**Circe** 1893 (detail)
bronze 240 x 79.4 x 93.4 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Felton Bequest 1910

# 'Her invitation and her contempt': Bertram Mackennal and the sculptural femme fatale in the 1890s

DAVID J GETSY

In the early 1890s Bertram Mackennal still struggled to find audiences, patrons and critical recognition. After having moved between Melbourne, London and Paris, he had been unsuccessful in garnering what he considered sufficient attention, and his letters from the period are fraught with anxieties and plans for his career. In 1892 he began working on a major life-size 'statue' in the 'ideal' or 'imaginative' genre that would, he hoped, establish his name. 'I am trying to make a big work of this figure and at present am full of hope,' he remarked.[1] Such a gambit was common enough for an aspiring sculptor in the competitive market of the late 19th century. British sculpture, in particular, had been reinvigorated in the 1880s by artists who staked their reputations on similar highly-conceptualised life-size statues. This movement to modernise the theory and practice of sculpture in Britain would be dubbed the 'New Sculpture' in 1894 – the same year Mackennal's own contribution to it could be seen at the Royal Academy of Art's summer exhibition.[2] As Mackennal knew himself from his brief time at the Royal Academy schools and from the contacts he made there, polemical statues such as his could be the statements through which debates about the theory, practice and future of sculpture occurred.[3] Even after his move to Paris, Mackennal seems to have identified with these formulations of modern sculpture in London and kept a close eye on the British capital and the better market possibilities it offered for an Australian sculptor.[4] His ambitious life-size statue, although first exhibited at the 1893 Paris Salon, drew deeply on his familiarity and sympathy with the aims of the New Sculpture, and it was in London where it made its more lasting impact.

For this most important statue, Mackennal chose the mythological character of Circe, the sorceress from Homer's Odyssey who entrapped Odysseus's men by turning them into swine. This decision came after much deliberation but Mackennal's belaboured choice of subject matter was savvy. Circe was characteristic of the trope of the femme fatale that had gained renewed popularity across Europe in the last quarter of the 19th century. With roots in romanticism and emerging reanimated from the writings of Charles Baudelaire, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Théophile Gautier, Gustave Flaubert, Joris-Karl Huysmans and others, the femme fatale became an iconographic obsession that spanned aestheticist, Decadent and later Symbolist movements.[5] Crystallising male anxieties about the shifting power dynamics of gender relations, the stereotype of the beautiful but dangerous woman acted as a repository into which multiple polarities were collapsed: control and submission, lust and fear, desire and revulsion, and the natural and the unnatural. As gender roles began to be remapped at the end of the 19th century with such developments as the suffrage movement, the femme fatale emerged as a counterpoint to the New Woman, becoming another regulatory stereotype through which fears and anxieties about women's agency could be assuaged and managed.[6]

Recognising the currency of this imagery, Mackennal was one of the first sculptors of his day to translate the femme fatale to the high-stakes format of the life-size statue. Up until the 1890s, the femme

Alfred Drury
*Circe* 1893–94
bronze, life-size
Park Square, Leeds, UK
Photography D Getsy

fatale had been seen primarily in literature and in painting. Sculpture – with its physical and concrete existence in the viewer's space and with its general commitment to the freestanding figure – at first proved difficult to accommodate into such developments as Decadence or Symbolism.[7] Nevertheless, the femme fatale would become, by the end of the 1890s, an important subject through which sculptors across Europe could engage with international Symbolism, including such artists as George Frampton, Max Klinger and Fernand Khnopff.[8] Sculptors in the British context, in particular, pursued the theme of the femme fatale more extensively. In comparison to the Continental manifestations of this theme, there are simply far more femmes fatales in British sculpture than elsewhere. They proved to be a substantial contribution to the second wave of the New Sculpture that developed in Britain in the 1890s. Mackennal's **Circe**, begun in 1892 and exhibited in 1893 (Paris) and 1894 (London), exemplified the increased interest in the sculptural femme fatale that would reach its peak at the end of the decade and was one of the most significant life-size statues on the theme. With Mackennal's work and more broadly with the New Sculpture in the 1890s, what was it about sculpture in Britain that made this imagery especially resonant?

The New Sculpture in Britain was less of a movement than a new set of practices and questions around which innovative sculptors oriented themselves. As English critic Edmund Gosse wrote in the eponymous account of these developments, '[The New Sculpture] might be defined as a fresh concentration of the intellectual powers on a branch of art which had been permitted to grow dull and inanimate'.[9] Overall, the New Sculpture can be understood as a concerted attempt to reconsider the role of sculpture, to make it more vital and life-like, and to bring it into a more sustained engagement with contemporary life. This involved supplanting earlier conventionalised renderings of the human figure with a more focused attention to bodily detail, surface articulation and representational particularity. Sculptors explored new techniques and formats that would showcase these nuances appropriately in statues intended for the gallery as well as in sculpture in public. Their aim was to activate the temporal encounter between viewer and sculpture, making the viewer more self-aware of her or his own physical relations with the sculptural body. With such a physically charged relation, the nude sculptural body

became highly contentious. Consequently, the first wave of New Sculptors strategically chose subject matter that would shield the bodily focus of their works from being interpreted as overly quotidian, 'realist' or even salacious.

For an example of the ways in which sculptors played with these dynamics, we could look to another Circe seen along with Mackennal's at the 1894 Royal Academy exhibition. Alfred Drury's *Circe*, now in Leeds' Park Square, shares with Mackennal's work the imagery of the femme fatale and the attempt to activate the physical encounter between viewer and statue. A comparison reveals, however, why Mackennal's work – and not Drury's – proved to be so contentious.

Drury's *Circe* takes the form of a delicate and youthful female nude poised above the metamorphosed sailors and the food used to drug them into passivity. These swine are organised as an upwards spiral around the base, echoing Circe's raised left arm and the overall composition. This formal organisation of the sculpture prompts viewers to walk around the statue, leading their attention upward from facet to adjacent facet. In the 1880s and 1890s, many sculptors associated with the New Sculpture used similar spiral organisations and their capacity to incite circumambulation as tools to amplify or modify the subject matter of their statues.[10] In the case of Drury's statue, however, the process of walking around and examining the statue raises the possibility that the viewer too has come under Circe's spell. The peripatetic process of examining the figure eventually puts the viewer in a position where Circe looks down her nose at the viewer, invoking an association with the already mesmerised swine at her feet. While this experience can be shared by all viewers, it is most poignantly and directly aimed at male viewers enticed by the nude body of the sorceress – a body which, from a distance, appears to be openly offered for the viewer's delectation. Circe at first appears to be one more female nude, raising her arm to allow the viewer unfettered visual access to her body. Drury complicates this inspection of the body by making the apex of his spiral composition (and the viewer's circumambulation) the position where viewers find themselves under Circe's imperious and mischievous gaze. That is, the sensual and youthful body, with its the relatively sweet countenance (from a distance), lures viewers into a position where they are implicated in the represented scenario itself.

In its underlying warning to the heterosexual male audience, Drury's statue conveyed the moral that a prurient interest in Circe's body was suspect and dangerous. Nevertheless, he relied upon the subject of the femme fatale to give this peripatetic encounter meaning and a moral. He was able to display his refined ability to capture the sensual details of the nude female form by couching that lingering attention to the body in a moralising message about the consequences of looking. In short, he could both direct attention to the sensualised female body while also deflecting potential criticism for his display of the particularised nude in public. Such a duplicitous strategy was central to many New Sculptors, whose reputations were built on the ability to showcase the nude body without descending into the lurid, carnal, 'realist', or unjustified sensuousness (all traits that were ascribed to French sculpture).[11]

Because of its formal self-containment, overall prettiness and implicit moralising, Drury's *Circe* was very well received, and the Leeds City Art Gallery purchased the bronze from the 1894 exhibition. Mackennal's **Circe**, however, was more confrontational and pushed the activated physical encounter with the statue to a new level. His is not a playful girl toying with her newfound pets, but a powerful adult sorceress actively casting her spell over men. She is not sensually organised into a gentle spiral, but rather stands there, bold, erect and powerful.

