling at studies and sport, particularly golf, swimming and tennis. Some of this success is reflected in the fact that in her final year she became Head Prefect. After the War her father retired and both parents devoted their time to developing the extensive gardens at ‘Mahabba’, their home in Brighton.

Father designed the garden and made the decisions about what was planted and mother picked and arranged the flowers for the house, and we had a full time gardener of course, was how Pat remembers this part of her life with her parents and family at Brighton. A calm well ordered life, of tennis parties, afternoon tea and croquet on the lawn, only Dyring disturbed the peace. She designed and made clothes which were outrageous and no one else would have been allowed to wear, yet no one seemed to take any notice, according to her sister.

I don’t think we expected anything else, but now I look back on it I realise that she was making a statement. And she would chat to my friends while she took a bath, I think it was the first time some had seen a naked body, I was the most popular girl in school.

After Moya’s last day at school she locked herself in her room and cut off her long plaits. She didn’t come out for two days she knew how much it would upset her father and it did, but it all blew over very quickly, everything Moya did blew over. ‘If I’d done it’ said Pat, ‘it would have been different’.

In 1928 Dyring and her sister Rosa went on a European tour. They were unchaperoned which seems unusual for two girls of 18 and 22 in the 1920’s, yet perhaps it was in keeping with the liberal attitude of the Dyring parents who galloped off to the War and left their children with relatives. They stayed with brother Carl, who was in college in London training to be a surgeon and then went on to travel Europe. It was while they were in Paris that Dyring first saw the Ill St. Louis and fell in love with it. She remarked later in her life, that it was on this first trip with her sister that she decided she would eventually live in Paris.

There is no family memory or record of Dyring painting or drawing before she started art classes in Melbourne, yet there seems little doubt that she knew what she wanted to do. On her return to Melbourne in 1929 she immediately enrolled in art classes at the National Gallery School, training under Bernard Hall. Her father turned a garden shed into a studio for her which Dyring decorated in orange and black. Sam Atyeo, a fellow student came for lunch and to meet the parents. Dyring’s mother approved but Pat believed her father never liked him.

Father only ever said one thing about him after he came home for lunch, he said; ‘well he had

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2 Personal Interview with Pat Boyes, March 2001
3 Ibid
4 Ibid
5 Personal interview with Judith Innes-Irons, April 2002
6 Bernard Hall was Director of the NVG and head of the NGV school for 43 years.
nice hands'. I think that was the only nice thing he could say about him and father was the sort of person who never said anything nasty, but he conveyed a lot with that statement.  

After Dyring's father died in June 1931, life changed for the entire family. Dagmar decided to sell their large home and move to an apartment. Rosa and Carl had married and Pat was sent to boarding school so there was only Dyring left and she was very rarely at home. Dagmar and Moya moved to a flat in Malvern and Atyeo decorated Dyring's room with striped wallpaper in silver, cream and green with black furniture, Pat thought it was beautiful but the rest of the family disapproved. Dyring set up her studio at the top of Melbourne's Little Collins Street, close to the artistic hub of the city which Alister Kershaw referred to as "our own antipodean Chelsea, our Greenwich Village, our St. Germain des Pres."8 ‘The Petrushka’ which Dyring always referred to as ‘The Russian Cafe’, Gino Nibbi’s Leonardo Bookshop, a seedy French restaurant, a few art galleries and John Reed's Office, were all situated within this area. Dyring’s studio became a popular venue, and she became famous for her parties; "with bodies all over the floor in various stages of lovemaking,"9 according to some reports.

Dyring’s desire to enter into the Melbourne National Gallery School was quite a natural one for anyone wanting to study art in Melbourne at that time. There would have been little to choose from in 1929 and the conservative teaching and conservative reputation of the school within the Melbourne Establishment, made the choice obvious. Under Bernard Hall she would receive a thorough if narrow grounding in tonal realism, progressing from drawing busts and casts with charcoal on paper, then life classes, first in charcoal and then in paint and finally admission into the painting school. Hall believed in the massing and grouping of light and shade into a traditional tonal mode, with emphasis placed on Royal Academy and Paris Salon standards of excellence. Knowledge of the radical stylistic experimentation from France and Germany was certainly available to art students in books and prints, these could be viewed at the State Library or purchased from Gino Nibbi’s bookshop, but the practice of modernism was not taught at the National Gallery School.

Modern developments in art emanating from Europe were censored by the strict buying policy of the National Gallery of Victoria and the high protective tariff levied against artworks entering Australia. The art loving public of Melbourne had to be protected, as modernism as perceived by the conservatives, was akin to barbarianism, heralding an eventual slide into moral decay. The national value and virtue embodied in the pastoral vision of the Heidelberg School, must be upheld at all costs. Despite Dyring’s experimentation with Cubism, her friendship with Atyeo and the other ‘moderns’ she

7 Personal interview with Pat Boyes February, 2001
persevered at the National Gallery School, graduating after three years. Her survival technique shared with Atyeo and others from the school, was to become a frequent visitor at the newly opened and more sophisticated art school of George Bell and Arnold Shore.

Sam Atyeo

Atyeo was well established at the National Gallery School by the time Dyring became a student, and they formed a relationship. Both would have been attracted to the vivid personality of the other. This was not an attraction of opposites as both had a dynamic zest for life and a quick wit. Atyeo was an early devotee of Jazz and he possibly converted Dyring. Neither was afraid to be different or attempt the outrageous, but while Dyring was content to confine her eccentricities to outrageous clothes, wild parties and an early conversion to Cubism, Atyeo was far more public in his rebellion.

Between 1930/31 he won three prizes culminating in the prestigious Grace Joel Scholarship. But his 1932 submission of the painting A Gentle Admonition for the coveted travelling scholarship, was rejected by Bernard Hall. This stiff, stylised portrait of Hall with two naked women, following the theme of Lot scolding his daughters, was disqualified by Hall for contravening regulations, but was obviously of great embarrassment to him. The Sun reported that, “it did not conform to traditional standards, it was considered ultra modern.” The portrait was subsequently acquired by Edward Dyason a Melbourne financier and mentor to Atyeo. The painting was later displayed in Fred Ward’s Collins Street shop through the invitation of Cynthia Reed.

Atyeo’s circle of friends included young designers commencing their professional and artistic careers. Fred Ward studied art and engineering, and from 1927 had started to design simple, functional furniture incorporating Australian wood. John Reed shared a house with him after returning from law studies at Cambridge and it was through this association he began to take an interest in the artistic life of Melbourne. Cynthia Reed and Ward opened a shop together in 1932, promoting modern furniture and interior design. Atyeo joined them as a designer after giving up painting while he remained in Melbourne in 1934, and through the patronage of Dyason carried out some major projects, including

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10 Dyring was obviously very fond of Jazz as there are many references to Jazz bands etc. in letters to the Reeds. Her sister believes she was introduced to Jazz by Atyeo, as she does not remember hearing Jazz played at home. The Reeds called her ‘Fat Bottom because of her love of the music of Fats Waller.

11 Also known as Lot Admonishing his Daughters

12 The Sun December 20th, 1932

13 Cynthia Reed was John Reed’s sister and supposedly a partner in Fred Ward’s furniture design shop, although this appears to have been a very casual arrangement.


15 Phipps, J. Atyeo Catalogue. Conversation with Mr. Fred Ward p.12
the facades and interiors of The Equitable Building and Regency House in Melbourne and the design and interior decoration of Dyason's main house at Narbethong.

But he continued to give lectures on modern art at his studio, and was often called on to use his skills as a decorative artist to embellish walls for major events. Many of these were controversial but one caused a furore in the press in 1934 when he painted a mural of naked Aborigines for the Victorian Artists Society's ballroom decor, to mark the Centenary of Melbourne. He was asked to cover certain parts of their bodies with fig leaves so he put them over their faces.

John Reed described Atyeo as: "Perpetually restless and active, articulate and never satisfied to passively accept authority, his vivid personality influenced everyone with whom he came in contact".16

Undoubtedly, his influence on Dyring as a young student was pivotal, particularly as Dyring matched him in spirit and in her need to be outrageous and different. Her early forays into Cubism while still a student at the National Gallery School, could be attributed to her visits and occasional classes at the George Bell School, but it was Atyeo who opened her eyes to new experiences.

3. Sam Atyeo  The Thinker  c.1933-1935
This painting reflects Atyeo's view of art as an intellectual and experimental exercise and his efforts to interpret space in Cubist form.

In his public lectures he constantly preached against the exact rendering of nature as art and the obsessive need by most people to link art to formal realism.

Almost all painting in Australia is landscape painting of eucalyptus trees, a few still lives, nudes and portraits. Most pictures are casual, i.e. taking nature as it is, without even arranging it (no design)...everybody seems to like what they see outside imitated on the walls inside.17

And he was very fond of quoting Shopenhauer. "Art is only art when it is not nature".18

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17 Phipps, J. Atyeo Exhibition Catalogue 1982 pp. 34-35
18 Ibid p.32
Jennifer Phipps, who curated the Atyeo Retrospective exhibition at Heide Park and Art Gallery in 1982, believed that he occupied a singular position in Melbourne in the 1930's because he struck out on his own in interpreting European art after post-impressionism.

He did not accept the status quo, to join in with the prevailing 'modern' art practices of George Bell, Jock Frater and Arnold Shore in exploring post-impressionism. He believed in the organic nature of art, an idea he shared with John and Sunday Reed, and that painting should start gesturally, "the hand being the tool of the brain." His first abstract work, and the first abstract painting in Melbourne, Organised Line to Yellow was shown at the Contemporary Art Group Exhibition in 1934. At this stage in his life, according to Phipps, he had come to terms with abstract art but in fact between 1934 and 1936 when he finally left Australia he painted very little, apparently he became disenchanted with the Melbourne art scene and most of his energies went into architecture and furniture design.

Atyeo's major asset was his ability to attract people to mentor and foster his creative output, and himself as a creative individual. Cynthia Reed and Fred Ward, Edward Dyason, John and Sunday Reed, Dr Evatt and his wife Mary Alice, were major players in the Atyeo saga. Attracted by his restlessness, intelligence and creativity like moths to the light, they flocked in times of need. He was also very attractive to women and had numerous affairs before and after his marriage to Dyring. Although his friendship with Dyring culminated in their marriage in 1941 was known to everyone at the time, he had a well publicised affair with Sunday Reed during 1935 and 1936. The affair ended when he began to make it clear he would travel overseas and although Sunday suffered from a nervous breakdown at the time, it appears this did not affect Atyeo's friendship with the Reeds, or their belief in his talent.

He also shared a close relationship with Cynthia Reed, from their first meeting in the early 30's until 1940. In letters to Sunday, Cynthia made it clear she was very fond of Atyeo, and despite her close friendship with Dyring, made a last ditch attempt to secure some sort of understanding with him before he married Dyring. She visited him in Barbados on her way to Australia at the outbreak of the war and became pregnant. Their child Jinx was born in May 1941, but obviously no understanding was reached as Cynthia returned to Australia alone and pregnant, calling herself Mrs. Hansen. She never

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14 ibid
15 ibid p35
21 Letters sent from John Reed to Sunday while she was staying at her parent’s home in Sorrento suffering a nervous collapse after the break-up, suggest that Atyeo and Dyring were visiting Heide regularly and there was still a deep friendship between them all. In one letter he writes "I haven’t seen Sam today so I can’t tell you anything you don’t know as I expect he talked to you for hours last night (at Dyason’s expense)" John Reed Letters
22 Cynthia spent the winter of 1940 until the beginning of Spring with Dyring in Vence in France. A letter sent to J. & S. Reed and postcards to her mother confirm this. Cynthia left Vence to return to London and from there catch a boat to Australia, but made a detour to the West Indies on the way home.
saw or spoke to Atyeo again. It was many years before anyone, including Dyring, knew Jinx was Atyeo’s child.

The most enduring influence on Atyeo’s early life came from Herbert Evatt and his wife Mary Alice. Evatt was a Judge of the High Court of Australia when he met Atyeo in Melbourne in the early 30’s and both had a lasting effect upon the other. Evatt was attracted to Atyeo’s quick wit and intelligence and Atyeo, to Evatt’s knowledge of modern art and his willingness to champion the modernist cause. The Evatts bought art and were generous in their patronage and Atyeo and Dyring introduced them to the up and coming young intelligentsia of Melbourne. In 1942 when Atyeo and Dyring were living in the West Indies, Evatt, by then Minister for External Affairs in the Curtain Government, invited Atyeo to become his private secretary. From that time on until Labour lost government in 1949, the lives of Atyeo and the Evatts were closely bound together.

Judgie and Mas

Herbert Vere Evatt was born in Maitland in the Hunter Valley in 1894, the third in a family of six boys. His father died when he was seven and his mother moved to Sydney to be closer to an extended family so she could work to support them. Evatt attended Fort Street High and the University of N.S.W. on scholarships, passing the Intermediate Examination in the Faculty of Law in 1916. He was called to the Bar in October 1918 and announced his engagement to Mary Alice on the same day.

Mary Alice Sheffer, Mas to her friends, was a clever, articulate girl, chocolate box pretty, with blond hair and blue eyes. She came from a wealthy family, attending Redlands, a private girls school on Sydney’s fashionable North Shore. At university she studied architecture because of her talent for art and design, but art was her real love and after her marriage she took art lessons. Her marriage to Bert united the Capitalist Shellers to the socialist Evatt but it was a marriage of true minds, Mary Alice had a mind of her own, a stoicism and strong will inherited from her father and a keen sense of social justice. They were unable to have children and adopted Peter and Rosalind in the 1930s.

They were described by Rosalind to me as; “The most in love couple, totally devoted and dependent on each other, always asking advice of the other. They were a unit, a total unit.” Evatt was a real intellectual, consumed with ambition yet tortured by the contradictions of his personality. He worried constantly about his and his family’s health to a point where he wore newspaper under his clothes to ward off the cold, carried cough lollies and a variety of tablets in his pocket to cover all emergencies

23 Tennant, Kylie, Famous Australians, EVATT; Politics and Justice, 1970. Angus and Robertson, Melbourne
24 Personal interview with Rosalind Carrodus, February, 2001
and was always careful to keep out of draughts. When he walked Rosalind down the isle on her wedding day he crackled and rattled but he had covered every possible pitfall, nothing was going to mar her day.  

His children loved him dearly. He was a marvellous father, loving and thoughtful and while Rosalind could look back and see how he must have affected others at times, to her he was a kind and caring man who always had her best interests at heart. The children’s birthday parties were planned by their father and he always took part in the festivities. He made up stories for Rosalind which he would tell her every night after he got home and as much as possible he would pick them up from music lessons and attend school activities.