In making his **Circe**, Mackennal drew upon his understanding of the aims of the New Sculpture and engaged specifically with its prototypes and strategies. It has frequently been noted that the rigid verticality and rectilinear composition of Mackennal's statue referenced major sculptures through which the movement was articulated – notably, by Alfred Gilbert (*An offering to Hymen* 1885–86) and Hamo Thornycroft (*Teucer* 1881). Thornycroft, it should be remembered, was the sculptor who had

**Circe** 1893 (detail)
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encouraged Mackennal to study at the Royal Academy and Gilbert had urged Mackennal to target London for a market.[12] In their works from the 1880s, both Gilbert and Thornycroft deployed the rigid, feet-together pose as a polemical alternative to the time-honoured *contrapposto*.[13] Thornycroft, in particular, used it as part of a strategy to establish an overlap between the space of the representation (of an archer targeting a distant opponent) and the literal space of the viewer. Mackennal's use of this unconventional pose attests to his engagement with these precedents and his adaptation of their tactics – in particular, the aggressive incursion into the viewer's space. In contrast to the slow seduction of Drury's gentle spiral, Mackennal's **Circe** gazes directly out into the viewer's space, standing columnar with feet and hips squared and extending her arms in the act of witchcraft. As one contemporary writer made clear, this figure of Circe was an embodiment of women's amorous hold over men. He wrote, '[Circe] stands erect, almost rigid in the pride of the consciousness of the irresistible supremacy of her nudity'.[14] That is, there is no coy allure as with Drury's work, but an overt statement of the power of the naked adult female body and Circe's self-confident wielding of it. Unlike the moralising flirtation of Drury's statue, Mackennal's **Circe** demands to be acknowledged as powerful from the first glance.

When Mackennal first exhibited the life-size **Circe** at the 1893 Paris Salon, it was well received. When he submitted it to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition the following year, however, the selection committee accepted it into the exhibition with one crucial condition: that the pedestal of the sculpture be covered from public view. The pedestal, much like that of Drury's *Circe*, represents the fate of the men who have fallen under her power. Underneath two coiled snakes, however, Mackennal depicted not swine but an array of intertwined bodies, both male and female. His sorceress does not merely cause a metamorphosis of man into animal (as with the literal swine in Drury's work). Instead, this Circe unleashes the animal nature of man. Drawing upon persistent cultural anxieties fuelled by Charles Darwin's theories of evolution, Mackennal inflected the figure of femme fatale with the danger not of death but of the loss of control, humanity and culture – that is, of regression – and gave no comforting moral as an antidote to it.[15] The idea of men becoming pigs was fantastic and unreal, and Drury's chiding equation of the prurient viewer and beast was consequently tame. Mackennal's pedestal, however, pointed to the only-too-real possibility of the loss of rational control that lust could inspire. In response, the Royal Academy attempted to weaken the challenge of Mackennal's **Circe** by wrapping the pedestal in heavy red cloth, thus hiding the morally suspect display of intertwined bodies. It should be noted that the bodies on the pedestal frieze are interrelated in a number of ways, none of which are explicitly sexual, even though they have been often read as such. They include women weeping and men embracing, for

instance. Nevertheless, the Royal Academy saw that base as 'not being in accordance with the exigencies of the exhibition', even though the statue itself was given prime placement.[16]

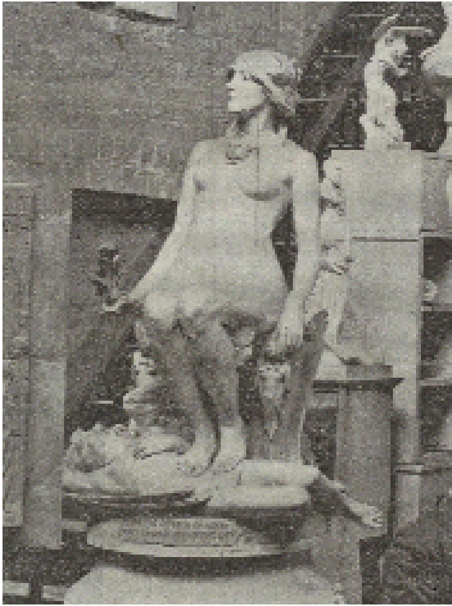
Viewers of the 1894 exhibition were confronted with two statues of Circe that depicted the seduction of the sorceress and her effects on men. The cartoonish metamorphosis that Drury depicted could be more easily accepted, but when Mackennal rendered that transformation not as physical but as psychological, his intertwined quotidian bodies perhaps seemed too realisable an effect of the seductive and powerful female nude. That is, without a moral bracketing as was given by Drury, Mackennal's confrontational work overtly presented the power and attractiveness of 'algolagnic desire', to use Mario Praz's phrase for explaining the eroticisation of suffering which the femme fatale embodies.[17] Whereas Drury deployed the femme fatale imagery only to scold viewers who lingered too long over the female body, Mackennal instead gave a forthright and tougher presentation of the beautiful but dangerous adult woman who demanded submission. The pedestal relief, which depicted the effects of giving in to Circe's seduction, went too far in celebrating that power and invoked the irrational lust with which Drury only demurely flirted.

The following year Mackennal further pursued the highly charged theme of the femme fatale with the enigmatic and in many ways outrageous sculpture titled **'For she sitteth … on a seat in the high places of the city'** 1894–95 (p 103). The work is presumed destroyed and is only known through contemporary photographs. Its iconography was very loosely derived from Proverbs 9:14, which tells of a woman who solicits passers-by, inviting them into her house. The man who accepts her invitation, however, is doomed, for 'he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell'.[18] Running rampant with this somewhat obscure passage, Mackennal presented the viewer with another beautiful, haughty woman, luring men with the gilded rose in her hands while crushing Love under her feet. He described the work in a letter to the influential journalist James Smith, 'My group this year represents a woman who sells herself for gold, trampling Love underfoot ... In her hand she holds a golden rose, emblem of her love, which lasts as long as a rose may bloom'.[19] A far more extensive description was provided in a contemporary account. The lack of adequate photographs of the work warrants quoting it at length:

> [She is] sitting sternly erect with eyes of scorn that sweep the crowded streets beneath her; the rose of love, in gold, she holds in her extended hand. The back, the pose of the body, and the vanity of it all, her invitation and her contempt, are very finely expressed. In the lower part of the body, which is muscular and powerful, the sculptor has dared to indicate the hard service of vice. The plinth, as usual, he charges with decorative symbolic meaning. Under the feet of the figure lies Love, with broken wings; his life ruined by contact with such a creature. At the back is a huge but sinister male face, of Syrian type, and, despite its strong beauty, of goat-like expression. It is Sin.[20]

The writer of this passage, R Jope-Slade, no doubt took the details of much of his account of Mackennal's works from the artist himself. The sheer panache of this description gives a sense of just how melodramatic the sculpture was intended to be, and Mackennal clearly did not see fit to offer a more conservative work to the Royal Academy the year after his **Circe** had been partially censored. Mackennal made a femme fatale that was more extreme in both its obviousness and in its decorative excess – the trampled body of Love leaves little ambiguity for the viewer. Mackennal seems to have enjoyed the notoriety gained through the prudishness of the Royal Academy the year before and saw it as an opportunity. As he smirkingly wrote to a friend in 1894 after the **Circe** incident, 'Fancy my being indecent, it is too lovely'.[21] It appears he used the femme fatale, at least in 1894, as a vehicle through which he could, on the one hand, engage with the art-theoretical concerns of the New Sculpture and, on the other, do it with a subject matter and treatment that was sensationalist.

**Circe** in plaster in Mackennal's London studio (**Bust of Sarah Bernhardt** in background) c1896
*The Sketch* 29 April 1896
Photograph courtesy State Reference Library, State Library of New South Wales



**'For she sitteth … on a seat in the high places of the city'** from *Mackennal in his London studio* c1901
Photograph courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne

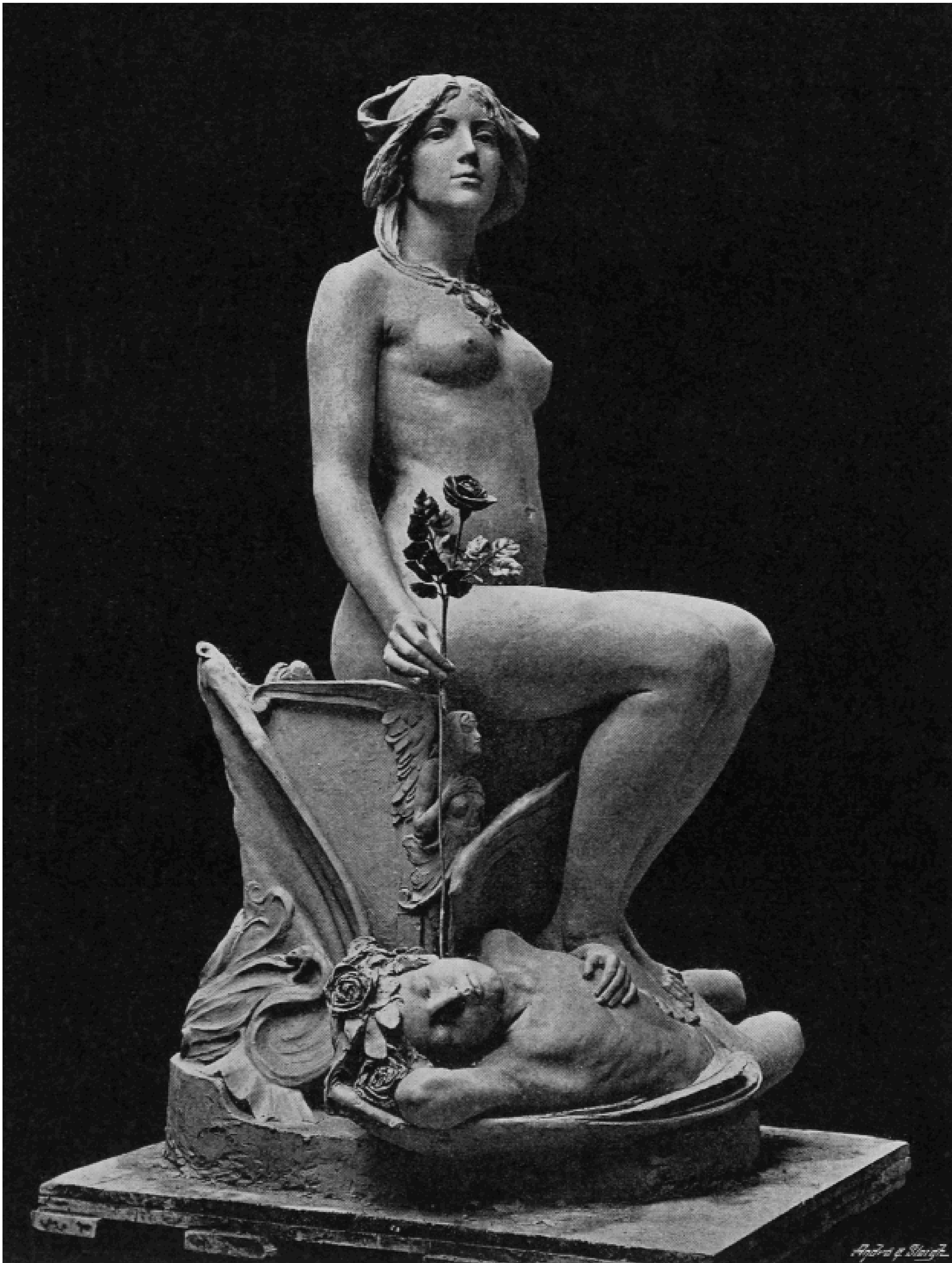
**'For she sitteth … on a seat in the high places of the city'** 1894–95
plaster approx 170cm h
*Royal Academy Pictures 1895*

On first glance **'For she sitteth ...'** may appear to be less physically confrontational than **Circe**, but Mackennal deployed other means to engage and entice the viewer. The figure itself, waiting rigidly for her next catch, shares with **Circe** a rectilinear organisation of the body. Mackennal called it the 'insolent pose of the body and the head' and used it to convey the hardness underlying the physical beauty of the nude much in the way he had with the earlier statue.[22]

The most significant advancement Mackennal made on his **Circe** was the use of colour and mixed materials. Departing from the monochromy of his earlier major work (**Circe** was exhibited in plaster evenly painted to look like bronze), Mackennal left the plaster white and coloured specific elements of **'For she sitteth ...'**. The extant photographs of the statue make it difficult to ascertain the extent and variety of this polychromy, but it appears that the rose and perhaps the woman's necklace, hair and chair were also painted or coloured. Of these elements, commentators and Mackennal himself consistently made sure to mention the golden colour of the rose in their descriptions of the work. Such an object would have been difficult, if not impossible, to realise in plaster, and it is likely that the flower itself was gilt bronze. It appears as such in the photographs. This combination of materials would have been consistent with the practices of many sculptors including Gilbert, Harry Bates and Edward Onslow Ford (who added a gilt bronze wreath to the brow of his 1892 effigy of Percy Shelley).

This statue thus would have offered to the viewer an object that appeared to be an actual gilt rose. Because it was set off from the otherwise white form of the figure and its represented scene, the golden flower acted as a literal object used to lure the viewer. That is, the rose exhibited a degree of actuality higher than the other components of the sculpture – not just the pure white body but also the other painted elements – because it was recognisably distinct from them in material, colour and kind.[23] In this way, Mackennal established a porous relation between the space of sculptural representation (the Biblical seductress) and the literal space in which the viewer encountered the statue holding an actual, delicate and precious golden flower. As he did with Circe, Mackennal found in the femme fatale an ideal theme through which he could solicit and confront the viewer directly with beauty and fictional danger. **'For she sitteth ...'** failed to achieve the notoriety of Mackennal's earlier femme fatale (and similarly did not result in a sale or commission), but it represented his attempt to capitalise on a subject that brought him to public attention and that made the activated encounter between viewer and statue more contentious and complex.

In this way Mackennal's two major statues helped to establish the vogue for the femme fatale in British sculpture of the later 1890s. His works were some of the most visible – and most extreme – manifestations of this theme, and they set the parameters for later explorations of the female nude for the rest of the decade. As Mackennal demonstrated with these works, the New Sculpture's focus on the encounter between viewer and statue made it particularly amenable to the subject matter of the femme fatale with its blending of allure and confrontation. In his description of **'For she sitteth ...'**, Jope-Slade noted that it was 'her invitation and her contempt' that was central to Mackennal's subject – and the theme of the femme fatale more widely. Mackennal saw in this theme a way to fuel sustained attention to the female nude by making it not an image of ideal beauty but an idol of algolagnia placed there to tempt and confront the viewer. He was in no way critical of the femme fatale trope or its sexist underpinnings, and his works seem to be unabashedly aimed at male viewers. He seems rather to have understood how the sensationalism of the femme fatale could add drama to his work and, more to the point, how he could set himself apart by staging in the sculptural encounter its carefully managed eroticisation of dominance.



# Notes

Many newspaper and journal articles cited in this publication are from the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) pressclipping archive; page numbers for specific articles are not always available.