Described by his peers and his niece Justice Elizabeth Evatt, as “a rare lawyer”, he believed that you must fulfill social aims with justice according to law, but it was justice above all that he stood for and he championed the poor and oppressed. By 1930 Evatt became a judge of the High Court, at 36 he would be the youngest judge to take this position. The Evatts had a holiday house at Leura in the Blue Mountains by this time and he travelled frequently between Sydney, where they had a home, Leura and Melbourne, as the High Court sat for six weeks each in Sydney and Melbourne. In Melbourne they stayed at hotels, which Evatt hated because they were cold and full of draughts. So Mary Alice found a flat and set out to furnish it and because of her love and knowledge of modern art was drawn to the furniture shop of Cynthia Reed with its prints of Van Gogh hanging in the window. From Cynthia they bought furniture and paintings from the exhibitions Cynthia held of the young Melbourne modernists.

While Atyeo takes credit for converting Evatt to modernism and Jazz, it was his own insight and responsiveness to change that attracted Evatt to the modern movements. Also the influence of Mary Alice, a painter herself, closely involved with the modern art milieu of Melbourne. Already well travelled, they purchased English and European modern art when it was unknown in Australia and it is more likely that they improved Atyeo’s knowledge with their collection, which included Picasso, Modigliani and Vlaminck. But it was after an initial meeting with Atyeo and Cynthia and his introduction to the Reed Circle that Evatt became a self appointed protagonist for modernism in Australia and the champion of the Heide group. Cynthia, typically irreverent, called him ‘Judgie’ and the name stuck.

25 Ibid
26 Ibid
27 ‘Doc’ A Portrait of Dr. Herbert Vere Evatt. ABC Documentary 1995 Film Australia.
28 Tennant, Kylie op.cit.
29 Ingram, Terry, Financial Review. Friday October 31st 1980. p.41
30 Crockett, Peter. Evatt a Life, 1993. For a discussion on the early days of Evatt’s involvement with the modernist movement. pp 21 & 22
But Atyeo did make an impact upon Evatt and it started with his dress sense or lack of it, at their first meeting at Cynthia’s furniture shop. His visit to the gallery/shop was probably encouraged by Mary Alice and Atyeo, who worked there on a part time basis was minding the shop. “In walks this old guy in butterfly collar, cravat, lavender waist coat, black tails, striped pants, button up boots and black Derby hat.”

Evatt was about 38 at the time and Atyeo obviously wasted no time telling him how old and dated he looked. As the story goes they hit it off and went out for lunch and Evatt asked for his help, “as I obviously look 40 years older than I should,” so Atyeo took him to a store and he bought some more up to date clothes.

It was the beginning of a friendship that was to steer Atyeo’s life on a different course and for Dyring, who would eventually hitch her star to his, it was the beginning of a friendship with the Evatts and particularly Mary Alice, that would last until Dyring’s death in 1967. Atyeo was clever, articulate, witty and irreverent, he made Evatt laugh and later as Evatt’s secretary he was considered to be Evatt’s eyes and ears on the world.”

At their first meeting Evatt was impressed with Atyeo’s rejected gallery painting, Lot Admonishing his Daughters, which cocked a snoot at the academic painting of the National Gallery School, also he was impressed and sympathetic with this new school of artists seeking to express the rapid transformation of society with radical imagery and innovation. When Robert Menzies, then the Federal Attorney-General, proposed and founded an Australian Academy of Art in 1937, ostensibly to promote art generally, but in reality to provide patronage for the conservative, realist artists, Evatt was among the first to oppose it.

The new Modernists were politically motivated, aligning themselves with the Communist wave sweeping Europe in retaliation to Fascism. Many joined the Communist party which became fashionable for a while among the avant-garde, but as Kylie Tennant observed in her biography of Evatt: “Evatt had enough political sophistication to know that people did not stay in the Communist Party – they passed through it on their way to somewhere else.”

He was impressed with the prescience of the Melbourne art movement and championed their cause at every opportunity, believing that artistic innovation went hand in hand with political change and he backed this up by buying art and being available to open exhibitions.

Dyring’s solo show at Riddell’s Gallery was among the early exhibitions Evatt was supposed to have opened in Melbourne. Because of ill health he travelled to Melbourne the day after the exhibition, giving a press conference the following week in which he attacked the proposed Academy of Art. Ironically, while Dyring was sympathetic with the aims of the Reed circle and had no time for the

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31 Ingram, Terry, Financial Review article p.41
32 ibid
33 Tennant, Kylie. Letter from Sam Atyeo reprinted in Evatt, Politics and Justice. P.100
34 ibid p.98
conservative elements of the Melbourne art scene, she seemed not to be politically minded, in fact her family described her as apolitical and she was certainly not in sympathy with the radical element which was forged in opposition to the Academy of Art. She constantly fell out with her friend Adrian Lawler on the subject as he drew the battle lines at every social event and waged a war in the print media. She was ‘bored’ she wrote to Sunday Reed, after a night out with at the Russian Café, “about Adrian going on and on about his paper attacking Menzies, in fact everything that has anything to do with the art controversy and he is truly worked up about it, but he is boring, rather he bored me.”

At a party which the Evatts organized for Dyring, to celebrate her success, Evatt launched into a bitter attack on the Melbourne establishment, much to her horror and in the same letter to Sunday she wrote; “he became worked up at times and almost vicious making personal attacks and then on the academy business until I thought he would never stop.”

Dyring was worried people would be upset, but not too many were, most of them had heard it all before and were sympathetic with his views, “and only a few that mattered,” were not in agreement. Evatt’s views, as usual, received wide press coverage, adding to the controversy already surrounding the establishment of the Academy. His plea that, “Australian galleries should be induced to buy or borrow modern pictures,” drew an immediate response from the Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, J. S. McDonald and was reported in The Sun newspaper a few days later. “I don’t think we should have modern art in the gallery at all.”

Uppermost in Dyring’s mind as she wrote her letter to Sunday Reed was the fact that her exhibition had been well attended and the critics were very favourable. She had not sold many paintings but had expectations that more would sell, and she was being encouraged to think about studying in Paris by her mother and the Evatts. Dyring had been upset about Evatt’s late arrival in Melbourne to open her exhibition and skeptical about his claims of illness, but was now concerned because of his obvious signs of ill health and she wrote to Sunday: “I was surprised at how sick Judgie looked when he first came over, his clothes were hanging loosely on him but he looks better now.” She related all the details of the cocktail party and the fact that she was able to invite as many people as she wanted and that Judgie had arranged for one of his friends to make cocktails, a typically kind gesture, which made the night a success despite the outburst.

Both Herbert and Mary Alice were amongst those who encouraged Dyring to follow Atyeo to France after her success at the Group 12 exhibition a few weeks later. With the promise of fares and a trust

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35 Letter to Sunday Reed June 6th 1936. Reed Estate
36 ibid
37 ibid
38 The Herald, Melbourne. 3rd June, 1937
39 The Sun, Melbourne. 5th June, 1937
40 Letter to Sunday Reed undated. Reed Estate.
fund from her mother Dyring made preparations to sail to America and then Paris. In 1938 the Evatts took a year's sabbatical, visiting America, London and then Paris to visit Atyeo and Dyring. Through Atyeo, Evatt met a Jewish refugee from Germany and heard at first hand the situation that was unfolding in Germany with the build up to war and the exclusion of the Jews from German life. He believed Australians were totally unaware of what was happening in Europe, and Australia was unprepared for a war that seemed inevitable. He told Dyring and Atyeo that on his return to Australia he was intending to resign his position on the Bench and go into politics.

In September 1940, Evatt stepped down from his position as Judge of the High Court and sought nomination for a seat in the forthcoming election in the Barton electorate. John Curtin eventually headed the reformed United Australia Party and Evatt became the Minister for External Affairs. He set about gathering together a group of brilliant young men with academic, legal and media backgrounds, a move that was to become a hallmark of his career, surrounding himself with intelligent, handsome, young protégés. Eventually Sam Atyeo would become one of the group taking him and Dyring from their island home in Barbados to the wartime activity of New York and Washington.41

41 Kylie Tennant commented in Chapter 10 'If Medal for Bravery', *Famous Australians EVATT Politics and Justice*: these brilliant young men he attracted were like adopted sons. He was patriarchal moving in a herd of secretaries, dependents, relatives and friends. p.131
George Bell

In February 1932 the Bell-Shore School opened in Bourke Street, Melbourne. It was a collaboration between the artist and teacher, George Bell, and the artist and stained glass designer, Arnold Shore. Students were enrolled either full-time, or weekends but the school was also a venue for the Gallery School students and others of like mind who wished to promote an intellectual exchange of the new modernist ideal. For Dyring and Atyeo it was almost a home away from home, Dyring often participated in the life drawing classes, although she was never a student. During this period Dyring painted the portrait of Sunday Reed, who was a student at the school for a short time, and Mary Alice Evatt painted Dyring in a work titled *Seated Figure*. The lure for Dyring and Atyeo were the discussions and lectures given by Bell explaining his theories and the principles of modern art. He encouraged debate and experimentation, yet to his students he was authoritarian and stubborn believing that you went with him or went under and there was no compromise.42

Bell taught modern art with a classical approach, placing great emphasis on drawing: Drawing was the major discipline occupying about two-thirds of teaching time with the emphasis on life drawing from the model. Bell taught drawing on the principle that an understanding of the figure frees you to do what you like with it, to use it to express an idea for instance.43

Bell believed in simplified forms posed against a flat background, using colour to support the form rather than tone, a departure from the tonal structure and realism of the academic painter. He was a complex, dogmatic teacher who taught strictly to a set of rules, yet he encouraged individuality and creativity in his students, passing on his knowledge of Cubism, Surrealism and Abstract Art. “He eschewed copying, believing that to reproduce any artists work or slavish adherence to modern ideas; “only led along a cul-de-sac from which it was difficult to return”.44

As June Helmer argues in her assessment of his contribution to the art movement in Australia, it was his ‘influence’ not just as a teacher but as:

a leader, a critical writer and as an artist (that) made him one of the heroes of the modern movement.45

His formation of the Contemporary Art Group and the New Melbourne Art Club, his art reviews in the *Sun* and his outspoken criticism regularly voiced at his lectures and art openings against the conservative elements of the Melbourne art establishment, provided a sense of history in the making.46

But by the late 1930’s he also had his detractors, Albert Tucker, the Reeds and Atyeo all speaking out

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46 St. John Moore, op. cit. p.24
against Bell’s narrow, rigidity of beliefs. A new generation of artists was concerned with politics and the social condition. They were looking towards recent developments in modernism from Europe, such as German Expressionism and Surrealism as sources for their art. John Reed argued that Bell was a man of his time who played an important role in the battle of modern art and the formation of the CAS but was unable to move on.

What he overlooked, according to Helmer, was that Bell’s pioneering work and his radical and intellectual experimentation of the thirties paved the way for the politically motivated, social realism of the forties. Radical and intellectual development didn’t start with Reed and his group, the artists that remained loyal to Bell and his teaching, founded their style on the Bell principles and then went on to cultivate their own unique signature. Artists such as Russell Drysdale, Peter Purves Smith, Alan Sumner, Constance Stokes, Sali Herman, Dyring and many other students of the school, were just as talented and enlightened in their creativity, as the politically motivated Albert Tucker, Noel Counihan, Arthur Boyd and Yosl Bergner.

Richard Haese believes it was the pervasive concern for the humanist ideal given form through Surrealism, Expressionism and Social Realist modes of art which saw artists such as Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Noel Counihan, Arthur Boyd, Yosl Bergner and others, determine their respective aesthetics. All the writers seem to be arguing over the genesis of the creative well-spring of modernism, and clearly there was an intellectual experimentation that arose quite independently of Bell’s teaching and philosophy. It seems to me there was a constant search for intellectual stimulation that led artists to bounce from one well-spring to the next, pausing briefly to absorb sustenance and then move on in search new ground to fill the vacuum. Also quite clearly the group that surrounded Bell was one such forum, and there were many others: the Boyds at Murrumbeena for example. Also as Nancy Underhill points out, portrait artist Lina Bryans, a former student of Bell, was a key cultural force in the 1940s and 50s. Her home Darebin Bridge House, was the centre for a very diverse intellectual community that included Adrian Lawler, Danila Vassiliiff, Jock Frater and after 1945 Ian Fairweather, but her contribution has been overshadowed in the attention paid to the group at Heide.

Though conventional himself Bell supported unconventional imagination when it surfaced in his students, such as the originality of Purves Smith, or the inspired work of Russell Drysdale. In spite of the opinion of Atyeo “I think Bell’s school is good for grey people to learn to paint - like they would go somewhere to ride a bike”, and John Reed’s belief that he had passed his use by date, Dyring

49 Eagle, Mary Peter Purves Smith - a painter in peace and war 2000 p.77 Beagle Press, N.S.W.
50 Letter to Sunday Reed, South Yarra. No date. The Reed Papers.
remained friends with Bell who opened her solo exhibition in Melbourne in 1937.

**John and Sunday Reed**

Between 1932 and 1933 Dyring was to meet the people who would continue to play an important role in her life as they would in the life of Atyeo. John and Sunday Reed, John’s sister, Cynthia and Herbert and Mary Alice Evatt. The Reeds, at the time Dyring met them, were newly married, living in Marne Street, South Yarra. She probably first met them at the George Bell School, which Dyring and Atyeo frequently visited as Sunday took classes there and John attended lectures. Later Mary Alice would join the group, taking lessons at the School when she and Justice Evatt were in Melbourne.

Both the Reeds came from privileged backgrounds, Sunday was a Baillieu, an old establishment Melbourne family and John, a Cambridge-educated lawyer, came from a family of Tasmanian graziers. In 1934 they bought a former dairy farm at Heidelberg, fifteen acres of degraded land and scrubby bush running down to the Yarra River, which they named ‘Heide’. Both had become familiar with the area before they married, driving to the ‘country’ to exercise John’s German Shepherd, falling in love with the area that had nurtured the ‘Heidelberg School’. Artist friends were made welcome at Heide, books, paintings and lively conversation were abundant, and gardening was a constant occupation. John and Sunday were nurturers, to each other, to their home and garden and to their friends, Dyring quickly fell under their spell and happily remained there for the rest of her life.

In 1933 Atyeo showed 25 paintings at the furniture/design gallery of Cynthia Reed and Fred Ward at the larger shop they had moved to at 367 Little Collins Street. By then he had become disenchanted with the teaching and attitude of Bell and moved on, taking John and Sunday with him, but not before Dyring painted *Sunday*, a portrait of Sunday Reed, (Fig. 5) while Sunday was still a student at the school. Dyring continued to be part of the Bell circle with many of the students of that time visiting her in Paris after the war. Her portrait of Sunday wearing a blue sun hat with a large flower pinned to her shoulder, showed the influence of Cezanne, one of the many styles Moya was experimenting with at this time. Maudie Palmer described this painting as “belonging to this exploratory phase of an inchoate Australian modernism.” But this oscillating habit, swinging from Cubism to Impressionism, Post Impressionism and then back to lyrical Cezanne, was not just a beginning for Moya, it was the way she was to paint for the rest of her life. What never changed was her ability to capture the moment and the soul, as in this little painting of Sunday staring down at the cat in her arms.

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51 Background notes for the Committee of Management of Heide Park and Art Gallery, put down by John Reed. 8th October, 1980.
In 1934 Dyring travelled to Sydney boarding with a family in Dee Why. She had drawing lessons at the studio of Rah Fizelle and Grace Crowley, describing them in the letter to Sunday Reed as “very charming!!! so perfect and unemotional, so good so very good in their own way their painting I mean but oh so cold”. A shark had just taken a surfer at Bondi and Moya recalled a conversation she had with Sunday about being eaten by a shark. The letter to Sunday dated 14th March was in return for one she had obviously just received; “Your letter was the most exciting thing that happened today”. Dyring wrote. She was homesick but she enjoyed Sydney very much, many years later when living in Paris, she was quoted in People Magazine naming Sydney as the only Australian city she could live in if she returned to Australia. The family she was boarding with “predictably Australian, not being able to think any further than cricket and bridge” were relatives of her mother and the lifestyle would
have been similar to Brighton, Tennis parties and afternoon teas. Soon Dyring moved on, taking a room in a large, old house becoming friends with the young men renting the stables, Donald Friend and Wolfgang Cardamitis, both students at the Sydney school of Dattilo Rubbo and on weekends they all painted together. Pat remembers spending her school holidays there, being painted by them and falling in love with Wolf, the youngest one. Dyring's Portrait of Pat, Fig. 6 was done during one of these holiday visits and was bought by Dr. Evatt at the first exhibition of Dyring's work at Riddell's Gallery. Years later it was presented very formally to Pat by Evatt, at what she could only describe as an 'audience'.

We, (Moya, Pat and their mother) were ushered into a reception room near his office and asked to wait. When he finally appeared he presented the painting to me, chatted with us for a moment and then left, I felt like I had just had an audience with the Queen.\(^{56}\)

The Portrait of Pat, 1934, Fig 6. shows a solid little girl resting on her folded arms. The eye is drawn to the red collar of her dress and her red lips but the composition is dominated by the dark mop of hair which intensifies the contrast between the brown eyes and the pale face and sets the figure squarely in its landscape of cloudy skies. Like the Portrait of Sunday, Fig. 5. the space is flattened by using the same light tones in the background and foreground.

Even at this early stage Dyring was writing to the Reeds to ask their advice about her work, sending them a drawing from her art class, and asking for criticism, connections that were to become an integral part of her communication with the Reeds for the rest of her life. Talking about the eagles she had seen on the trip to Sydney, and the dove that woke her every morning on the pine tree near her window, the books she was reading, the shows she was seeing. Art, life and nature were the ties that bound her to John and Sunday Reed.

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\(^{56}\) Interview with Pat Boyes, 20th Feb. 2001
It was during her stay in Sydney that the first mention of 'Bob' occurred in Moya’s letters to John and Sunday Reed. Cynthia Reed, nicknamed ‘Bob’ by her family, apparently because of her masculine looks, was also staying in Sydney and for a time at least attended art classes with Dyring. Together they went to see the film ‘I’m no Angel’ starring Mae West and shared a book by D. H. Lawrence. Both wrote to Sunday Reed about these experiences but the tone of Moya’s letter was ‘I wish you were here to share this with me’, whereas Cynthia wrote “ah, ah, ain't we one up, oh we're very privileged.”

The relationship between Dyring and Cynthia was close and affectionate, Dyring becoming protective about her friend as time went on, worrying about the fact that she drank too much and played too hard and paid the price. ‘Bob’s’ love of the good life clashed with her delicate constitution, and her black mood swings dominated her life, playing havoc with relationships between family and friends. In 1934 they were just two young women in Sydney, away from family restraint, enjoying themselves but it was at this time that Dyring began her intermediary role between Cynthia, and John and Sunday, who saw her as difficult and disruptive. Over the years she kept them informed about Bob while smoothing the waters, as in this letter from Sydney:

Bob and I have had some lovely days together she is very well lost the dark rings under her eyes and enjoying life ever so much. She seems to have re-adjusted herself and found a bright outlook, is not drinking at all here but breathing and coughing such a lot.

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57 This statement came from Phillip Jones but another story is that her father nicknamed all his children after his dogs.
58 Letter from Cynthia Reed to Sunday and John, 1934. Reed Estate
59 Letter to John and Sunday Reed from Dyring in Sydney, 14th March, 1934. Reed Estate
After Cynthia’s death in 1976, Lady Maie Casey wrote in an obituary in *The Age* “Perhaps her greatest attraction was her voice unlike anyone else in quality travelling from high to low. She had a pale face shaded by dark hair and lovely eyes.”

Her eyes were apparently very light blue and many described her as attractive, but in old fashioned photographs the vibrant voice and lovely eyes that Lady Casey found so fascinating, have no effect. Instead the faded vision of a pale flat face with dark rimmed, deep set eyes take on a ghost like, rather sad appearance. In photographs she rarely smiles.

While Dyring was in Sydney, Atyeo was a regular caller to the Reed’s home in South Yarra and went on a camping holiday with them to the Wyperfield National Park. He began an affair with Sunday at this time which John knew about and sanctioned as he did about her later affair with Nolan. Letters from Cynthia and Dyring to the Reeds, always included references to Atyeo who they obviously assumed would be spending time with the Reeds or at least was in constant contact with them. Whether or not Dyring knew of the affair is hard to say, but while Sam and Moya were considered to be an ‘item’ at that time, Dyring could not have been under any illusion about his playboy reputation, and his relationship with Sunday was common knowledge among their circle of friends.

**Impressions and Influences**

The influence of Atyeo and Dyring, but particularly Atyeo, on John and Sunday Reed, who were to champion modernism in the years ahead, was pivotal. The Reeds were newly married and in the first flush of shaping their lives together. Atyeo and then Dyring, prepared to overstep the boundaries that were just being tentatively breached, were the proof of progress and change through experimentation and the Reeds wanted to be part of that change. And Atyeo and Dyring needed champions, brash and confident in their personalities they lacked conviction in their work and both felt the lash of the critics, particularly Sam, who as an experimental painter often faced hostile criticism.

Both were couples making their first tentative steps together, and like all young people starting married life, or in the case of Dyring and Atyeo, shared life together, sought the company of other young people. Moya and Sunday had a similar upbringing of wealthy families and private schools and while Moya’s family were not as wealthy as the Baillieu family, she also had a private income which allowed her some degree of independence. The difference between them was that while Moya flouted conventions to a certain extent, she never compromised her close relationship with her family, and to

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60 Casey, Maie *The Age* Newspaper: Maie Casey was part of the early Melbourne Modernist scene, taking lessons from George Bell as well as buying and promoting modern art. She became friends with Cynthia Reed in the early 1930s and they remained friends until Cynthia’s death in 1976.
the extent that she wanted, moved easily within whatever social milieu she chose. While for John and Sunday there was a "risk and pain associated with living outside social conventions" which ultimately caused strained relations with Sunday's family.\textsuperscript{61} 

Dyring was ever mindful of who might come to her next exhibition and who might buy her paintings, and throughout her life never missed an opportunity to add to her network of gallery and press contacts. But she was also discreet about her affair with Atyeo, and later John Reed, because although she was unconventional herself Melbourne was still a very conservative city in the 30's and 40's and for the sake of appearances, and particularly her mother's sensibility, Dyring maintained an air of respectability, albeit eccentric and outrageous at times. Moya's charm was that she attracted lifelong friends from every walk of life, and to this day her friends and relatives speak of her vibrant personality and her genuine interest in the lives of the people around her, with love and affection.

In any article on modernism of the early 30's Atyeo and Dyring are forever linked as much by their early experimentation and subsequent escape from conservative Melbourne in 1936 to Paris, as by their relationship, culminating in their marriage in 1941. Both Dyring and Atyeo exhibited daring works resulting in mixed reactions from the art establishment. Both broke away from their gallery training, Atyeo to be the first non-objective painter and Dyring becoming the first women in Melbourne to exhibit her early forays into Cubism.

Then as the story goes they went to France, spent some time in Dominica and America during the War, with Dyring only returning a few times to exhibit her work. In fact they left Australia a year apart, Atyeo in 1936 and Dyring in 1937. Dyring returned to Melbourne for a while after leaving France at the beginning of the German occupation and both came to visit their families after World War II ended. Dyring returned every three years, in the fifties and early sixties, spending up to a year each time as her work was exhibited throughout Australia and New Zealand. Dyring always thought of herself as an 'Aussie' she never referred to herself or her Australian friends in Paris as being expatriated.

With her large Melbourne family and close circle of friends with whom she corresponded frequently, Dyring remained in touch with current developments in the Contemporary Art Society and trends in both the Melbourne and Sydney art scenes. She kept her Australian friends in touch with what was happening in the American and European galleries, constantly sending reports to John and Sunday Reed about this and that exhibition, Matisse and Cezanne were her favourites. Current catalogues, art books and prints were sent to Heide, as well as drawn illustrations accompanying detailed reports of exhibitions she liked and disliked. Her letters to the Reeds, after 1950, related frequent trips to Italy, Spain and the French countryside usually with friends, and they always contained descriptions of gardens, or at least the local flora and fauna, obviously a shared interest. Seeds, leaves and even moss

\textsuperscript{61}Burke, Janine, Ed. *Dear Sun*, William Heinemann, Australia, 1995. p.16
and feathers accompanied the details of birds and plants. As well, Dyring never missed sending Sunday a letter and present for her birthday.

Moya's love of gardening and her belief that the garden should provide food and environment for the home, possibly stemmed from her parent's pre-occupation with their garden at Brighton, but the time she spent at Heide elevated this to a passion. Pots of herbs at the kitchen door, bulbs planted to flower in the Spring, fresh produce from the local market, lavender grown to make things smell sweet, constant references to gardens, food and cooking was a philosophy she shared with the Reeds. As John and Sunday Reed developed the garden at Heide when friends such as Sam and Moya came to visit or stay they were expected to dig and plant. Or at least Dyring lived up to that expectation, Sam thought it was beneath him. "Sam slept in the sun" John wrote to Sunday, "poor old Moya worked her fingers to the bone".62

The time Dyring spent at Heide working in the garden at weekends and caring for the house and garden when Sunday was in America, became part of a shared love and tie with the Reeds that was to last all her life. Every change of season in Europe reminded Moya of what was happening to the trees and flowers at Heide, and every letter asked for more news. She believed passionately in Sunday's preoccupation with perfection in her housekeeping and garden, "living takes so long if one lives properly".63 Even the smallest apartment in America would have herbs flourishing in pots around the kitchen window, and Heide lavender in the linen press. Later in the fifties Moya's regular studio dinners and her open door policy to visiting artists, reflected the life she had loved at Heide. In her book Dear Sun, Janine Burke makes the point that friends were made so welcome at Heide they did not want to leave, or when they did were inextricably bound to the place, and this certainly applies to Dyring.64

62 Reed Papers - Letters to Sunday from John Reed, 19136. Reed Estate  
63 Reed Papers - Letter to Sunday Reed from Dyring, June 1937. Reed Estate  
GOING SOLO

Dyring’s solo exhibition in Melbourne was held without some of her closest friends present. By 1937 Atyeo had left London and was living in Paris with his Melbourne friend Kenneth Von Bibra, and Cynthia was in London training to be a nurse at St. Thomas’s Hospital. Sunday Reed had been travelling in America with her companion Clare Pitblado, or ‘Doodie’ as she was known, and at the time of Dyring’s exhibition she was just about to leave America for New Zealand. Dyring had been spending most of her weekends at Heide in Sunday’s absence, working in the garden, cooking for John and the friends who dropped in and stayed for a meal and putting the finishing touches to her paintings with John’s help. Both John and Moya wrote constantly to Sunday while she was away with details of almost every aspect of life at Heide.

The night before Sunday left on her trip, Dyring arranged a dinner party to farewell her and later, unable to sleep wrote a letter that she hoped would be waiting for Sunday in America when she arrived. It is a revealing letter about love and friendship, Sunday’s unhappiness and ill health and particularly Dyring’s love for John and Sunday and the complex relationship the Reeds had with their friends. Moya had arranged a dinner at The Petrushka Cafe, or as Dyring called it, ‘The Russian Cafe’ with Adrian Lawler and his partner Connie. Sunday, had apparently been in a good mood that night which must have been a welcome change because Dyring wrote:

Tonight for the first time your bitching witch left you and you had glow of an old self I had not seen for many long days and you seemed happy but a nervous sort of happiness that could not last...I hate knowing you are not happy about going, I hope in America you get to the bottom of it.66

Sunday left the cafe early, perhaps to finish packing, and Lawler started an incident which led to a fight. “Adrian attacked John and I saw red and saw him in a true light. Most people all they want is something for nothing, and the whole while where are your friends?”.67

The week before Dyring’s solo exhibition at Riddell’s Gallery was hectic as she worked hard to finish her paintings and arrange the opening. She spent a lot of her time at Heide, at least every weekend and sometimes longer “I have been at Heide House all this week, the days have flown past without me bothering to even look up a while”,68 with John giving advice as she completed her final paintings.

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65 ‘Doodie’, Sunday’s companion, was a former maid of the Bailleau family.
66 Letter to Sunday Reed June, 1937 Reed Estate. Sunday Reed suffered from continual poor health and because she contracted syphilis in her first marriage was unable to have children. In this letter Moya refers to the fact that Sunday will never have grandchildren.
67 op.cit
68 op.cit
Late Autumn and early Winter at Heide was freezing in 1937, Moya wrote to Sunday,

But the cold Sun freezing everything and I guess it would have almost killed you, how John loves it. For me it was fun breaking ice on the horse troughs in the morning watching ice on the wattle, spruce and cedar, walking over old jack frost running down the hill your footsteps leaving marks behind, then you see some little plants eaten up worst of all your cherry pie, cause I know how you feel about your front door cherry pie.\(^{69}\)

As the exhibition drew closer pressure built up as Dr. Evatt who was to open the exhibition, sent a telegram to say he would not be arriving early as planned, because he thought he was coming down with something, and Kenneth (a friend of John, Sunday and Moya) who had been spending a lot of time at Heide while Sunday was away, “sniffing after Moya”\(^{70}\) according to John, caught the flu and could not help them hang the paintings. Moya took it very personally, particularly Dr. Evatt not being able to travel at the last minute, writing to Sunday “Christ I felt let down...what a fuss is made about illness in that home.”\(^{71}\) In fact as his daughter Rosalind confirmed, Evatt was obsessive about his and the families health, but in this case his fears were real as Maya later reported to Sunday;

I was surprised at how sick Judge looked when first he came over his clothes were hanging loosely on him but he looks better now.\(^{72}\)

John arranged for Basil Burdett the art critic to direct the hanging of the paintings and he and Moya climbed the ladders to get them hung, and George Bell agreed to open the exhibition.