Unless otherwise specified, letters cited in these notes are from the following sources: Theodore Fink papers, University of Melbourne archives MSS97/96; James McGregor papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, Sydney MSS2615; Felix Meyer papers, University of Melbourne archives; Tom Roberts letters, Mitchell Library, MSSA2480; James Smith papers, Mitchell Library, MSS21214; Arthur Streeton letters, Mitchell Library, ML misc 1165

## Introduction

pp 11–12

1 Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1983

2 Beattie 1983, p 232

3 Beattie 1983, p 231. See also, for example, Rudolph Dircks, *Art Journal*, 1908, pp 193, 195 and Benedict Read, 'Whatever happened to the New Sculpture?' in *Reverie, myth, sensuality: sculpture in Britain 1880–1910*, exhibition catalogue, Stoke-on-Trent City Museum and Art Gallery, 1992, pp 21–25

4 '... the nose. It was an Italian nose.' Interview by the author with Michael de Luca, c1989

5 I am particularly grateful to Alison Inglis for taking me to view it in 2003

6 Originally at Charing Cross, Lahore, but now at the Lahore State Museum

7 Beattie 1983, pp 73–134

8 See Mary Ann Steggles, *Statues of the Raj*, British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, London 2000, pp 97–98. Steggles also lists statues of George V by Mackennal for Delhi and Calcutta

9 Charles Wentworth Dilke, *Greater Britain: a record of travel in English-speaking countries during 1866 and 1867*, Macmillan, London 1868, vol 1, p 7

10 Dilke 1868, vol 2, pp 281, 226–77

11 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Feb 1879. For more on this topic, see Benedict Read, 'Edwardian sculpture' in A Gray (ed), *The Edwardians: secrets and desires*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra 2004, pp 124, 129–33

## 'Adaptability and versatility': Bertram Mackennal – an overview

pp 15–81

1 Charles Marriot, *Dictionary of national biography 1931–1940*, Oxford University Press, London 1949, p 266; 'Obituary', *Times*, London, 12 Oct 1931, np

2 David Getsy, 'Strategy and sentimentality: C J Allen in the 1890s' in Matthew Clough (ed), *C J Allen 1862–1956: sculptor and teacher*, University of Liverpool Art Collections, Liverpool 2003, pp 73–84; M H Spielmann, *British sculpture and sculptors of today*, Cassell, London 1901, p 2

3 Michael Hatt has commented thus on the New Sculpture in 'Thoughts and things: sculpture and the Victorian nude' in Alison Smith, *Exposed: the Victorian nude*, Tate Publishing, London, 2001. Benedict Read analysed New Sculpture innovations as part of a British continuum of production in *Gibson to Gilbert: British sculpture 1840–1914*, Fine Art Society, London 1992, pp 3–7. Other major modern writers on Victorian art and New Sculpture include Richard Dorment, Martina Droth, Alison Smith, Tim Barringer, Jason Edwards, Elizabeth Prettejohn, Alex Potts, Susan Beattie and David Getsy

4 Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1983. David Getsy, *Body doubles: sculpture in Britain 1877–1905*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2004. Read, author of *Victorian sculpture*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1982, has consistently incorporated references to Mackennal

5 M H Spielmann, 'British sculpture' in F G Dumas (ed), *The Franco-British Exhibition illustrated review 1908*, Chatto and Windus, London 1908, np; Robin Tranter, *Bertram Mackennal: a career*, self-published, Sydney 2004, p 11

6 For example, Lionel Lindsay, 'Sir Bertram Mackennal', *Art in Australia*, 3rd series, no 11, March 1925, np. Quote is from W K West, 'The sculpture of Bertram Mackennal', *Studio*, vol 44, 1908, pp 262–67

7 See, for example, 'Missing in the history wars', *Artlink*, vol 26, no 1, 2006 and *The new sculpture in Australia: Australian art-nouveau sculpture 1880–1920*, exhibition catalogue, McClelland Gallery, Melbourne 1987

8 Richard Dorment's description in his book *Alfred Gilbert*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1985, p 47

9 'In the days of my youth by Sir Bertram Mackennal', *T P's and Cassell's Weekly*, London, 24 Oct 1925, pp 18, 30; see Humphrey McQueen, 'The fortunes of Tom Roberts' in Ron Radford et al, *Tom Roberts*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide 1996, pp 20–38; R Jope-Slade, 'An Australian quartette', *Magazine of Art*, 1895, p 389

10 Sydney Long, 'The trend of Australian art considered and discussed', *Art and Architecture*, vol 2, no 1, 1905, pp 8–10; Humphrey McQueen on Bunny in Mary Eagle, *The art of Rupert Bunny in the Australian National Gallery*, ANG, Canberra 1991, p 17

11 'Australia's only sculptor', *Sketch*, Australian edition, 29 April 1896, p 25

12 *Magazine of Art*, 1892, p vi. The profoundly animating role of French sculptors in Britain, Jules Dalou and Edouard Lanteri, was widely acknowledged. The Academy reinstituted a separate life-modelling school and renovated the sculpture display rooms to gain greater space and light in 1881–82

13 Edmund Gosse, 'The future of sculpture in London', *Magazine of Art*, 1881, pp 281–84

14 Beattie 1983, p 138; for Leighton's 1881 Academy lecture, see Martina Droth, 'Ornament as sculpture. The Sam Wilson chimneypiece in Leeds City Art Gallery', Henry Moore Institute Leeds, no 30, 2000

15 Autobiographical reminiscences by Frederick McCubbin, State Library of Victoria, MSB193 MS10302, p 16. Students Tom Roberts and Charles Douglas Richardson established an informal class in drawing from the nude which Mackennal may have attended

16 J S Mackennal's great ambition, according to his son, had been to make enough money in Australia to enable him to live and work in Rome: *T P's and Cassell's Weekly* 1925

17 I am grateful to Terence Lane for finding an early etching of the German court showing this work

18 'The Royal Academy: fourth and concluding notice', *Times*, London, 8 June 1885, p 4

19 The Chantrey Bequest was established for the purpose of building a national repository of contemporary British artworks and was seconded in the spaces of colonial public galleries, which were enthusiastic purchasers of the New Sculpture by the early 1890s

20 Mackennal to Tom Roberts, 26 Mar 1887, Tom Roberts letters. The 1886–87 heads were executed in Shropshire, where Mackennal had accepted a job as modeller (and possibly designer) at the Coalport china factory; the later head was modelled in London

21 'The two Mackennals', *Table Talk*, 8 Mar 1889, p 5. *The five foolish virgins* was listed for sale at a humble £7.7 (7 guineas)

22 Mackennal kept a bronze of Gilbert's early *Kiss of Victory* with him for life. A testament to their friendship was evidenced in the floral wreath Gilbert sent to Mackennal's funeral in 1931: Tranter 2004, p 111

23 Thornycroft and Mackennal met in the British Museum in 1882 or 1883. Noel Hutchison has suggested that the artist met Thornycroft through 'one of the Sassoons': Hutchison, *Bertram Mackennal*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1973, p 5

24 Mackennal spent nine months in 1883 on drawings and models of the pediment figure Hercules, considered one of the most vividly naturalistic of the Parthenon ensemble. For early 19th-century attitudes to the Parthenon marbles, see Alex Potts, 'The impossible ideal: Romantic conception of the Parthenon sculptures in early nineteenth-century Britain and Germany' in Andrew Hemingway & William Vaughan (eds), *Art in bourgeois society 1790–1850*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, pp 101–23

25 Mackennal's investment in the notion of self-reliance would come to rely on an Emersonian conception of the necessary nurturing of individuality from within nature. He wrote from Shropshire, 'I have got free of the … feeling that used to possess me – viz to get work done … I have the old mistress Nature only. I find her very hard to understand but wake up now and then to some new revelation … this isolation … brings out whatever individuality I may happen to have': Mackennal to Tom Roberts, 26 Mar 1887; Thornycroft quoted in Getsy 2004, p 47

26 'Art in Paris: Mr Bunny and the post impressionist: the future of art in Australia', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Sept 1911, np

27 'Le salon de 1894: sculpture', *Journal des Arts*, Paris, 10 June 1894; see Sergiusz Michalski, *Public monuments: art in political bondage 1870–1997*, Reaktion Books, London 1988, p 14

28 Mackennal had enrolled in December 1883 and left for Paris several months later: see Biographical Notes, CD-ROM

29 Mackennal to Theodore Fink, 6 May 1892, Theodore Fink papers; 'Australia's only sculptor', *Sketch*, 29 Apr 1896, p 25

30 Quotes from *T P's and Cassell's Weekly* 1925, p 30. Anecdotes persist that Mackennal was given lessons by Rodin, although this has not been substantiated. Certainly Mackennal met Rodin and probably saw him at work in his studio: see Biographical Notes, CD-ROM

31 Notwithstanding their radically different creations, one can note an intersection between Gilbert's Clarence tomb and Rodin's *The gates of hell* in the conception of the work as 'sculptural infestation'