It’s been John for everything, how grand he has been, without him to lean on God knows he seems to have the knack of doing and suggesting things at the right time”. And after everything was finished John took her to a movie and then dinner at the Petrushka and home to Heide. Never have I been so glad to see a white cottage before.\(^{73}\)

The exhibition opened on Monday 26th May 1937 and was considered a great success. An estimated 500 people attended the opening at Riddell’s Gallery with its wooded floor, and in Dyring’s next letter to Sunday she reported: “Everyone was packed as tight as sardines and Mr. Riddell and his boyfriends thought the floor would fall in”.\(^{74}\) Only three paintings were sold on the night, one, _Melametha_, a Cubist painting was bought by John Reed for the Heide collection, and another, _Portrait of Pat_, done in the style of Cezanne, by Dr. Evatt, but others were sold over the next few weeks and Moya’s mother and the Evatts believed she should go overseas to study. The exhibition was also widely reported in the press as solo exhibitions of a women artist was a rare event and the fact that she was a modernist was rarer still.

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\(^{69}\) _op.cit_

\(^{70}\) _op.cit_

\(^{71}\) Letter to Sunday Reed, May 24th 1936. Reed Estate

\(^{72}\) Letter to Sunday Reed, June 6th, 1936. Reed Estate

\(^{73}\) Ibid May 24th, 1936

\(^{74}\) Letter to Sunday Reed, June 1936. Reed Estate
Not unexpectedly she got a good review from Basil Burdett, The Herald Art Critic who wrote;

the significant thing about Miss Dyring is that she is experimenting - always a healthy sign in a young painter.\(^5\)

Another critic from The Herald was a little confused about the whole question of modernism and even more confused about how he conveyed it to his readers.

At Riddle’s Gallery Miss Moya Dyring, a modernist, shows a number of pictures expressive of her depicitve attitude concerning art and its relationship to nature. To grasp with any degree of coherency Miss Dyring’s point of view the normalist must purge his mind of any ingrained prejudices concerning tone values and literal definition, and approaching his subject in a state of aesthetic dehabillitation must endeavour to gauge its significance fairly from a purely modernistic standpoint.\(^6\)

All the critics including Basil Burdett agreed that Dyring was full of ideas and ready to tackle anything. She was young, inexperienced and experimental they acknowledged, and her direction lacked clarity, but she was making a serious attempt to explore the possibilities of art with all the echoes of the modern masters. Her use of colour and feeling for form were rare in Australian painting and should be noted with interest.

The Group 12 exhibition, one month after her solo show was held at the Athenaeum Gallery, Melbourne, was also a triumph for Dyring although both she and John Reed felt the show was mediocre. She had continued her stay at Heide and with John’s help re-worked a painting she called ‘my blue painting’. The four paintings she exhibited were widely praised, John told Sunday in his next letter they were probably her best work. The pressure was really on her now to travel overseas and she decided that America might be the best place to study for a while. Her plan, she wrote to Sunday Reed was that she might stay in San Francisco for a while, travel through Mexico and perhaps study in New York. But as she could get little information from travel agencies in Melbourne Dyring decided the best way to go was to travel to Panama on the liner ‘Eridan’ leaving Sydney on August 6th, and then get to America the best way she could. The American Vice Consul explained to her that she may be able to study in America but it was more likely that she would not be allowed to land on American soil let alone travel in America unless she had a ticket booked to another destination outside the United States. But Dyring was determined to go:

There is an abstract urge to make me leave Australia something I cannot analyse, it may be a feeling that there is a notch in America somewhere for me but as far as I can work out, the desire to go there is just the same urge that helps me to paint, when you know what muck is being done when you see the mess and see the atrocities you do yourself, thinking you will give up but before you know where you are there is a brush in your hand and a pallete on the table and you have started again\(^7\)

\(^5\)Burdett, Basil, *The Herald*, Monday 24\(^{th}\) May, 1937


\(^7\)Letter to Sunday Reed, sent from Heide, June 19th 1937. Reed Estate
Sunday Reed returned two weeks before Dyring left for Sydney and she and John threw a party for her in a restaurant in the city. Pat remembers this occasion very clearly because it was the first and only time she met Sunday Reed, and Sunday was crying. "It was such a happy time for Moya, why would someone cry I wondered. I had no idea they were such good friends, although I knew Moya saw a lot of John". In fact Pat had met John Reed on many occasions when she visited Dyring's studio in the city from boarding school. Pat had bands on her teeth and had to attend a monthly session with a Collins Street orthodontist. Having a sister in the city meant she was allowed to travel on her own and after each appointment she visited Dyring in her studio. Invariably, Pat told me, John would be there and over a period of time she realised they were very close. She said she didn't realise at the time they were having an affair because unlike Dyring at 17, Pat was very innocent and naive. She was not able to read the signs, she said, until after she married. At this stage her sister and John were always together when she met them, either at Dyring's studio or at a restaurant for lunch, and she believed they were just very close friends.

Dyring stayed at Heide until she left Melbourne: "I packed my bags and walked out of Heide, catching the train to the city, clutching some Heide lavender". After a visit to her sister Rosa at Albury she arrived in Sydney to stay with the Evatts before sailing. It was rather a fraught time because Dr. Evatt was taking an unaccustomed holiday and was very touchy:

Judge had a holiday, that's always bad, he and Mary Alice bickered for two whole days, both seemed glad to see me but they were very possessive, Mary Alice wanting me to do one thing and Judge another till I almost went silly with the conflict.

Sunday Reed rang her to say the vaccinations she had in Melbourne might have an adverse affect, which they did and she wrote to Sunday from the boat that once the reaction set in she hardly remembered anything until she got on board.

**America and Paris**

Dyring's first letter to John and Sunday from the boat described her fellow passengers with accompanying drawings, the crew and the food. "I don't trust the crew they are dirty but decorative in their blue clothes against the sea, their faces a cross between an abo and Pablo's blue period". The boat docked at Noumea on the 14th August and must have stayed for a few days as Dyring left the boat as soon as it tied up and travelled into the hills to stay on a farm. She was only able to pack watercolours which she found very inadequate for the vibrant colours but she wrote long letters to the Reeds about every aspect of her stay including all the vegetation, geography, birds and of course the

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78 Personal interview with Pat Boyes, February, 2001  
79 Ibid  
80 Letter to John and Sunday Reed, 9th August, 1937. Reed Estate  
81 Ibid  
82 Letter to John and Sunday Reed from the Eridan. August, 1937. Reed Estate
8. Drawing reproduced from letter to John and Sunday Reed from Dyring. Dyring's amusing anecdotes about her fellow passengers were accompanied by drawings, this one she called 'Rat Face'.

9. Drawing of a bird that Dyring could see flying around the ship as she wrote to the Reeds.
people she stayed with and the meals they ate. (Fig. 8 and 9) are reproduced from letters she sent to the Reeds during the trip to America in 1937.

After travelling through New Caladonia and Tahiti the boat finally docked in Panama where Dyring discovered she could not travel on to America unless she bought a ticket to another country, "Impulsively I decided France - Paris for the exhibitions" although she had not given up on America and believed she could find out about the possibility of art classes in Washington to return to at a future date. From Panama she caught a sea plane to Cuba and then Miami and then took the Greyhound bus across America to New York. From the coffee stops and overnight stays along the way, Dyring sends letters to the Reeds sharing detailed descriptions of each moment of her travels, everything she sees, hears and does, written in a rush of words. The major theme of all her letters is the flora and fauna and the gardening notes, often she sent seeds and leaves and at one point she sent pressed wildflowers as well because she finishes with ‘let me know if the wildies keep’.

At Washington Dyring visited The Phillips Gallery describing the artwork she has seen to John and Sunday as: “Rouault - Clown, 3 figures - fair. Gone off Rouault. Matisse - still life - bad. Rousseau - Notre Dame - bloody fine.” This went on and on written on tiny pieces of blue paper she must have been holding in the palm of her hand as she walked around the gallery. In Philadelphia she stopped off to visit the Pennsylvania Museum to see paintings by Picasso and Cezanne.83

In New York, Dyring visited all the Surrealist galleries seeing the work of Salvador Dali, Rene Magritte, Giorgio De Chirico and Max Ernst. Her biggest thrill was a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art where she saw ‘the best Pablos I have every yet seen, an immense Miro, a lovely Ernst and some exciting Vincents’. Dyring soaked up the atmosphere in New York going to the top of Radio City, drinking a cocktail in the Rainbow Room, and travelling on the underground. She was impressed with the bookshops particularly the ones selling second-hand books, which had ‘a million things I’ve seen and wanted’ sending John and Sunday a book on Surrealism by Julian Levy and recommending many more. She saw all the latest films and listened to as much Jazz as she could, went to the World Fair and made some valuable contacts among the dealers and gallery owners in New York. Her last few days were spent buying presents to send home for Christmas for her family and the Reeds.

Dyring arrived in Paris at the end of November 1937, it was very cold after New York and she had trouble acclimatising to the weather, food and language but her reunion with Atyeo was a happy one. He had been painting and selling some of his work. He was in better health than when he left Australia. Dyring was impressed to see how physically fit and happy he looked. She wrote to the

83 Letter to John and Sunday Reed written on her bus trip to New York. Late August, 1937. Reed Estate.
Reeds that she was surprised with his work, "an advance on anything he has done, perhaps his best he has just sold to an American for 10,000 francs." Yet she felt in some ways he had not changed at all "he is just as nervous as ever and I don't think he likes Paris very much, or the French. He won't speak French though he speaks well and understands lots".84

Dyring moved in with Atyeo, enrolled in French lessons and also art classes at the Calarossi Art Academy where she drew three days a week but with no tuition. She found a studio to share with an American girl and wrote to John and Sunday to tell them she had been to an exhibition at the Petit Palace and seen some interesting work by Modigliani, Braque and Picasso. She had cooked Chicken Maryland for their Christmas dinner and hung herbs in her kitchen to remind her of Heide.

In January, Dyring wrote to Sunday and John from Avignon where she was waiting for her mother and Pat to join her, telling them about the holiday they had spent in Germany. "German beer, a tiny white pension with a white bed and feather eiders, low windows looking out onto snow and trees god, it was marvellous".85 They skied, made friends with some German students, sang German songs. But it was the latest Surrealist show she and Atyeo had seen in Paris that took up most of the letter. It was obvious from her letters to the Reeds from New York that Dyring was not taken with Surrealism, but if she had any doubts, the Paris exhibition put them to rest. "We came away feeling the whole thing was the biggest racket ever and let down, and so would you chaps". Salvador Dali whom they saw arriving, left them singularly unimpressed, "a slick little Mexican type absolutely saturated with sickly perfume, a slick little moustache and a suave black fur coat".86 They left feeling depressed and sad that for once in their lives they had to agree with the general public.

In Avignon, Dyring and two of her cousins, Johnnie and Ruth were waiting for Dagmar and Pat who landed at Millefranche on the 17th February 1938. The French were in British mode in the 20's and 30's as English tourists flooded the scenic southern coastal areas. Avignon, Nice, Monte Carlo and Cagnes sur Mer where the Dyring family stayed, had a distinctly British bias which Dyring disliked because she felt a lack of affinity with the British. "So many hotels, so much English, it's put me off wanting to go to England for a while." And she thought the beaches were terrible; "I try to walk by the sea and find no sand and it's too cold to swim".87 But travelling with her mother and sister gave her the opportunity to discover places she may not have got to for quite a while as her mother paid for the accommodation.

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84 Letter to John and Sunday Reed 20th December, 1937. Reed Estate
85 Letter to John and Sunday Reed, January 1938. Reed Estate
86 ibid
87 Letter to John and Sunday Reed. March 1st 1938, from Monte Carlo. Reed Estate
Vence, a Hill Town a few kilometres from Cagnes sur Mer, made a lasting impression;

One place I am going back to live for a while perhaps is Vence tucked away in the mountains with rivers and terraced lands, orange trees and colours of brogue greys, ochres and soft green olive trees.\(^ {88}\)

Although Dyring complained in her letter to the Reeds that she was not working they did spend some time painting together because Pat remembers them working hard. She remembers her sister and the cousins drawing, and Atyeo with his designs, and they were practising their French. Eventually Dyring was able to return to Paris as her mother and sister left France to continue their tour of Europe. In June Dyring did visit London to see Dagmar and Pat who was attending a design college. She wrote to John and Sunday that she had seen ‘Bob’ and visited her at the hospital where she worked. “She looks extremely well and seems to have grown a bit.” War talk was constant but London lacked the tension of Paris, Dyring believed. Her mother had just returned from Germany and they believed war was inevitable.\(^ {89}\)

The Evatts were on a whirlwind tour of Europe and on her return to Paris, Dyring was able to catch up with them. Atyeo introduced the Judge to some Jewish refugees who confirmed his fears of impending war and the Nazi push for domination. Evatt believed Australia was unprepared and apathetic, he asked Atyeo to keep him informed of the war news from Paris.\(^ {90}\) As the situation worsened Dagmar summoned Dyring back to London and Atyeo went as well. In a letter to Sunday Reed, Dyring wrote:

This is a birthday letter but it will be all about war and bombs and things. You see being in London you can’t think about anything else. Paris was better but mother made demands and here I am, thank god not for long as its blown over for a while. London is a hell of a place and I like it less and less each time I come, now its full of gas masks, trenches in the park and enormous posters for ARP, and what’s even worse its so cold.\(^ {91}\)

England was very depressing and by this stage Dyring preferred the French attitude. But the talk of war suddenly ceased, there wasn’t going to be a war and for a short while everyone tried to return to normal. Dyring was able to return to Paris and she wrote in the birthday letter that she was planning to have a summer holiday with a friend on the Loire and Atyeo was taking a bicycle trip with friends to the south of France. Dyring was expecting her mother and Pat to come over for Christmas.

\(^{88}\) Ibid
\(^{89}\) Letter to John and Sunday Reed. June 4th from London. Reed Estate
\(^{90}\) Tennant, K. *Famous Australians EVATT Politics and Justice*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970. p.179
\(^{91}\) Letter to Sunday Reed, October 3rd from London. Reed Estate
Towards the end of 1938 Atyeo purchased a property on a few acres on the outskirts of the hill Town of Vence, a primitive little cottage of a few rooms and stone floors with no electricity or water. Water had to fetched from a tank outside, the rooms lit with oil lamps and all the cooking had to be done over the fire. It was situated in the Alpes-Maritimes, a farming and flower growing district, he would have visited the area with Dyring when they all stayed near-by at Cagnes sur Mer. It was convenient to some of the most spectacular scenery in the South of France, just a stones throw from Nice, Monaco and the Cote-d'Azur and just a few hours drive to Provence. Over the years this area had attracted many artists such as Van Gogh, Matisse and Renoir who had lived and painted in the area.