32 Mackennal to Theodore Fink, 6 May 1892

33 'An Australian sculptor's studio', *Table Talk*, 17 Jan 1890, p 8

34 John Peter Russell to Tom Roberts, undated c1884

35 Dorment 1985, p 38. See Biographical Notes

36 The competition was open only to colonial sculptors and may have been secured under the aegis of J S Mackennal, aided by Bertram Mackennal's astute exhibition of a speculative panel, *Federation of the colonies of Australasia*, in Melbourne in 1887

37 The bust was commissioned by Frank Stuart. Thanks to Juliette Peers for alerting me to the Percival bust, placed in the French Society of Victoria's Melbourne rooms, 1888. *Table Talk*, 17 Oct 1890, np

38 'Art: Melbourne art notes', *Sydney Mail*, 27 Apr 1889, np; *Table Talk* 17 Jan 1890, p 8. In 1888 no Australian-born artist was represented in the NGV collection

39 Springthorpe diaries, Jan 1901?, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria; 'Dinner for Mr Bertram Mackennal', *Times*, London, 17 Mar 1909, np

40 Mackennal to James Smith, 20 May 1895, James Smith papers

41 Edmund Fisher, 'Sundry people: Mackennal the Australian', *Bulletin*, 13 Apr 1901, p 15

42 Mackennal to Fink, undated (June 1891?)

43 'Mackennal's The triumph of Truth', *Argus*, 11 July 1891, p 4; *Table Talk*, 10 June 1887, p 4

44 'Les Salons des 1893: la Peinture au Champ du Mars et al sculptures sans les deux salons', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, vol 118, July 1893, np

45 Spielmann 1901, pp 132–35

46 Mackennal to Smith, 23 Sept 1892

47 Mackennal to Smith, 30 May 1893

48 *Revue des Deux Mondes* 1893, np; *L'artiste,* Mai 1893, vol 5, pp 321–25; 'Le salon du 1893 (III), *Le Charivari*, 6 May 1893; Claude Phillips, 'Sculpture of the year', *Magazine of Art*, 1893, pp 397–402; Gaston Jollivet, 'Sculpture', *Catalogue illustre de painture et sculpture, Salon de 1892*, Paris 1892; *Revue des Arts Decoratifs*, June 1893, pp 379–86; 'La sculpture (III)', *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 1893, pp 106–21

49 Claude Phillips, 'Sculpture of the year', *Magazine of Art*, 1894, p 70

50 Mackennal to Tom Roberts, 26 Mar 1887. Mackennal to Smith, 19 Aug 1892. Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À rebours* (a key to the context in which the femme fatale flourished) was in circulation in Paris by 1884, and Circe's body is, in curious way, closely aligned to Huysmans' descriptions of the femme fatale Salome as a beauty cursed 'above all other beauties by a rigidity that stiffened her flesh and hardened her muscles'. Gustave Moreau's obsessively produced Salome paintings were also in vogue in Paris, and the work of Odilon Redon, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and the Symbolist followers of Rodin – Bartholeme, Jean-Joseph Carriés and Jean Dampt – were established as Salon presences in the late 1880s. In Melbourne in 1891, Mackennal had perhaps taken particular note of the National Gallery of Victoria's major purchase for the year J W Waterhouse's *Ulysses and the sirens*. Vedder, a minor painter in a Leightonesque manner injected with mysticism and a friend of both Leighton and Gilbert, had just published his popular *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* when Mackennal arrived in Rome in November 1884 and had also commenced sketches for *The Pleiades* 1885, depicting the mystical creation of the constellations in an art-nouveau-inspired treatment: see Ann Galbally, 'Australian arts abroad' in A Galbally & M Plant (eds), *Studies in Australian art*, University of Melbourne, Melbourne 1978, pp 58–66. Mackennal modelled Sarah Bernhardt in the role of the femme fatale Cleopatra in 1891 and Cora Brown Potter, 'the first of the vampires', in 1890.

51 Vincent van Gogh commenting on Salon paintings, cited in Eagle 1991, p 28. John Longstaff received an honourable mention in 1891; Arthur Streeton in 1892

52 Referred to as such in 'Le Salon de 1893: sculpture', *Le Journal des Arts*, 17 June 1893, pp 1–2. Spielmann 1901, p 2

53 Tranter has also commented on *Circe* as a metaphor of human sexuality, see Tranter 2004, pp 30–31

54 *Table Talk*, 29 June 1894, p 3; Rodin quoted in John L Tancock, *The sculpture of Auguste Rodin: the collection of the Rodin Museum, Philadelphia*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia 1976, pp 90–111

55 Designs for minor tableware and small statuettes were clearly not lucrative enough. A month after arriving in Paris the artist had warned Theodore Fink that he had nearly used his sponsors' first draft; by July 1892 he requested that his Melbourne patrons consider forwarding the proposed second year's instalment immediately:

3 *Art Journal*, 1894, shows the relief and gives both title and sculptor

4 Tranthim-Fryer diaries, 22 Sept 1897, private collection

5 Tranthim-Fryer diaries, 22 Apr 1896, 15 Feb 1897; *Table Talk*, 6 Feb 1902, pp 12–13

6 Obituary in *Open Door*, no 1, 1928. Cf the text from his memorial plaque at Swinburne University, which reads 'In memory of John Robertson Tranthim-Fryer, the first Director of this College 1908–1928. His rare gifts and charming personality were an inspiration to students and staff alike. Greatly respected – A Christian Gentleman Died July 13th 1928'. The portrait was sculpted by Paul Montford in 1932

7 Judith McKay, *Harold Parker: sculptor*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane 1993, p 34

8 McKay 1993, p 14, which captions Mackennal as 'Parker's rival'. Cf pp 28–29, 34

9 Letter of Paul Montford to Louis Montford, 14 Apr 1927, Montford Estate, Brighton UK

10 Margaret Baskerville diaries, 2 Aug 1904, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, Sydney; Wallace Anderson, unpublished autobiography extracts in Bertram Mackennal file, Ken Scarlett Collection, State Library of Victoria

11 Letter of Web Gilbert to J G Roberts, 28 Apr 1916, J G Roberts scrapbooks, La Trobe Library, MS 8508, vol 12; letter of Web Gilbert to Roberts 21 June 1917, J G Roberts scrapbooks, vol 3

12 Letter of Web Gilbert to R H Croll, 12 June 1914, La Trobe Library, MS 8910 Box 1203/2(b). To Croll, Web Gilbert added 'Parker is quite a nice fellow and a good artist'. Letter of Web Gilbert to Roberts, 8 Jan 1916, J G Roberts scrapbooks, MS 8508, vol 12 for quote 'and keeps it all'

13 *Table Talk*, 3 Jan 1901, p 27

14 Unidentified Brisbane newspaper, 25 Jan 1927, AGNSW archives

15 Mackennal to Roberts, 26 Mar 1887, Tom Roberts letters. Ball was a friend and of American artist Elihu Vedder in Rome for a number of years before coming to Melbourne and therefore would have shared a number of mutual friends in Rome with Mackennal

16 Cf Robin Tranter, *Bertram Mackennal: a career*, self-published, Sydney 2004, pp 107–08

17 Quoted in 'Australia's only sculptor', *Sketch*, London, Australasian edition, 29 Apr 1896, p 25

18 *Sunday Times*, 7 Mar 1926, np

19 Unidentified Brisbane newspaper, 25 Jan 1927

20 Unidentified Brisbane newspaper, 25 Jan 1927

21 See Mackennal's letters to Smith, 30 May 1893, 20 July 1894, 16 Dec 1897, James Smith papers; and letter to Fink, 10 Mar 1894, Theodore Fink papers

22 Mackennal's uses 'ought' in letter to Smith, 20 July 1894; quote is from letter to Smith, 3 May 1893

23 Tranter 2004, pp 101–03. One notes that the plainness of these late works could hint at the imbrication of a proletarian influence in the commissioning, as much as signalling that Mackennal was becoming complacent after material success or 'selling out' to the British Empire. The Brisbane statues were of Labor politicians and, at the time St Mary's Cathedral commissioned works from Mackennal, the Catholic Church was generally read as not representing the establishment. NSW Labor Premier Jack Lang credited businessman and newspaper proprietor Hugh D McIntosh with the impetus behind the cenotaph project, including devising the concept: see Frank van Straten, *Huge deal: the fortunes and follies of Hugh D McIntosh*, Lothian, Melbourne 2004, p 199

24 'Distinguished visitors at The Australia', *The Australia handbook*, Australia Hotel, Sydney 1926, p 9

25 See letter of Mackennal to Arthur Streeton, 27 Mar 1926, Arthur Streeton letters, and letter of Paul Montford to Louis Montford, 14 Apr 1927. Mrs Montford bet a pair of gloves with a friend that Mackennal would visit Paul when he was in Australia, referencing an old social custom that ladies could only wager stakes no higher than a pair of gloves

26 The novel is Dal Stivens' *Jimmy Brockett: portrait of a notable Australian*, Britannicus Liber, London 1951. It was overshadowed in Australian public memory by the similarly themed *Power without glory*, which was published the year before

27 *Dian dreams (Una Falconer – also known as Falkiner)* 1909, AGNSW. Katie Holmes, '"This diary writing does not really count as writing": women's writing and the writing of history', National Library of Australia, 1995, www.nla.gov.au/events/holmes.html (accessed Nov 2006). See also Katie Holmes, *Spaces in her day: Australian women's diaries of the 1920s and 1930s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1995, pp xxvi, 95–101

28 *Sunday Mail*, 10 Feb 1926; *Bulletin*, 13 Apr 1901, p 15

29 See photograph reproduced in *Weekly Times*, 7 Oct 1905, p 12

30 *Argus*, 6 May 1908, p 7. Cf editorial, 1 May 1901, p 6, praising Mackennal's achievements in art as 'a worthy representative of Australia'

31 Joint letter of Felix Meyer, John W Springthorpe and Frank Stuart, *Argus*, 1 Apr 1901, p 9. Cf letter of Springthorpe, 22 Mar, p 7; also letters of Edward Langton, Trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria, 14 Mar, p 7 and 29 Mar, p 6

32 Letter to Bernard Hall, 19 Mar 1901, Bernard Hall papers, National Gallery of Australia library. Mackennal also threatened to sue the trustees if they had cast the statue in Melbourne. He feared *Circe* 'would be butchered' if it were cast in Melbourne. This may be a veiled attack on Australian sculptor James White who had the most extensive facilities for casting statues in various techniques in Australia and did complete technically successful castings, but was not respected by the avant-garde for his design skills

33 Letter to Smith, 16 Dec 1897. Smith's support of the always ambitious and consistently progressive Mackennal stands against his strawman status in art historical memory as the wowser opponent of Tom Roberts and the Heidelberg School

34 Letter to Smith, 30 May 1893

35 Letter of Paul Montford to Louis Montford, 11 May 1926

36 Letter to the architects of Australia House, quoted in Mackay 1993, p 29

37 *Advertiser*, 24 Dec 1904, page 11

38 James Smith (ed), *The cyclopedia of Victoria*, vol 2, Cyclopedia Co, Melbourne and Ballarat 1904, p 88

39 Mackennal sculpted a Hercules that gained him a place at the Royal Academy schools and the characterisation of that bust too could have been effectively linked to this lost work

40 *Herald*, Melbourne, 14 Feb 1921, p 10

41 Arthur Streeton, 'A fighter for the best: sympathetic and resourceful', *Argus*, 13 Oct 1931, p 7

42 *Register*, 9 Jan 1926, p 5, copy of article in *T P O'Connor's Weekly*, 24 Oct 1925, p 18

43 For discussion of the misogynist violence of the male–female encounter in fin de siècle art, see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of perversity: fantasies of feminine evil in fin-de-siècle culture*, Oxford University Press, New York 1986

44 Curiously, Richardson has virtually no presence in two extended textual mediations of sculpture into Melbourne public life and Australian nationalist aspirations: the scrapbooks of J G Roberts and the diaries of John W Springthorpe. Richardson is mentioned as attending the funeral of Web Gilbert in Roberts' scrapbooks. In Springthorpe's case a plausible explanation can be found in Richardson's linkage to David Syme, a man disliked by Springthorpe for his proletarian and atheist associations (Springthorpe diaries, vol 4, facing page 20 Oct 1900). With such invisibility, the conundrum of Richardson holds firm

45 Florence Ward and Minnie Bernhard Smith of the Yarra Sculptors Society are also likely pupils of Richardson

46 If Baskerville sought to make visible through her art a differently toned and gendered public space, her painting of a young concert singer, *The rehearsal* 1900, could surely be linked to the much-discussed adolescent singing star Amy Castles and the attempt of Castle's advocates to draw another vision of the Australian state at the time of Federation, spirituelle and feminised

47 Margaret Baskerville diaries, 23 July 1904

48 Mackennal to Roberts, 26 Mar 1887

49 This effect is further enhanced as the study for *Fleur de lys* at the National Gallery of Victoria shows a somewhat more tangibly mature and even streetwise persona with her artificially curled fringe, in the height of everyday fashion of the period

50 J Peers, 'The tribe of Mary Jane Hicks: imaging women through the Mount Rennie rape case 1886', *Australian Cultural History*, vol 12, 1993

51 Chapter 19 'The pipes of Pan' in Louis Stone, *Jonah*, Richmond, North Sydney 2003 (1911), pp 169–77

52 *The Australia handbook* 1925, p 9

53 *Bulletin*, 13 Apr 1901, p 15

54 Letter to Fink, 19 Nov [1891?], Theodore Fink papers. The reference to 'brutes' suggests that it was male rather than female flesh that Mackennal enjoyed seeing

55 *Australasian Critic*, 1 Aug 1892, pp 266–67 although *Bohemia*, 16 July 1891, pp 4–5, added Melbourne based-scuptor R Kretzschmar to Richardson and Mackennal as the only competent sculptors in the competition. Ten years later *Table Talk* (3 Jan 1901, p 27) still named Mackennal and Richardson's entries as standing out from the competition. This account ambiguously suggests that Richardson's design was 'favoured as more appropriate', although this phrase was possibly meant to refer to Mackennal's entry, mentioned some lines above as having won a prize

56 Labor Premier George Prendergast, often claimed as the 'father' of the party in Victoria, attended the opening of Richardson's memorial exhibition. The guest speaker was L V Biggs, then editor of *The Age*. An association can be tracked to David Syme, who commissioned decorations for *The Age* building in 1899 from Richardson. The small *Memoir of Charles Douglas Richardson, sculptor and painter* by Ernest Fysh was published in 1933 by the Industrial Printing and Publicity Co, a Carlton printery which was a subsidiary of the ALP and the union movement, and mostly worked on jobs centred on the needs of these organisations

57 Gilmore 1910, pp 31–32

58 Fred Johns, *Annual biographical directory of the Commonwealth showing who is who in Australasia*, Fred Johns, Adelaide 1913, p 77

59 *Stead's Review*, 2 Nov 1925, p 27

60 Frank A Russel, 'Who are our giants? A man of his hands', clipping from unidentified Australian newspaper c1921–25, collected by Mabel Gilbert in her scrapbook

61 B McLean, 'The perfect woman is she extinct? What Web Gilbert says', clipping inscribed as *Sun News Pictorial*, 13 Oct 1922 in J G Roberts scrapbooks, La Trobe Library, MS8508, vol 12, p 467

62 'Rupert Bunny and Web Gilbert' in *Art in Australia*, new series, no 1, Feb 1921, p 41

## 'Her invitation and her contempt': Bertram Mackennal and the sculptural femme fatale in the 1890s

pp 97–103

1 Bertram Mackennal to James Smith, 23 Sept 1892, James Smith papers

2 The term 'New Sculpture' derives from the title of the first historical assessment of the movement, written by Edmund Gosse in 1894: 'The New Sculpture 1879–1894', *Art Journal* 56, 1894, pp 138–42, 199–203, 277–82, 306–11. See further, Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1983; Benedict Read, *Victorian sculpture*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1982; and note 3 below