After the invasion of Poland by Germany on the 1st September, 1939, and the declaration of War by Britain and France, it was generally believed the Germans would invade France. Atyeo and Dyring moved to the cottage in Vence as they believed it might be taken over by the locals if it was left vacant in time of War, or perhaps by the Germans if they invaded France. Not long after they moved from Paris, Atyeo was offered a job on the island of Roseau in the West Indies, designing a home on a plantation. Dyring would follow when they believed the house was safe but for the time being they felt she should stay.

Now that Dyring was living in the countryside of France it was a worrying time for her family in Melbourne, especially as the War escalated and winter approached. Dyring sent weekly postcards to her mother (relating all the small details of her days at the farm,) although she could never be certain if they would get through. At the beginning of October she wrote; “Dear Mum, not much news this week except I’ve had tooth ache and a visit to the dentist in between picking figs am anxious to hear if your are getting all my mail” By the 9th October the tooth had been removed, Dyring was roasting chestnuts, still collecting figs and had decided to make wine as she had so many grapes and they were difficult to sell. Cynthia had written and was coming to stay before Christmas. By the 22nd October the winemaking was a success, Dyring had spent a day in Nice having lunch at the Russian Restaurant, “which was still maintaining its standard”, and had just received news of Pat’s marriage, “have posted off a night-gown hope it arrives but have my doubts” which indicated that Dyring was probably only receiving intermittent mail from Australia as Pat was married the previous month, the 23rd September.

Over a very cold Christmas of 1939 Cynthia stayed with Dyring for four months. Soldiers from the French army were stationed nearby and they could hear them practising in the hills. In April she wrote to John and Sunday Reed “it seems too crazy in these peaceful surroundings to hear boom boom all

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92 Personal interview with Dyring family members on 2nd February, 2001.
93 Postcard to Mrs. C. Dyring, Melbourne, October, 1939
94 ibid 22nd October, 1939
Over a very cold Christmas of 1939 Cynthia stayed with Dyring for four months. Soldiers from the French army were stationed nearby and they could hear them practising in the hills. In April she wrote to John and Sunday Reed: “it seems too crazy in these peaceful surroundings to hear boom boom all day. Those and the mistrals make me mad.” In the same letter she told them about Cynthia’s visit, how she had arrived from London tired and unwell but Moya writes that she left in better health:

A transformation took place in 4 months that you would never believe her tiredness almost gone her cheeks almost rosy, life again in her big blue eyes and a shine in her hair. Dyring was sorry she had to leave after enduring such a cold winter and not seeing the result of the planting they did for Spring. But Cynthia was returning to London to pack up her flat and go home to Melbourne.

Dyring made friends with her neighbour whose husband was a soldier as were most of the local men. They all appeared to be stationed nearby and were able to return to keep an eye on their farms, but Dyring wrote that she did not know how long this would go on for. Many of them grew flowers for the market and Dyring passed some of the time helping to harvest the flowers at dusk and gossiped to the locals about their men who were away. She usually got up at 6.00 in the morning to paint and feed her rabbits and chooks. Sometimes she went into the market in Vence with the vegies she has grown and comes home with bread, cheese, tea and coffee, “so the days go by to weeks and months”. Letters she sent to her family at the time apparently indicated that her life was hell, and while she appears a bit more optimistic in her letter to the Reeds, reading between the lines suggests that she is certainly depressed and very uncertain about the future. Iler drawing, her garden and her local friends keep her occupied and she falls into routine which passes every day; but her comment “I am relatively happy in a half-alive way” says so much about her personality which makes the best of things, finds people she can talk to and food and wine to make a good meal. Dyring caught the last boat out of Marseille as the Germans got closer, her Hlmily finally convincing her she may not be safe. She sailed for Australia on the liner ‘Ceramic’ which was involved in a collision at sea near the coast of South Africa. The experience made a lasting impression on her, although in her typical manner she made the most of the two months she was forced to stay there waiting for the boat to be repaired. She earned some money teaching art at a local school and made a few trips inland to paint and visit a rock art site.

95 Letter to John and Sunday Reed. Reed Papers
96 ibid
97 Letter to John and Sunday Reed. Reed Papers
98 ibid
99 This information was available from a number of sources, a family interview was my first source but further details came from a magazine article. People, June 3 1953. p.14
Home Again

Back in Australia, Dyring took a flat in South Yarra and leased a studio in the city for a few months, not far from John Reed's office in Collins Street. She would pop in to see John at his office and he was frequent visitor to her studio during lunch breaks. The affair they began in 1935 was resumed for the short time Dyring was in Melbourne. Perhaps the catalyst and the security was knowing there was going to be an end to it as Dyring was determined to join Atyeo in the West Indies. Because of the War Dyring could not obtain a visa to the West Indies in Australia and although she could book a ticket from the American coast to the islands from booking agents in Melbourne, she could not actually purchase the ticket until she had a visa. Therefore, it was necessary to travel to America and cross to the East coast as she had done before. As well, she could not live in the Catholic West Indies with Atyeo without being his wife, so she had to marry him by proxy before she left Australia. John helped her with all these arrangements and obviously filled in her lonely moments as well. Even the indomitable Moya must have had doubts about travelling half way around the world to live with Atyeo in the jungle.

There is a certain irony in the knowledge that the first affair between John Reed and Dyring in 1935/36 must have coincided with the affair between Atyeo and Sunday. The second time, in 1941 must have happened at the beginning of Sunday's well publicised affair with Sidney Nolan. Janine Burke’s
dealers. She arrived at Roseau on the Island of Dominica to find a messy situation. Douglas, the plantation owner appeared to have romantic ideas about the house design and viable crop management, and the day to day running of the estate seemed to be falling on Atyeo's shoulders. I would not have believed there was any hint in Atyeo's previous history that would have prepared him for running a plantation, he may have appreciated the philosophy behind the acquisition of Heide but he quickly became bored when he was asked to work in the garden. Yet he had purchased the farm at Vence and Dyring expressed no surprise in her letters to the Reeds when she outlines Atyeo's attempts to make order out of chaos, but she is sceptical about the results:

The woods on the island are really beautiful but all being cut down by the natives to make chocolate. Sam has learnt a hell of a lot about this and tropic vegetation which leads to what...nil I'm afraid.

Atyeo was in a bad way when Dyring arrived. He was drinking too much, his teeth were bad, he was depressed about the War, his diet was very poor according to Dyring, and he was not painting. Added to this he was running an estate that was rapidly going down hill because of the stupidity of the owner in planting the wrong crops, mainly oranges and limes which could not compete with jungle vegetation, and he was now stuck on the island because of the War. Dyring's family believed Atyeo went to Roseau to avoid the call-up. Perhaps this was correct in the beginning and accounted for his pre-occupation and guilt about the War which Dyring refers to constantly in her letters to the Reeds. But it seems unlikely, as he did try to enlist in the RAF and was rejected.

Moya's first task when she arrived on the island was to try and sort Atyeo out. She wrote to Sunday to tell her she had put Atyeo on diet with plenty of orange juice, and had made him see he was 'boozing' too much. They took a trip together to the island of Barbados to have Sam's teeth fixed and get married officially, this gave them the opportunity to spend some time alone and talk. Perhaps it was during this time together they decided to make these islands their home. On their return to Dominica they purchased some land on the other side of the island. Their property was situated on a tiny rocky cove overlooking an inlet with a sandy beach. It was next to the Indian reserve or 'Caribs' as Dyring called them. There were two ways to get there, drive from Roseau until the road ended and then walk for 12 hours through jungle, or sail around the island. The nearest village, Morigot, was a half hour walk.

Within a few months they had planted fruit trees, built a hut and moved in. The two letters that have survived from this time describe how they tried to achieve a self sufficiency similar to Heide. In Dyring's words it was extremely beautiful and it sounds like an island paradise. The weather was always warm, they wore few clothes and no shoes. Sam fished from his canoe every day, but there was

106 There is no record I could find to explain who 'Douglas' was. In an interview Dyring gave to People Magazine in 1953 she is quoted as saying, her former husband went to work for a wealthy plantation owner. The name Douglas comes from letters Dyring sent to John and Sunday Reed.

107 Letter sent to John and Sunday Reed 1941 from Roseau. Reed Estate
always a supply of fresh fish caught by the natives in the reserve. Wild pig was plentiful although their diet mainly consisted of fish, fruit and vegetables, some fresh eggs and goats’ milk. The local Caribs were friendly and liked a chat so they were not alone. They swam and bathed every day in their private rockpool on the beach.

The dark side to Eden was the diseases that were endemic among the local natives. Atyeo had a tape worm which shrunk him to skin and bone and Dyring caught a blood disease which eventually crippled her with boils all over her legs. Without adequate medical attention Dyring was very ill at the beginning of 1943. Atyeo had repeatedly tackled local officials in Barbados to fly her to the United States for treatment to no avail and finally he contacted Dr. Evatt to intervene on his behalf. Evatt’s reply contained visas and tickets to America and the offer of a job.

New York

In 1941 Evatt became Attorney-General in the newly elected Curtin Government. After the bombing of Pearl Harbour by Japan, on the 7th December, 1941, and Singapore falling to the Japanese in February 1942, Australia became vulnerable to attack and it became obvious that Australia needed a representative on the War Council in Washington. Curtin sent Evatt as a representative and also as an advocate, arguing for Australia’s right for a greater say in the direction of the War, but Evatt also exercised his role in the procurement of military supplies. Atyeo’s job was with the Australian War Supplies Procurement Office and when Evatt was in America, Atyeo travelled with him as his personal secretary.

Dyring and Atyeo were based in New York and moved into an apartment in Greenwich Village. There lives had come a full circle and nothing could convey that better than this excerpt from Dyring’s letter to John just before she left her home in April, 1943.

A summer morning brown and hot, scrubbed boards a fire I could go on forever but will spare the censor a little. We have five orchids out and two hens sitting, yes that’s something I’ve never liked much but it was necessary to have our eggs, and we have a little black goat with white feet and I’ve been lying on my improvised divan in the sun made from boards and an old blue Paris rug. I’ve watched Sam run with the goat on a string to the goatery at night but the goat is pregnant now and we have to be careful - all this and more we leave for New York We’ve planted a lot of coconuts and bananas and strange fruit some rare and some not so rare. Our vegies already give beans, tomatoes and cabbage. And then to be a city girl again, high heel shoes instead of bare feet, black suit white shirt instead of shorts and your cotton crimson sweater. Slick hair cut instead of Samuel hacking away with blunt scissors, face cream and cotton wool instead of lime, and hot showers instead of a plunge in the ocean with carbolic soap. Perhaps before long bombs and blackouts instead of no flour for bread and fire flies.  

108 Letter to John Reed, sent from Roseau, Dominica April 5th 1943. Reed Estate
12. Members of the Australian delegation to the 1945 San Francisco Conference. Sam Atyeo is standing behind Evatt and appears to be smiling down at his wife. Dyring is pictured on Evatt's left, in the front row.
In New York Dyring slowly recovered from her illness but it was a very long process and obviously there was not much information available about tropical diseases. Letters caught up with them in America telling them friends had been killed in the War and of the death of art writer Basil Burdett in Melbourne. Atyeo's brother Bunny had disappeared in Singapore and they did not know if he was dead or a prisoner of War. In letters to John throughout 1943 Dying asks for news of friends she has not heard about for years and of course news of Heide. She tells John and Sunday about their life in New York and of the art classes they attended three nights a week. Her doctor's office was near the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art and she visited every week.

In September Dyring was still not well but felt that she must be recovering. She wrote to Sunday for her birthday hoping the letters get to her as the fighting has moved closer to Australia. "I go like mad to catch your birthday but its always doubtful with those bloody little rats so close to Aussie if it shall arrive or not, but you know I'm wishing you fun across the sea." Dying was sketching at the local park, the zoo, Washington Square and the Bleaker Street market and they had moved to a studio apartment in Greenwich Village. It was tucked away on top of a building and they could see up to the Empire State building and down 7th Avenue.

A month later Sunday's father had died and Dyring wrote; "I've just received news of your father's death. I feel so far away from you and more than anything want to hold hands." So many things were reminding her of Heide, she and Atyeo were staying on a farm out of Washington, drinking fresh milk and catching the apples, pears and figs as they fell to the ground.

From 1944 until late in 1949 there are no letters surviving from Dyring to the Reeds in the archives. It is likely that the correspondence would have carried on during some of this time as the first letter from 1949 suggests they were in regular contact. Dyring and Atyeo would have had a few trips to Australia during this time, together and separately and information has been given to me of this period from family and friends and recorded data.

During 1945 as the War drew to a close Evatt was involved in framing the United Nations Charter in San Francisco. The Australian delegation flew from New York to San Francisco and of course included Atyeo but interestingly also included Dyring. In a photograph of the Australian delegation taken at the time of the opening session, Dyring is sitting next to Evatt and is the only woman named, of the four women in the front row. There is no mention of her role at the time but she was appointed as Australia's Cultural Ambassador to the United Nations, by Evatt in 1956.

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109. Letter to Sunday Reed from New York, September 10th 1943. Reed Estate
110. Letter to Sunday Reed from Washington, October 15th 1943. Reed Estate
111. Photograph reproduced in: Evatt - Politics and Justice by Kylie Tennant, dated 1945. Printed underneath the photograph it says: 'Reproduced by permission of the United Nations.'
Paris Again

At the end of the war Evatt asked Atyeo and Dyring to set up the Australian Embassy in Paris. Atyeo’s title was that of Cultural Attache. Setting up the Embassy involved renting a suitable property and buying all the furniture necessary, including bedding, cutlery and the like, for the future staff of the Embassy as they were appointed and sent from Australia. Back in Paris Dyring began lessons at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere, in between her role as ‘den mother’ to the young diplomatic staff as they arrived and settled in. A role that included buying food and cooking meals for everyone in the first few months.

By 1947 Atyeo had been appointed as Australian representative to the United Nations Balkans Commission. They had moved out of the Embassy by this time and Dyring had become a student of Edouard MacAvoy in Paris. Dyring’s mother Dagmar died in Melbourne on the 18th June aged 72 but Dyring was not able to attend the funeral even though both she and Atyeo were able to get back to Australia for Christmas and see their families on a number of occasions.

1948 marked a turning point in Dyring’s life with the break up of her marriage to Atyeo. On a trip away for a conference he met a Swiss woman Anne Lecoultre, and on his return to Paris ended his marriage to Dyring. For Dyring the timing could not have been worse; she had been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Reeds with Sweeney and had found an apartment for them to rent. There had been a lot of correspondence between them all, regarding accommodation, money exchange and plans for future travel throughout France. John, Sunday and Sweeney sailed to France in August 1948. They arrived in Paris with the dual purpose of organising an exhibition of Nolan’s Ned Kelly series, and to discuss the future of Sweeney with Albert Tucker who was living in Paris at the time. This time away was also to be a holiday for the Reeds, they planned trips through the South of France onto Italy and then England.

Information about Dyring’s life at this time was received through interviews with family and friends. Personal interview with Dyring family members 2nd February, 2001 and personal interview with Rosalind Carrodus, February 2000.
As a result of her marriage break up Dyring became deeply depressed. She was unable to discuss the situation with the Reeds because she felt they would be torn between their friendship and loyalty to Atyeo and the relationship they shared with her. She also felt she had to maintain her loyalty to her husband and not discuss their problems with his friends, so rather than turn to the only two people she later realised would have understood, she decided to return to Australia to be with her family, particularly her brother Carl with whom she had a close relationship. The Evatts were very affected by the break-up of the Atyeo's marriage, although according to Rosalind, the Evatt's daughter; “they were probably not surprised, as they knew Sam so well.”

113 Interview with Rosalind Carrodus. February 2000. She said her parents believed at the time of the marriage break-up, that Atyeo left Dyring for Anne Lecoultre because she was wealthy.
LIFE ON THE ILE ST. LOUIS

Back in Paris in the latter part of 1948, Dyring's lifesavers were her friends David Strachan, Fred Jessup and many of the former students of the Bell School in Melbourne, all of whom made Paris their home after the War. It was during this time she made the acquaintance of the artist Margaret Olley from Sydney, who left Australia for London with fellow artist Mitty Lee Brown in January 1949. In London she stayed with Sydney friends in South Kensington for a month, before travelling to Paris with Brown and Jessup. In Paris, Olly met up with Strachan, a fellow student from East Sydney Technical College who introduced her to Dyring.114

When I spoke to Margaret Olley about her time in Paris her memories were of Dyring's apartment at 39 Quai d'Anjou on the Ile St. Louis, and their painting trips which might be a weekend in the country or extended trips to Italy or Spain. It was from Margaret that I first learned that Dyring had a car, later I read this in her letters but at the time of my interview with Margaret I had not discovered the letters and I could not understand how she had painted all through the European winter. Her letters to the Reeds often related details of country trips and weekends away, and many of her paintings are of rural and city winter landscapes. Her car was her studio and also an escape from Paris for Dyring and for the many friends who accompanied her over the years. Her car also became important when her marriage broke up and she had to support herself. She used her car to take tourists around Paris, showing them little known historic sites and earning her 'pocket money' as she called it.

But it was her home on the Ile St. Louis that was her haven and her pride and joy. Mitty Lee Brown, looking for a home/studio for herself, discovered the set of small dilapidated rooms on the smaller of the two islands in the Seine right in the heart of Paris. The Quai d'Anjou is a small street running parallel to the Seine but high above it. At each end of the street two bridges connect the island to the left bank, and it is situated just a little upstream from the Pont Marie and the famous Boulevard St Michael. It was an area Dyring had fallen in love with in 1928 on her first trip to Paris. When her friend decided the rooms were too badly run down, Drying leased them and transformed four small rooms into a studio apartment.

Margaret Murray an Australian journalist and a friend and neighbour of Dyring, described her studio/home as one huge room with very high beamed ceilings. It had an open fireplace and large windows looking out over the Seine. Moya bought brown/russet tiles from an old Norman chateau to line the floor of the studio and the corridor ran past a small bedroom on the river side and then on to the front door. Above the corridor were stands containing paintings and in the main studio were divans. Countless guests and artists slept there. In one corner a curved wooden bar hid the kitchen and from there Moya dispensed drinks and cooked the dishes she was famous for, particularly her curry and

114 France, C. Margaret Olley, Craftsman House, Sydney. 1990
pasta dishes.\textsuperscript{115}

The studio was the centre of activity, a meeting place for local artists, a place to stay for visiting friends. Artists, musicians, writers all could be found at Moy's flat. Dyring painted in front of the long windows on an antique easel when she wasn't tramping the streets and squares, drawing and painting, or painting from the car when the weather was cold. Many photographs of her standing behind the wooden bar concocting some dish or dispensing drinks were published in Australian papers and magazines. Dyring became the expatriate to quote on almost any newsworthy item from France after the war, from women's luxury items returning to the Paris shops to oyster vendors in the Paris streets.

\textsuperscript{115}Interview with Margaret Murray April, 1999.
Moving On

In November and December 1949 Dyring held her first one-woman show in London at the gallery, 20 Brooks Street. The nudes and landscapes were well received by the critics and buying public. Several newspapers reported favourably on her exhibition held downstairs, contrasting her rather cruelly with the exhibition of abstract artist Boulenc (a pseudonym taken from the composer Poulenc from whom he derived his stimulation and inspiration), held upstairs, and English women painters in general. “Give me one by this lady and you can have all 55 by the gentleman”, from The Scotsman. And from David Waring, Art News and Review;

They are the work of a fresh mind and a good sense of design...They form a vigorous and refreshing contrast to the rather well-bred, timid paintings of some English women painters.116

Dyring was interviewed by Dick Bentley of the BBC during her exhibition, which was then relayed to Melbourne via the ABC. She was also interviewed by the Australian and New Zealand Weekly and the Melbourne Sun. Any spare time Dyring had in London was spent checking out a Siamese cat breeder for the Reeds. The last kitten they had ordered from the breeder Sterling-Webb, had caught distemper and died. In the first letter in the records since 1944 she wrote:

The mother cat is not yet pregnant again, he says if you still do want one you will have to wait until it is at least 4 months old so as to have its anti distemper injections.117

It was obvious there had been previous correspondence as the Reeds had lent her money, possibly to mount her 1950 exhibition in Australia. Money transfer was difficult in these post War years, perhaps it was easier for John to pay for everything and Dyring would reimburse him in the future. She would be unable to visit Australia because of her London exhibition, and John Reed and Mary Alice Evatt were responsible for some of the organisation at the Australian end. The exhibition took place in Australia during July and August, 1950 and travelled from Melbourne to Sydney and Canberra. In March she wrote to John about money she owed Sunday. The bank in Melbourne had messed up the payment in some way and she asked him to see if he could clear it up. It must have been a refreshing change for the Reeds to have someone pay back the money they had lent them.

In May she wrote again to thank him for working out the problem and to say how glad she was to have the account settled. She was very pleased with her new studio apartment she told John, very happy to have a home of her own to come back to at night. She had very little money but was able to buy the occasional piece of furniture but she had an exhibition of her work at her house warming party and it was quite profitable. She was very pleased with the reviews he had sent her of her Australian exhibition and the reviews of her London show in the Australian press.

117 Letter sent to John and Sunday from London dated 16th November, 1949. Reed Estate
From the letters Dyring was sending the Reeds at this time, it appears they were asking her about Atyeo. How was he? Had she seen him? In 1949 Atyeo had been appointed as a permanent representative for the Australian Government on the Balkans Committee. But in 1950 as the Menzies Government took office, his position was questioned in the Australian Parliament by the Public Service Association and questions were asked in the Press. The explanation that his position was temporary and he had only been appointed because he spoke French, the official language of the United Nations, was dismissed by the Head of the Public Service Board. There were plenty of career diplomats who could do the job just as adequately, it was believed and his position was terminated.

With his marriage over and nowhere to live in Paris he retired to his property in Vence to restore the cottage and turn the farm into a profitable concern. Dyring wrote to John and Sunday that she had signed the divorce papers in August 1950 and believed he would marry ‘the Idleweisse’ her name for Lecoultre. She had seen Sam, she told John and Sunday, and believed him to be very bitter with life in general:

He is now in Tourisette (Vence) doing up his old ruin. He is sad about being dismissed he thought he would be left until the end of his commission, it was too bad as it just seems another bow untied, he does not know what next.118

But if Atyeo’s life was unravelling, Dyring was starting to pull the threads of her life together. Relatives had visited from Melbourne and friends were calling in. She had received invitations to travel and was planning a winter holiday in Majorca with her friend Madelaine. An August 1950 letter to the Reeds mentioned that her work was improving and Paris had finally burst back into life with a marvellous July 14th celebration.

We danced for 3 days until dawn of course. I was a complete wreck after, I spent 4 days in bed. There were street parades and an enormous statue of Adam and Eve with red wine gushing out of the snakes head which looked like a giant penis. We all danced round with empty glasses filling them - Paris was dressed in fairy light for 5 days and sang with music.119

In the same letter she mentions Albert Tucker who had been to her house-warming and had obviously written to the Reeds to tell them that the Left Wing Party in Paris was about to erupt and the economy about to dive. Dyring’s reply was unconcerned, telling them that the financial interests of big business would probably prevail. The French were a revolutionary nation but the middle class would keep the balance she believed. The franc situation was good and she thought it would stay that way. She was happy they seemed concerned for her and grateful for their continuing friendship.

The Reeds must have made some requests because she says; “I shall certainly get the espadrilles and beret to you.”120

118 Letter to John and Sunday Reed, May 12th 1950, Reed Estate
119 Letter to John and Sunday Reed August 22nd 1950, Reed Estate
120 ibid
In late August 1950, Ronnie Rowan, David Strachan’s sister arrived in Paris. This was the first time she had met but they became friends immediately and Rowan stayed with her at her studio. She remembers Dyring having tickets to the Davis Cup through her connections at the Embassy and David not having a coat to wear so she found one of Atyeo’s suit coats and he went in that. Strachan worked as an international telephonist to make money, an occupation he had trained for in Melbourne and Rowan remarked that Dyring must have had a private income. She didn’t know about her little business taking tourists around Paris but said that the trip she took with Dyring was remarkable for the things she showed her and the history she knew. Even fifty years later she remembered the out-of-the-way places Dyring took her to. “I saw the real Paris, so they (the tourists) would have got their monies worth.”

Dyring did have a small private income but it was very depleted after her studio renovations and the impact of post-war Paris prices.

Rowan, Strachan and Dyring stayed with Olley in a cottage she had taken in the French countryside and they went on painting trips together. She remarked how fast Dyring and Olley painted compared with her brother ‘who liked to think about it’ Olley, could churn out three painting for his one. When Rowan left Paris for Australia she took with her the beret and the espadrilles for the Reeds and her brother’s paintings for an exhibition at Georges in Melbourne, “just rolled up under my arm.”

1950 seemed to be an emotional and professional turning point for Dyring. Her show in Australia progressed and received good reviews. Allanah Coleman writing to John and Sunday around this time reports: “I have visited Moya’s home on the Quai D’Enjou, it is just so wonderful, it would do me for the rest of my life”. Moya was doing a lot of work at this time and Allanah thought it was very good. In letters to the Reeds, Dyring tells them of the trips she is taking and says how glad she is to hear that Sweeney is “really yours now, I know how happy you and Sun are about it”. She has started painting small canvases with the motifs of the people she sees around Paris streets, such as the tramps, street sweepers, flower sellers and ‘the man who repairs china and glass’. She has a friend and mentor in Eugene Baboulene, Professor of Fine Art at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Toulon. Under his direction she starts to look at her work differently, recognises the messy emotional quality of her work and strives to correct this.

Actually during the past year I have drawn more than ever before, also I am painting differently, more construction, due to help and ideas from Baboulene.

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121 Interview with Ronnie Rowan. March 2000
122 Interview with Ronnie Rowan. March 2000
123 Letter from Allanah Cole to John and Sunday Reed, 22nd September, 1950. Reed Estate.
125 Letter to John and Sunday Reed. 5th August, 1951. Reed Estate
Dyring finally appears to have put her marriage behind her and get on with her life. She was able to keep a reasonable standard of living taking tourists around Paris and was able to sell her work to them as well, usually small drawings she did on the trips. She took her portfolio, pencils, pen and ink and believed that the tourist work made her 'look' in a different way. Albert Tucker met her at a party and wrote to John and Sunday:

I saw Moya Dyring she has changed a lot from when I last saw her, she is older, but I think much better, she was very warm and pleasant, qualities which I haven't experienced in her before. Perhaps the final rift with Sam has been for the better.  

She had many friends to paint with and there was always someone who wanted to join her for a holiday or a weekend, or a friend or acquaintance from Melbourne calling in. She wrote to John and Sunday for Christmas 1951, telling them of the six weeks she spent in the North of Italy with Olley, travelling from Verona to Venice and then Padua the home of Giotto. Down the Adriatic Coast to San Marino, Toretto and Assisi. In Florence they stayed with friends in their studio, but apart from that time, spent the whole trip camping out, doing their cooking on an alcohol stove. Olley remembers villagers throwing stones at them when they camped on the outskirts of a town. She believed people thought they might have been gypsies. Or that two women camping alone could have been prostitutes as they did not have a tent and just put their sleeping bags on the ground.

In December she looked forward to seeing her nephew David Dyring and his friends, who were to stay with her for Christmas and the New Year; "I am taking them all home for Xmas it will be fun having my first home Xmas with one of the family." Then in January, Albert Tucker returned to live in Paris for a while. He stayed at the Hotel de Verneuil close to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and built a caravan in the hotel room which he completed in May. He lowered the caravan from the window of the hotel with help from friends and parked it alongside the Seine opposite the Ile Saint-Louis not far from Dyring's home. He lived in it through May and June the warmest part of the year and then took off for Italy, settling for a year in Noli, a fishing village on the Ligurian coast of the Italian Riviera where it remained warm all year. While he was still in Paris he had an exhibition at Galerie Huit near the Ile Saint-Louis to good reviews but no sales. Dyring missed this exhibition, writing to the Reeds that she had left before it started but hoped to see after she returned.

1952 was a busy year for Dyring. After her nephew David Dyring left in February, to stay with Atyeo at his property in Vence, Dyring took off for warmer climes, visiting Spain with friends to sightsee and paint. In Spain, Dyring and two friends travelled 600 kilometres down the Mediterranean Coast. She

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126 Copy of a letter to John and Sunday Reed from Albert Tucker, 2nd January 1952. Property of Janine Burke.
127 Letter to John and Sunday Reed 12th November, 1951. Reed Estate
129 Letter to John and Sunday Reed, June 10th 1952. Reed Estate
was fascinated by the Moorish architecture and the paintings of El Greco. She visited Altamira to see the cave paintings and learned to cook Paella from a chef at a restaurant in Valencia where they went for dinner. Back in Paris she saw the exhibition of Toulouse Lautrec and then she was off again, touring the French countryside.

In her letter to the Reeds describing her Spanish trip, Dyring talks for the first time about the men in her life. While she never appears to lack male company wherever she is, she usually refers to them as 'buddies' and certainly Olley and the Dyring family remarked that most of her male friends were homosexual. During 1951 she rekindled a friendship with an old friend living in London, psychiatrist Leo Schlict. As Schlict is married their liaisons are confined to his trips to Paris, usually on his holiday, which he liked to take on his own, riding his motor bike around the French countryside, or Dyring's occasional trips to London:

Theo Schlict came through for a few days at the beginning of the month. I've always been fond of Theo we have corresponded with each other for years, there have been long silences but during the last two years the friendship has grown. He is out of London at a hospital and I see him when I go over and he spends his annual holiday in France....." Dyring returned from a painting trip to the South of France in time to meet him on his return to Paris. "We have just had perhaps the happiest five days - yes perhaps the happiest I have ever been in my life."