3 For an analysis of the importance of the 'ideal' or 'imaginative' life-size statue in the development of modern British sculpture in the 1880s and 1890s, see David Getsy, *Body doubles: sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2004 and, for further case studies, David Getsy, 'Privileging the object of sculpture: actuality and Harry Bates's *Pandora* of 1890', *Art History* 28, no 1, 2005, pp 74-95; David Getsy, 'Strategy and sentimentality: C J Allen in the 1890s' in Matthew Clough (ed), *C J Allen 1862–1956: sculptor and teacher*, University of Liverpool Art Collections, Liverpool 2003, pp 69–80; and David Getsy, 'Encountering the male nude at the origins of modern sculpture: Rodin, Leighton, Hildebrand, and the negotiation of physicality and temporality' in Antoinette Roesler-Friedenthal & Johannes Nathan (eds), *The enduring instant: time and the spectator in the visual arts*, Gebr Mann Verlag, Berlin 2003, pp 296–313. For an in-depth analysis of Alfred Gilbert's repeated deployment of this tactic, see Jason Edwards, *Alfred Gilbert's aestheticism: Gilbert amongst Whistler, Wilde, Leighton, Pater and Burne-Jones*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2006

4 It is outside the scope of this essay to explore more fully the reasons for Mackennal's primary orientation toward British sculpture rather than the scene in Paris. Beyond the issues of national affiliation and the greater potential for securing commissions in the London market (which nevertheless still proved to be difficult for him), the stylistic and iconographic priorities of Mackennal's work were more in accord with those of the New Sculpture as it was developing. Given the considerable critical and market enthusiasm the New Sculpture had begun to enjoy in the late 1880s, it is not surprising that these factors came together to orient Mackennal towards London while also attempting to gain a foothold in the larger international scene of Paris

5 For surveys, see Henk van Os, *Femmes fatales 1860–1910*, Groninger Museum, Groningen, Netherlands 2003; Mario Praz, *The romantic agony*, trans Angus Davidson, 2nd ed, Meridian Books, Cleveland, Ohio 1968 (1951)

6 I am here relying on the multiple and compelling feminist critiques of the femme fatale. The full extent of this literature cannot be summarised here, but major texts include Elaine Showalter, *Sexual anarchy: gender and culture at the fin de siècle*, Viking, New York 1990; Elaine Showalter, *Daughters of decadence: women writers of the fin-de-siècle*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ 1993; Judith Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: the history of an enchantress*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1994; Patricia Mathews, *Passionate discontent: creativity, gender, and French Symbolist art*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1999; Elizabeth Kolbinger Menon, *Evil by design: the creation and marketing of the femme fatale*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 2006

7 For instance, the prototypical Decadent novel, Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À rebours* of 1884, contains almost no references to sculpture, despite the protagonist's extensive descriptions of paintings, interiors, drawings, prints, decorative objects, flowers and so on

8 Symbolism took many forms across Europe and was often only loosely related to the theoretical debates that defined the movement in France. For representative discussions of the variety of sculpture in the context of international Symbolism, see Emmanuelle Héran, 'Art for the sake of the soul: polychrome sculpture and literary

symbolism' in Andreas Blühm et al, *The colour of sculpture 1840–1910*, Waanders Uitgevers, Zwolle 1996, pp 83–102; Bernhard Maaz, 'Modern tendencies in German sculpture 1870–1914: forms, styles, symbolism' in Ingrid Ehrhardt & Simon Reynolds (eds), *Kingdom of the soul: Symbolist art in Germany 1870-1920*, Prestel, Munich and London 2000, pp 177–87; Mathews 1999; Claudine Mitchell, 'Rodin and the Baudelairian legacy: Arthur Symons on the sculptor as poet' in Claudine Mitchell (ed), *Rodin: the Zola of sculpture*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2004, pp 73–94; Robert Upstone, 'Symbolism in three dimensions' in Andrew Wilton et al, *The age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860–1910*, Tate Gallery Publishing, London 1997, pp 83–92. For a concise critique of the over-use of the convenient label of 'symbolism' outside of the French context, see Caroline Arscott, 'Signing off', *Tate: The Art Magazine*, no 13, 1997, p 88

9 Gosse 1894, p 311

10 For a more sustained account of the importance of circumambulation, see Getsy 2004, pp 15–42

11 Debates about the propriety of the female nude in late-Victorian art provide the essential context for these developments. For discussions, see Alison Smith, *The Victorian nude: sexuality, morality and art*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1996; Alison Smith, 'The "British matron" and the body beautiful: the nude debate of 1885' in Elizabeth Prettejohn (ed), *After the pre-Raphaelites: art and aestheticism in Victorian England*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1999, pp 19–48; Alison Smith (ed), *Exposed: the Victorian nude*, Tate Publishing, London 2001

12 Noel Hutchison, *Bertram Mackennal*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1973, pp 5, 10

13 A full account of these statues cannot be offered here, but both are discussed at length in Getsy 2004, pp 69–74, 92–97

14 R Jope-Slade, 'An Australian quartette', *Magazine of Art*, 1895, p 390

15 Such invocations of Darwinian imagery and of the possibility of regression were central to the late 19th-century cultural imagination, especially around formulations such as Decadence. See, for instance, Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33, no 4, 1979, pp 434–53 and Whitney Davis, 'Decadence and the organic metaphor', *Representations* 89, 2005, pp 131–49

16 Quoted in Jope-Slade 1895, pp 391–92

17 Praz 1968, p 226. The phrase occurs in his account of Swinburne, but the concept of algolagnia underwrites all of Praz's extensive account of the femme fatale in 19th-century literature

18 The full quote is '[13] A foolish woman is clamourous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing. [14] For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, [15] To call passengers who go right on their ways: [16] Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, [17] Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. [18] But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell', Proverbs 9:13–18, *King James Bible*

19 Mackennal to Smith, 20 May 1895

20 Jope-Slade 1895, pp 390–91

21 Mackennal to Theodore Fink, June? 1894, Theodore Fink papers

22 Mackennal to Fink 1894

23 In his focused use of polychromy and multiple materials as a means to establish actuality, Mackennal was following upon the major precedent set by Harry Bates with his *Pandora* in 1890. On this statue and on the concept of 'actuality' more generally, see Getsy 2005, pp 74–95. On the flourishing of polychrome sculpture at the end of the 19th century, see Blühm et al 1996

## 'Here am I!': sexual imagery and its role in the sculpture of Bertram Mackennal

pp 105–19

1 The statue has been given various titles, some less flattering than others. The title given in Mackennal's obituary in *The Times*, London, 12 Oct 1931, is *Here am I*. The earlier *Eton Chronicle*, no 139, 1921, p 855, published at the time of commissioning confirms an extended title, *Here am I, take me*. At the Royal Academy exhibition in 1923 the title is *War memorial for Eton College*

2 'Eton war memorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July 1923, p 9

3 *Eton Chronicle*, no 139, p 855. The title probably owes something to the Biblical story of Samuel hearing the call of Jehovah (1 Samuel 3) but there is also the statement by King David which is closer in content and context of war (2 Samuel 15:26). I am indebted to Terry Lane for the Samuel story reference and particularly indebted to him and Deborah Edwards for giving me access to their Eton memorial files

4 *Evening Standard*, London, July 1923, np

5 Letter by J H Whittraff to the Provost, Eton College, 10 July 1923, National Gallery of Victoria file

6 H S Salt, *Memories of Bygone Eton*, Hutchinson & Co, London 1928, p 206

7 See George M A Hanfmann, *Classical sculpture*, a history of Western sculpture series, Michael Joseph, London 1967, pls 114, 115 for good illustrations of Myron's *The discus thrower* c440 BCE and other works from the period

8 J S [John Shirlow?], 'Personal recollection', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 Oct 1931, np

9 See 'Greek influence in English life and thought' in Sir Ernest Barker, *Traditions of civility: eight essays*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1948, pp 1–34