In a letter to the Reeds the following year she again refers to her friendship with Theo and the fact that he is married and attached to the St Albans Hospital just out of London. She also refers to another friend Michael Robineau, an antique dealer. He is not married she assures John and Sunday but Dyring thinks she is past marriage now. Instead Michael lends her his cocker spaniel for company and she spends every weekend with him at his country home.

16. 'Michael and I choosing cheese at Vernon Market' undated.
Courtesy of Pat Boyes

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130 Letter to John and Sunday Reed, August 5th 1951. Reed Estate
Dyring’s thoughts turned back to Australia in 1952, but it was to be a different homecoming to the one in 1948 when she fled to Australia to mourn the death of her marriage to Atyeo, in the bosom of her family. Now she is secure as a women and an artist, her life assumed patterns of travel, work and friendships that made her happy and content. Before leaving for Australia at the end of 1952 Dyring leased her flat for a year and sold her car. She sailed on a Dutch liner by way of Indonesia, and was able to complete some paintings in Bali and Java, she completed 40 painting during the trip to Australia, adding to the 520 oil paintings and gouache drawings she had brought from Paris. She arrived in Australia to spend Christmas with her family and New Year with the Reeds.

There was no correspondence on record with the Reeds between 1953 and 1961 but once again I believe from the tenor of the letter sent in 1961 that they were corresponding intermittently. During 1953 Dyring spent a year in Australia and would have seen the Reeds during this time. This was the year Rosalind, the Evatt’s daughter married, but not before the Evatts travelled to London to attend the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. For the strait laced Evatts ever mindful of Rosalind’s wellbeing a chaperone was needed and Dyring, between shows at the time, seemed an obvious choice. It was a happy time for Rosalind and Dyring, cementing a friendship of sisterly affection, but according to Rosalind an hilarious choice of chaperone given that Dyring did not exactly share her parents strict moral code. Another marriage that took place that year was Dyring’s aunt, Ola Cohn to Herbert Green a retired printer. Ola was 61 and Herbert 78.

Each series of exhibitions, 1953, 1956, 1960 and 1963, bought Dyring to Australia for at least a year. The exception was 1956 when she left Australia in September to attend the UNESCO conference as the Australian representative at the International Organisation of Plastic Arts being held in Vienna. She had been painting with Olley at Hill End in conjunction with her exhibition in Brisbane.

In 1957 Mary Alice stayed with Dyring in Paris while her husband visited David Ben Gurion in Israel. Evatt had been ill before his trip with bronchial influenza and high blood pressure and had taken a few days off in Paris to stay with Dyring before they both travelled back to Australia. Visitors such as this would have brought her all the news from Australia and kept her up to date.

In 1961, Clare Pitblado (Doodie) Sunday’s friend, had died and Dyring send her love and thoughts to Sunday. She mentions their land at Aspendale and asks if they have started to build. She tells them how close they have been with the arrival of Charles Blackman and then James Murbrik. And all about the Biennale de Paris in which Australia was represented for the first time. Dyring was one of the
people responsible for the organisation of the Australian section. Blackman, Lawrence Daws and Brett Whiteley were the artists chosen to represent Australia, and Dyring wrote:

"there were two large works for each painter, we had a struggle to get our space increased but with lots of negotiation eventually got 40 metres hanging space, having been allocated 10 originally."  

Roland Pullen, The Age representative in Paris, had sent a good column to Melbourne and Dyring hoped it had not been cut too much. James Murbrick was taking a catalogue back for the Reeds and Dyring reported she had organised a cocktail party for the artists at the Australian Embassy and thrown a party at her flat to introduce them to local artists, and then in August she had been on a holiday at St Tropez, with Tony Clave and his wife and about 15 others, all artists, swimming, fishing, painting and eating. Also in 1961 Herbert Evatt became very ill again during a holiday cruise with Mary Alice. He lay close to death for several days, finally making a partial recovery although he was now a shadow of the man he had been. They stayed with Rosalind as he tried to regain his health.

During 1962 Bernard Smith and his wife visited France during his sabbatical year, and Dyring organised an apartment for them close to her on the lle Saint Louis. They travelled to Burgundy together in her car with her spaniel Flush, the replacement for her borrowed dog from Michael. She was a wonderful hostess to Smith and his wife and they were impressed by the way she had become a 'kind of free lance ambassador to Australian artists'. In Paris, Dyring showed Smith the vacant land on which the international artists studios were going to be built. Artists could no longer afford to live in Paris, she told Smith, and Andre Malraux, a friend of Dyring and Minister for Cultural Affairs in the De Gaulle Government, had confided in her that this was where they wanted to erect purpose-built studios, as residences for overseas artists. In fact they were not completed until 1967, but artists started to live in basement apartments in 1965. In 1962 it was just a large hole in the ground.

Meeting Dyring in her ‘home environment’ seeing her efforts on behalf of Australian artists at first hand, sowed the seed for Smith’s later conviction that a studio should be purchased in her name, after her death in 1967. On his trip in 1962 he impressed by her ‘dynamic’ nature, the open way she approached all types of art although he believed her style remained fixed to a Post-Impressionist version of the landscape and the figurative.

In 1963 Dyring brought her last exhibition to Australia. In Sydney her work was displayed in two galleries. At Barry Stern Galleries in Paddington, Mary Alice Evatt opened the exhibition and Russell

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132 Letter to John and Sunday 10th October, 1961. Reed Estate 
133 Ibid 
135 Personal Interview with Bernard Smith, 27th November 2001. He said Dyring rarely discussed her work with him or his wife, although she gave them two paintings while they were staying with her.
Drysdale gave a nostalgic talk about the early days of Australian art and the friendships that had developed. At the Johnstone Gallery she exhibited with Margaret Olley and at both these venues she exhibited many more paintings of children playing than she had shown at previous exhibitions. These paintings of children with their mothers playing in parks and gardens, are a definite departure from the usual landscapes of Paris and the countryside, although she had continued to do these as well.

In Melbourne she exhibited jointly with Erica McGilchrist and Bernard Smith reviewed them both stating, that while their vision was different “they have developed a mature personal style with an intimacy and delicacy of statement wholly feminine.” He believed that Dyring’s ‘love of France’ was very evident in her work which obviously recalled to him the paintings of Monet and Bonnard. He remembered this last visit of Dyring quite clearly, and believed that she was not well at the time. He remarked that her feet had been very sore, but this may have been due to the constant pain she suffered in her hip, and the way she walked to compensate for this.

Dyring’s last letter to the Reeds is dated April 1965 and is written in a similar vein of familiarity with their lives as if she had been in constant contact. They had sent her a photograph of their cats and she asks if they have started to build yet. Their new home, Heide II was started in 1964 and finished in 1967 so during Dyring’s 1963 trip to Melbourne it would have still been in the planning stage. Dyring tells them of her trip to Mountauban on the Tarn and Gozonnc, and a trip she is planning during Easter for six weeks, travelling to Spain and the Pays Basque region. “I have some days in Barcelona Tony Clave has an exhibition there.” She reported that many galleries in Paris were now showing primitive and naive work rather than abstract, which had not been selling. Her work in pastel was progressing well and Spring in Paris was ‘heaven’. It was also in 1965 that Dr. Herbert Evatt died on Melbourne Cup day, 2nd November. There was no mention of this in letters to the Reeds.

The lifestyle she had established for herself since 1951 was continuing but she was not feeling well. Her niece Felicity had been staying with her or visiting from London where she was nursing and the trip to Spain, with Felicity, was partly to leave the cold of Paris for a warmer climate. Dyring believed she had arthritis in her hip, and as the Ile Saint Louis was increasingly damp and cold, she hoped a trip to Spain might relieve the pain. But this was not the case, eventually Felicity persuaded her come to London during 1966 to see a specialist, as Dyring did not trust the medical profession in Paris.

136Smith, Bernard, ‘Art Notes’ in: The Age, 22nd October, 1963
137A painting done on the trip titled Mountauban on the Tarn was purchased by Mary Alice Evatt after Dyring’s death, at an exhibition in Canberra to raise fund for the ‘Moya Dyring Memorial Studio’. This painting was presented to the National Gallery of Australia by Mary Alice for the permanent collection.
138Letter to John and Sunday 7th April, 1965. Reed Estate
The diagnosis of cancer of the kidney came as a terrific shock to Dyring as she had no symptoms other than the pain in her hip. She wrote to relatives in Albury that she was to have an operation to have the kidney removed and believed she would make a full recovery: “One can live quite happily with one kidney and I am glad the trouble has been found”. Theo Schliet and his wife had introduced her to a good surgeon and looked after her before the operation and she was to spend some time with them afterwards to recover before going back to France.

What Dyring was not told was that she had secondary cancer and that the operation was a means to make her life easier for a while. Her family made the decision not to travel to England to visit her as they believed she would know she was going to die if they did, a decision her sister Pat always regretted. Mary Alice Evatt, and Bernard Smith and his wife came from Australia to see her, and many friends from Paris crossed the Channel to visit her in hospital Allanah Coleman broke the news to the Reeds, telling them that the cancer had spread to her lungs: “She has asked me to write to you both she may die very soon now. She does not know she has cancer.” She told them that Dyring wanted news of them all and news of the new house.

Visiting friends were treated to fresh sandwiches from a nearby shop and a record player was bought into her room so she could listen to classical music. On her last night she was given extra sedation to ease the pain, and with some Bach music playing and Theo and Kathleen Schliet by her side she went to sleep. She died a few hours later on the morning of the 4th January 1967. Allanah’s letter to John and Sunday on the following day said that she would send flowers for them to the funeral, and that Moya would be cremated at Putney Vale on the 10th January, 1967. “I will not be there as I will be on the train to Paris to attend the Picasso exhibition. I am sure Moya would approve of this we talked about it so much.”

In 1971 The Australian Government purchased The Moya Dyring Memorial Studio at the Cite Internationale des Arts. Bernard Smith, attached to the Power Institute at the time, made the suggestion that Australia should purchase another studio in memory of Moya Dyring and he contacted David Strachan to see if together they could raise the money. Strachan, Mary Alice Evatt, Ronnie Rowan, Russell Drysdale and many others gave their time to hold exhibitions which included their work and the paintings Dyring was preparing for her next exhibition. Many artists also gave talks at the opening of these exhibitions, about their life in Paris and their friendship with Dying.

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139 Letter to Lucy Williams, Albury, 28th August, 1966.
140 Letter to John and Sunday Reed from Allanah Coleman. December, 1966
141 Many people spoke of Dyring’s last days to me, including Felicity Dyring and her Paris based friend Margaret Murray. The letter from Allanah Coleman was addressed to John and Sunday Reed and sent on the 5th January, 1967.
142 Australia already owned one studio bought in the name of Dr John Wardell Power, Bernard Smith was one the people responsible for this purchase by the Power Institute. Another was purchased in 1992 in the name of Rosamond McCulloch by the University of Tasmania.
of these exhibitions, about their life in Paris and their friendship with Dyring.

Dyring mentioned to many people during her lifetime, that she would like to bequeath her studio to visiting artists from Australia, as she was very aware of the cost and isolation for the young artist in Paris. Sadly this did not happen as Dyring sold her studio just before she went to London to have treatment, believing she would have to move to a warmer climate. The studio in her name has become a fitting tribute to a woman who welcomed every visiting Australian who knocked on her door. From 1966, 360 artists, writers, poets and musicians from Australia have lived at the Cite Internationale des Artes. The first artist to stay in the studio named after Dyring, was her friend Charles Blackman.

**A warm door closes in Paris...**

*From Sun Correspondent ROLAND PULLEN*

PARIS, Thurs. — Moya Dyring, the Melbourne-born artist who has painted Paris for 30 years, died last night in a London hospital.

"Choc Moya" (Moya's mate) is painted on the door of a Paris apartment on the Ile St. Louis, the island in the middle of the Seine.

The door might well be labelled "Australia House," because as Moya's mate for years, countless visiting Australians have felt as much at home in Paris as they do in Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart, Perth or Adelaide. Moya was Sam. At her parties, which were frequent, beautiful and convivial, you could meet Painters and Australian artists, musicians, diplomats, actors, professors or just plain French. They were all welcome, always distinguished Parisians.

17. Fittingly and rather sadly it was her friend Roland Pullen who sent the news of her death to Australia. Roland often leased her apartment in Paris when she travelled to Australia. *The Sun*, January 6th 1967.
SECTION II

Career and Public Acclaim
To discover the history of women and art is in part to account for the way art history is written. To expose its underlying values, its assumptions, its silences and its prejudices is also to understand that the way women artists are recorded is crucial to the definition of art and artist in our society.

This chapter deals with Moya Dyring the artist and where she belongs in the accepted canons of contemporary art history and asks why her contribution to Modernism has generally been excluded. During the 1970s, feminist art historians began to question the systematic exclusion of women from mainstream art. It was discovered that the history of art was based on ideological practice and not evaluated as an exercise of neutral, or objective, scholarship. This produced a limited picture of history where women’s art, often seen as homogeneous feminine practice, was left out of the dominant discourses. It was not just a case of male art history conveniently forgetting to mention the contribution of women in contemporary art movements, rather it was a particular way of seeing and interpreting, that limited the picture of history. As Griselda Pollock points out:

What Modernist art history celebrates is a selective tradition which normalizes, as the only modernism, a particular and gendered set of practices.

She also believes that women have resisted what is represented to them.

Women have struggled against the given definitions and ideologies of femininity, negotiated their varying situations at different periods and in different cultures.

She emphasizes that knowledge of a women’s history is essential in telling stories and that connections must be made between their history and the ideological and social formation, which shaped and informed their artistic practice. It is within this framework of negotiation and specific history that I wish to place the artistic practice of Moya Dyring. Not simply to reintegrate her into existing art history practices, but to place her into own particular historical perspective based on her own unique experiences as a women and an artist.

There is a common perception that Dyring was a minor, lightweight artist, who painted pretty pictures that she knew would sell in Australia and for that reason she has faded out of sight, apart from her short inclusion in the early history of Modernism in Melbourne, and the existence of a studio in Paris in her name. The argument is not that Dyring was a great artist, but that her art practice produced its own meaning, grounded in the artist’s history, ideology and philosophy. She travelled extensively and her

146 ibid p.41
honor a woman who had played host to so many visiting Australian artists. Occasionally her art is featured in exhibitions at Heide M.O.M.A., at appropriate times one or two of Dyring’s paintings are hung to recall the circle of friends that surrounded John and Sunday Reed, such as, Sam Atyeo, 1933 (Fig.1), or Portrait of Sunday, 1934. (Fig. 5, Page 15). Similar in style is Holly, Fig (Fig. 2.) also done around 1934 in a Cezannesque style, now part of the Dyring family collection. Or Melanctha (Fig. 7) to demonstrate Dyring’s early Cubist style.