10 Harvey Broadbent, *Gallipoli: the fatal shore*, Viking, Camberwell 2005, p 40

11 Brian Gardner (ed), *Up the line to death: the war poets 1914–1918: an anthology*, Methuen, London 1964, p 10

12 Gardner 1964, p 34

13 Broadbent 2005, pp 144–45

14 Gardner 1964, p 180

15 Gardner 1964, p 34

16 Mackennal to J R McGregor, 22 Dec 1923, James McGregor papers

17 1 Corinthians 15: 51–52, *The Holy Bible*, revised version with marginal references, Cambridge University Press, London 1898, p 178

18 See J A Symonds, *A problem in Greek ethics, being an enquiry into the phenomenon of sexual inversion*, London, first written in 1873, published in an edition of ten copies in 1883 for private circulation and appended to Havelock Ellis's banned book, *Sexual inversion*, London 1897. Walter Pater's views may be found in his *Greek studies: a series of essays*, Macmillan, London 1895, or later editions

19 Robert Graves, *Goodbye to all that*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1960 (1929), p 39

20 Graves 1960, p 23

21 Georges Bataille, *The tears of Eros*, City Lights Books, San Francisco 1989, p 70

22 Quoted by Barker 1948, p 1

23 Havelock Ellis, *The new spirit*, 3rd edn, Walter Scott Ltd, London 1892, p 10

24 See Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of perversity: fantasies of feminine evil in fin-de-siècle culture*, Oxford University Press, New York 1986 as well as Philippe Jullian, *Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist painters of the 1890s*, Praeger, New York 1971. Both are good guides to the attitudes of the times

25 Quoted by Mary Anne Stevens, 'Towards a definition of Symbolism' in John Christian (ed), *The last romantics: the romantic tradition in British art: Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer*, Barbican Art Gallery/Lund Humphries, London 1989, p 33

26 Listed in Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: a complete dictionary ... 1769 to 1904*, vol 3, Kingsmead Reprints, Bath 1970 (George Bell, London 1905), p 145

27 Matthew 25:1–13, New Testament, *The Holy Bible* 1898, p 28

28 Jullian 1971, pp 181–84

29 R H Croll (ed), *Smike to Bulldog: letters from Sir Arthur Streeton to Tom Roberts*, Ure Smith, Sydney 1946, p 26, mentions 'Bernhardt is going to sit for Mackennal'. The bust is to be seen in a studio portrait photograph of Mackennal amongst his sculptures at the St John's Wood, London studio late in the 1890s. Present location unknown

30 Letter from Mackennal to Theodore Fink, 6 May 1892, Theodore Fink papers: 'The great Sara [sic] is here. I expect to see her on Saturday. I did not exhibit her bust yet. I am to work on it again ... it must be a success'

31 In a letter to Fink, 28 and 30 Dec 1891, Mackennal indicates the beginnings of *Circe*: 'I have an idea dimly growing in my brain of what I want to do. I can't quite grasp it yet. It had better simmer for two or three months then I shall feel more like it ...'

32 Letter from Mackennal to Fink, 'Near the end of June' 1894

33 See Elizabeth Prettejohn, 'Morality versus aesthetics in critical interpretations of Frederic Leighton, 1855–1875', *Burlington Magazine*, no 138, 1996, pp 79–86 and also her essay 'Leighton: the aesthetic as academic' in Rafael Cardoso Denis & Colin Trodd (eds), *Art and the academy in the 19th century*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick NJ 2000, pp 34–35

34 From Proverbs 9:14. *'For she sitteth ...'* is listed as '5 ft high' in M H Spielmann (ed), *Royal Academy Pictures 1895*, Cassell & Co, London 1895, p 28. A later photograph shows Mackennal in his studio with this work on a base towering behind him; see *Herald*, Melbourne, 14 Feb 1920. Beattie's dimensions are wrong in terms of her reference but possibly right in terms of the final work; see Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1983, p 173, details to illus 174. Until this work is found we shall never be sure

35 Susan Beattie 1983, p 176

36 See Robin Tranter, *Bertram Mackennal: a career*, self-published, Sydney 2004, pp 40–43

37 Spielmann 1895, p 5

38 Mackennal to James Smith, 20 May 1895, James Smith papers

39 Claude Phillips, *The Academy*, 19 June 1895, p 548

40 Ellis 1892, pp 7–10

41 Spielmann 1895, pp 2–3

42 Isobel Jacobs, 'Art abroad – a review', *Art and Architecture*, Sydney, vol 9, no 1, Jan–Feb 1912, p 418

43 Anita Callaway, *Visual ephemera: theatrical art in 19th century Australia*, University of NSW Press, Sydney 2000, pp 71–72

44 This can be seen with the fine statuette *Sappho* 1909 shown in a marble version in the 1909 Royal Academy exhibition. Its seated nude enclosed form of head and arms on drawn-up knees could equally have been called 'Reverie' or 'Meditation' or 'Thinking while the billy boils'. There is little sense of the lesbian poet of ancient times

## Strategies of a sculptor: the shifting allegories of Bertram Mackennal's civic sculpture

pp 121–41

1 Treasury papers, T26/23/423, Public Records Office, Kew, London. The other sculptors who submitted designs were G A Lawson, W S Firth and F W Pomeroy. With little information remaining as background to this commission, it is possible that Mackennal was recommended through his involvement with the Royal Society of British Sculptors, who recommended sculptors to commissioning bodies seeking their services, see A L Baldry, *Modern British sculpture: an official record of some of the works by members of the Royal Society of British Sculptors,* Academy Architecture, London nd, np

2 See Tim Barringer, *Men at work: art and labour in Victorian Britain,* Yale University Press, New Haven 2005, pp 1–19

3 The work is briefly described in *Table Talk*, 3 Mar 1893, p 2. Mackennal also mentioned the model in a letter written from Paris to James Smith, 19 Aug 1892, James Smith papers

4 See Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: the theory of a symbolic mode,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1964, p 2

5 Mackennal to Smith, 30 May 1893, James Smith papers

6 'The ornamentation of Parliament Building', *The Australasian,* 2 June 1888, np

7 J S Mackennal, who had already worked on various allegorical figures for the building's interior, had been awarded the work for two bronze lions

8 Richard White, *Inventing Australia,* George Allen and Unwin, Sydney 1981, pp 59–62. These ideas were also succinctly expressed by the Governor, Sir Henry Lock, when he stated in 1886, 'Victoria is the Italy of the southern seas, and, like Venice of old, is destined to become the Nursing Mother of the Arts as well as the Mistress of Commerce. It is simply impossible to overestimate the importance of the influence exercised by art in refining and elevating the tastes of a young and thriving community like our own', cited in *Table Talk,* 18 Mar 1886, p 9

9 Richard Westmacott's pediment group for the London Royal Exchange (1842–44), for example, and Hamo Thornycroft's frieze for the Institute of Royal Chartered Accountants building (1889–1893). It was also a theme that Mackennal would extend in more contemporary forms in his Whitehall pediment sculpture

10 Graeme Sturgeon identifies the figures of both panels in *The development of Australian sculpture,* Thames and Hudson, London 1978, p 62

11 See Marina Warner's classic study of the gendered motifs of allegorical imagery, *Monuments and maidens: the allegory of the female form,* Pan Books, London 1987

12 'The two Mackennals', *Table Talk,* 8 Mar 1889, p 5

13 This is also given that the competition stated that the design of the companion statue 'must have a somewhat similar grouping', cited in *Table Talk,* 17 July 1891, p 14. The article, however, also notes that many of the other entries clearly ignored this requirement in the designs of their models

14 The Victorian period in Britain can also be described as having a similarly frenetic approach to the erection of public monuments. See Penelope Curtis, *Sculpture 1900–1945: after Rodin,* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999, pp 38–40

15 While Jules Dalou's *The triumph of the Republic* was not unveiled until 1899, after Mackennal's initial period in Paris, the model for this work dates from 1879 when it was entered into a competition sponsored by the city of Paris for a monument to the Republic. While Léopold Morice's sculpture of the same subject secured the award, the jury later decided to also have Dalou's more ambitious work installed. Mackennal may have therefore seen the famous model, which was displayed for the public at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts from late 1879. See H W Janson, *19th-century sculpture,* Thames