1. Dyring Portrait of Sam Atyeo c.1934

2. Dyring Holly c.1934

prepared the way for the café themes of Sali Herman, Yvonne Atkinson, Peter Parves Smith and Russell Drysdale and the night life subjects of Albert Tucker.159

Dyring was never unaware of what was happening around her and her letters are a constant reminder of this. Her painting subjects were drawn from the life around her, in Paris it was the people on the streets, the homeless that lived under the bridges, the flower sellers and the knife sharpeners, the patrons of the sidewalk cafes, the children in the parks and the young mothers with their prams. In the country and on the coast it was the farmers on their carts or in the fields, or the fisherman cleaning their nets that we see against a backdrop of mediaeval villages. As she travelled through France, Spain, Italy and Africa, she recorded what she saw. In this sense she never departed from the way she painted before she left Australia, but her love of nature and her desire to record the change of seasons meant that trees, Summer and Winter, were always part of her landscape. After the War, her figurative style took second place to the landscape when she started to paint again in France, but when her marriage to Atyeo broke up and she re-established herself in her new home/studio, she was able to travel more and this also became an important influence on her work. After 1960 she returned to her figurative style, recording children playing in the parks around Paris, she was still travelling at this time but her poorer health may have restricted her movements.

Painting to Live; Living to Paint

By 1950 Dyring needed to sell her paintings to live. The small trust fund set up by her mother had been depleted by her studio renovations and post war inflation. She took tourists around Paris showing them out of the way places visitors rarely see, taking a drawing pad and pencils with her to give them a momento of their visit and keep up with her drawing practice. She earned her ‘pocket money’ in this way, which enabled her to live on a week to week basis. But she needed to sell her paintings to keep her car running and afford her fare to Australia for her exhibitions. Most of her travelling was done very cheaply, staying with friends and her routine of weekends in the country was spent with her friend Michael at his parent’s home. On her painting trips she usually travelled with one or two other artists and often many more. In one letters she relates how at least twenty artists are living and painting in the town.

3. Dyring The Pear Tree, Senlis, c. 1948(?)

Her first major exhibition was held at 20 Brook Street, London in November 1949. She exhibited twenty-nine works, showing her recent paintings of shells which she had collected herself, or bought from flea markets, landscapes and nudes. It was opened by Mr. Norman Mighell, the Acting High Commissioner for Australia and received a lot of coverage in the Australian press. The Australian and New Zealand Weekly, The Melbourne Age and the Melbourne Sun, all ran articles about Dyring and the exhibition. She was interviewed in London by Dick Bentley of the B.B.C. which was played on Australian radio on January 12th 1950. Of particular interest to the Australian Press, was her studio in Paris, and her well travelled lifestyle. She was generally linked to Atyeo as wife of the First Secretary at the Australian Embassy although they had separated by that time. Also of interest were the famous personalities who attended the opening, such as artist Donald Friend, art patron Mrs. Alleyne Zander, artist and designer Loudon Sainthill and the Adelaide photographer Alec Murray. Paul Haefliger, Australian artist and art critic, wrote a lyrical little piece about the meaning of Paris as the center of the art world, as an introduction to the catalogue. Prices for the works ranged from twenty to eighty guineas.

The exhibition was widely reviewed in the London Press and well received by the critics. The Scotsman thought her paintings were sincere and commanded respect. Art News and Review wrote:

> These are the work of a fresh mind with a good sense of design and a welcome approach to colour. They form a vigorous and refreshing contrast to the rather well-bred, timid painting of some English women painters.

The Pear Tree 1948? (Fig. 3.) was in this exhibition and was featured in The Australasian Post which carried a report of the exhibition.161 The details of this black and white reproduction taken from the

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160 David Waring, of Art News and Review, November 1949
161 The Australasian Post, March 2, 1950. p.42-43
Post report are very hard to make out, but it appears that the pear tree is in blossom and certainly dominates the landscape. It was one of twenty-nine paintings Dyring exhibited in London, typical of her impressionistic style landscapes recording the recent painting excursions she had recently undertaken into the French countryside. The Post timed its article to coincide with Dyring's Australian tour opening in March, 1950.

This was her first exhibition in Australia since 1937, and started at the David Jones Gallery in Sydney in July and then Melbourne in October and November. Dyring did not come to Australia in 1950 for these exhibitions, arrangements were made for her Sydney show by Mary Alice Evatt, and on the day of the exhibition she and her husband flew from Canberra to open the show at David Jones. The Daily Mirror reviewed the exhibition before it opened and under a heading 'Paintings from Paris' reported;

The gaiety and colour of Paris are echoed in Moya Dyring's lively exhibition of oils to be opened by Mrs. H.V. Evatt.  

4. Dyring The Convent c.1950

\[162 The Daily Mirror, Friday June 30th, 1950\]
delicately to sound design.  

Personal choice also had a lot to do with the level of reporting, while one might like her restrained palette and believe it showed maturity another would say it was monotonous. Most agreed however, that the construction of her work was inconsistent and her technique came under constant fire. Dying worked quickly and the basic structure of some of her paintings obviously suffered from this. Rigorous culling before setting out for Australia might have saved her from the sarcastic comments of some of the critics. The overwhelming consensus was that her work suffered from being overly feminine and emotional and absolutely under the influence of the male Impressionists, Monet, Renoir, Corot, Chardin, Dufy and Utrillo, lack of originality being the implicit footnote. Dying never denied her great admiration for these artists or the fact that she literally followed in their footsteps as she travelled around France but little mention was made or this or the development of her personal style through 1950s and early 1960s. In this she was no different from the other women painting and exhibiting at this time, by the end of the fifties women artists were totally ignored.

The standard of art criticism from 1940 to 1960, according to Bernard Smith, was very poor and contributed to the lack of critical debate about contemporary painting during this time. Critics were inadequately paid and committed more to cliques than to principles.

Anecdotal evidence from family members suggests that while Dying was very happy when she received positive reviews and annoyed when reviews were bad or mediocre, she was philosophical about the fact that she had to take the good with the bad and had little respect for Australian critics whom she considered ignorant of overseas trends. But she knew she painted too quickly and that the underlying construction of her work suffered because of this, in two letters to John and Sunday Reed she mentioned that she was working hard to correct this. Margaret Olley also confirmed this, believing that her rapid execution and the need to capture a moment quickly was Dying's achilles heel. But the suggestion by one writer that she should study more must have been hurtful as she attended drawing classes regularly and worked constantly to improve her technique. Study abroad gave an artist professional credibility and this was constantly mentioned as was the fact that Dying lived in Paris and travelled often to paint. But for every review of her work, there was just as many discussing the fact that she was a good cook and hostess and that she loved hats and fashion.

Not that Dying would have minded this type of exposure, she loved any publicity and was obviously willing to give interviews and this would have been typical of the sort of information newspaper and magazine writers would have wanted to pass on to their female readers during 1950, many of these

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167 *Courier Mail*, 1951
168 Smith B. Ibid
articles were featured on the women's pages. Dyring's cooking and her hospitality in Paris were legendary and the most reproduced photograph of her shows her standing in her kitchen cooking and talking to friends. Also, exhibitions openings had become a social event, it was more important to be seen and perhaps photographed than look at the art. Dyring's openings attracted notice and an article about who was there and what they were wearing always appeared in the social pages.

Influences and Inspiration

While Atyeo's negative attitude to conservatism and his experimentation with abstraction presented Dyring with choices in style and subject that opposed the strict tuition of the National Gallery School, it was George Bell who introduced her to a method and theory of art that freed her to pursue a different direction. Her early work followed a similar path many of his students took, showing abbreviated figure styles and simplified form. (Figs 5 & 6.) The modernism of Cezanne, Picasso and Matisse were absorbed along with the techniques of Modigliani, Van Gogh, Dufy and Roult. She embraced Cubism early and then went on to study Dynamic Symmetry with Rah Fizelle and Grace Crowley in Sydney. Aspects of the early work of Yvonne Atkinson, Atyeo, Drysdale, Fairweather, Purves Smith and of course the paintings of Bell and Arnold Shore can be seen in the paintings by Dyring done in the 1930s. The primary forms of Cezanne's cubes, cylinders and cones, the square and rectangle formula of dynamic symmetry, Cezanne's patchy colour washes and slashing diagonals and the bland Moise Kisling faces with doe-like eyes, dominate much of the early work of the Bell students and Dyring was no exception. Her early work exhibited in Melbourne combined all of this along with experimentation of the stained glass technique taught by Shore. Melanctha (Fig. 7.) combined the stained glass techniques of Shore, with Crowley and Fizelle's constructivist approach to the designs and precepts of Albert Gleizes and Andre Lhote, called Dynamic Symmetry.109 The ideas of Gleizes, colour, form and movement are well illustrated here, which shows that although Dyring thought Fizelle and Crowley were 'cold fish' she absorbed their methods.

109 Albert Gleize's theory taught at the Sydney school of Rah Fizelle and Grace Crowley followed the Cubist idea of perceptual form, first by reduction to two dimensional space, second by representing objects as solids and third by rotating planes.
5. Dyring Drawing 131  1932  Ink on paper
6 Dyring  *Drawing* 1. c. 1933  Ink on paper
7. Dyring *Melanctha* 1934 Oil on canvas on plywood
The paintings of Max Ernst, Georges Braque and Henri Rousseau impressed Dyring when she saw their work in New York in 1937. In Paris she found the paintings of Modigliani 'thrilling' and Pablo Picasso; "as brilliant as you would expect". She enrolled at the Calarossie Academy and wrote to the Reeds about various experiments she was attempting with her painting; of the ones that worked she sent samples to John and Sunday for their comments. She painted every day in her classes and had three hours drawing at night. When her family came to stay she travelled with them and discovered places she would return to in the future to paint.

Her work was still strongly figurative up until this point, but as she began to travel with friends and on her own, the landscape started to take over and the figures became smaller. In Paris, The Seine near her home on the Ile St. Louis was a constant subject, (Figs. 8 & 9), as were views of Notre Dame, (Fig. 10) and the view from her balcony. She loved to swim, preferring to be near water whenever possible and she collected shells constantly turning them into still life works, which became so popular she could never do enough. Dyring's peripatetic lifestyle, her love of French seaside villages, and the many paintings of boats featured in her work, meant she was often compared to Monet. (Fig. 11.) is just one example of her paintings of fishing boats. Her interest in the activity of village life, the food, wine, clothes, customs and history of each place she visited, had no parallel to themes of leisure that the Impressionists pursued as they followed the tourists to the newly created seaside resorts. While they spent their weekends recording middle class Parisians swimming and boating, Dyring and her fellow artists stayed in the villages for months at a time, getting to know the locals, cooking regional food and in Dyring's case trying out local recipes to cook when she got back to Paris.

This aspect of living and painting has to be considered together to understand the philosophy which underpinned Dyring's painting technique. In her work she records her travels and her search for beauty, peace and tranquility after the turmoil of war and then the breakup and restructuring of her life. In this way her paintings can be viewed as a metaphor for the towns and villages of France, as life slowly returns to normal after years of upheaval and deprivation. The social meaning embedded in the structures of her art gave appropriate expression to her love of life and humanity and all that meant to her.

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8. Dyring *Bridge over the River Seine* c. 1951

9. Dyring *Bridge over the River Seine* Painted between 1960-1963
10 Dyring  *Notre Dame* c. 1950  Oil on canvas
(Fig. 12. and Fig. 13.) would have been completed when Dyring was forced to spend two months in South America when the liner Ceramic, on its way to Australia was damaged off the African coast. African Woman (Fig. 12.) is the sort of subject that would have caught Dyring's eye and in both works she has captured a sense of tranquility and stillness.
14 Dying *Three figures* c. 1941
Oil on canvas board
(Date at the top of the painting is the purchase date by Heide, Museum of Modern Art)
The movement or painting phase that influenced Dyring's personal style and her philosophy throughout the Forties and Fifties was Fauvism. She would have been introduced to elements of Fauvist techniques and colour at the Bell school, particularly as found in the work of Matisse, Dufy and Cezanne. Dyring's technique of ragged forms and abbreviated figure style, coupled with her
22. Dyring  *Burduma* c.1960

23. Dyring  *View Across Sydney Harbour to the Construction of the Opera House*  c.1960
Oil on composition board
24. Dyring Monet’s Garden c. 1951
Oil on canvas

25. Dyring View from the Studio
Oil on canvas
While these still life paintings appear to usher in a different phase of Dyring's life it was her 1960's paintings of children that indicated a changing trend in her technique and style. At this point her work
veered away from the ideas and influences she had absorbed all her life and became uniquely her own.
Dyring loved children and her inability to have any of her own was a lifelong source of sadness to her.
She drew all of her nieces and nephews as babies, and was often asked by friends to draw their children. Many of her paintings depicted children playing, riding bikes, walking with their parents they were always part of the landscape of Paris or village life. But in 1960 her work took a on a different focus when she began to paint little children with their mothers or nannies, playing in the parks and gardens around Paris. Children playing against the background of changing seasons became the theme.

Mary Cassat painted mothers with their children from 1875 when she arrived in France from America, until her death in 1926. From 1870 Berthe Morisot painted women and children strolling through the meadows in the countryside or in the gardens of their country homes. But these depictions were serious and formal interactions between mother and child. When they played they were well-dressed, subdued and well behaved. Dyring’s mothers were part of the liberated sixties with short skirts and bee-hive hairstyles. The children rode bikes and tricycles, one with trainer wheels, and scooters. In winter they are well rugged up against the cold with coats and jumpers, hats, boots and warm pants. In (Fig. 28) the cold can almost be felt as the wind whistles through the stick like trees, a man walk past in the middle ground in a heavy coat and bowler hat and a woman sits on the ground with the fur collar pulled up on her thick coat. (Fig. 29) shows the same spot on a hot summers afternoon, now the mum in the foreground wears sandals and the children have bare legs, both have been painted in the heart of Paris in the Tuiliery Gardens, with the Champs Elysees at one end and the Louvre Museum, at the other.

28 Dyring Children in the Park in Winter c.1958
29. Dyring  *Children in the Park in Summer*, c. 1959

30. Dyring  *Mothers with their Prams*  1962
The parks of Paris were the only place to play for children living in apartment buildings around the Champs Elysees, the only place apart from the streets, for mothers to push their prams. In (Fig. 30) the mothers settle their babies at the entrance to the park while children run ahead, blending into the path, becoming part of their recreational landscape. The tranquility of (Fig. 31 & 32) suggest a rural location and were probably painted on the weekends when Dyring stayed with friends out of Paris. There are no jarring notes in these paintings as there are in the ones painted in Paris, just a quiet harmony of colour reflecting a slower, more relaxed way of life. The frenetic pace of Paris is absent here as the mother reads her book and children play, or fish in the lake. The dog asleep at the woman’s feet is probably Dyring’s spaniel, and the random garden chairs, white tablecloth and water jug on the table, indicates a private garden.
Author/s: Cuthbert, Gaynor Patricia

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