

PAINTING WAR

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WORLD WAR ART SCHEME

During the First World War the Australian Government established an official war art scheme, sending artists to the front lines to create a visual record of the Australian experience of the war. Around two thousand sketches and paintings were commissioned and acquired between 1916 and 1922, forming the basis of a national collection that continues to have a central place in the way Australians interpret their nation's role in war.

In *Painting War*, Margaret Hutchison examines the official art scheme as a key commemorative practice of the First World War and argues that the artworks had many makers beyond the artists. Government officials and military officers commissioned soldier artists and eminent Australian painters to create images for a collection of art that represented Australia's part in the war for posterity. Their selection of artists and subjects for the war paintings and their emphasis on the eyewitness value of the images over their aesthetic merit profoundly shaped the character of the art collection. Their approach continues to influence the manner in which successive official war artists have represented the Australian Army and other services in their work.

Richly illustrated, *Painting War* is the first book to examine in depth the genesis of one of Australia's most enduring forms of commemoration. It provides an important understanding of the individuals, institutions and the politics behind the war art scheme that helped shape a national memory of the First World War for Australia.

Margaret Hutchison is a lecturer in History in the School of Arts at the Australian Catholic University, Brisbane. Her research focuses on the history of war, culture and memory.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47150-3 — Painting War
Margaret Hutchison
Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108471503

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First published 2019

Cover designed by Anne-Marie Reeves
Typeset by SPi Global

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

ISBN 978-1-108-47150-3 Hardback

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To Tristan

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PREFACE

The Australian Army has a long and admirable record of fostering serious research and publication about its history. For more than a century the Army has seen the relevance of history to its future. From its outset ‘Military History’ was part of the formal education of officers at RMC Duntroon, and for a time officers’ advancement depended upon candidates being able to give a coherent analysis of Stonewall Jackson’s Shenandoah Valley campaigns in promotion exams. An understanding of the Army’s history and traditions remains central to its *esprit de corps* in its most literal meaning.

From the 1970s (as a consequence of educating officers at university level) the Army has produced several generations of educated soldiers, several of whom became historians of note, including John Coates, Robert O’Neill, David Horner, Peter Pedersen, John Mordike, Bob Hall, Jean Bou, Chris Roberts, Bob Stevenson and Craig Stockings. The creation of the Army History Unit in the late 1990s demonstrated the Army’s commitment to encouraging and facilitating serious history. AHU has had a profound influence in managing the Army’s museums, supporting research on Army history and in publishing its history.

One of the most impressive demonstrations of the Army’s commitment to history has been its long association with several major publishers, and notably with Cambridge University Press. This has been a productive relationship between AHU and the former long-standing General Editor of the Army History Series, Professor David Horner.

The Cambridge Army History Series brings to an academic and popular readership historical work of importance across the range of the Army’s interests and across the span of its history. The series, which I now have the honour to edit, seeks to publish research and writing of the highest quality relating to the Army’s operational experience and to its existence as an organisation and as a part of its contribution to the national narrative.

The Army History Unit has created a community of writers and readers (including soldiers in both roles), the product of whose questions, research, debate and writing informs the Army's understanding of itself and its part in Australia's history. It is a history to be proud of in every sense.

Margaret Hutchison's *Painting War* makes us realise something that is too often simply taken for granted: that the collection of First World War art at the very heart of the Australian War Memorial depicts, almost exclusively, Australian soldiers. Soldiers – including the generals who directed the AIF, its renowned figures, its nurses and aviators, as well as the broad mass of those who fought – constitute the subjects of the first and most evocative works that document and commemorate the Australian Army in its first great conflict. As we approach the end of the centenary of that war, Dr Hutchison's pioneering research shows the relationships between artists, the officials who created the war art scheme, and the men and women of the Australian Army whose enduring memorial those works became.

Professor Peter Stanley
General Editor, Australian Army History Series
UNSW Canberra

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Just as the process of creating an art collection involves the interaction of many individuals, so too does the process of researching and writing a book. This volume started life as a doctoral thesis, which I undertook in the School of History at the Australian National University. My mentor and friend, Joan Beaumont, has more energy and passion for the discipline of history – and indeed life – than anyone I know, and I owe her a debt of gratitude for her erudite advice, which has made me reach further and think more deeply about my research. I am also deeply indebted to Anne Brennan for her contagious curiosity and love of art. I would also like to thank Peter Stanley for including this book in the Australian Army History Series and for his sage advice on the manuscript. Thanks also to the wonderful staff at Cambridge University Press for their guidance through the many stages of producing this book, in particular Olivia Tolich, Jodie Fitzsimmons and Cathryn Game.

I am also indebted to scholars in Australia and overseas for their interest in and support of my research. I would like especially to thank the historians at the Australian National University: Frank Bongiorno, Karen Downing, Barry Higman, Pat Jalland, Amanda Laugesen, Peter Londey, Carolyn Strange and Angela Woollacott for their invaluable advice and their encouragement, and Douglas Craig and Nicholas Brown for their belief in my ability not only to research history but also to teach it. I would also like to thank my colleagues and the band of incredible historians at the Australian Catholic University for all their encouragement during the final stages of this project, and especially Maggie Nolan and Michael Ondaatje for their support. Laura and Rob Brandon's generosity in letting me stay during a chilly research trip to Ottawa made my Canadian research possible, and I would especially like to thank Laura for sharing with me her passion for war art. I am also indebted to Brian Foss at Carleton University for the many invigorating discussions about art, and Charlie Hill for sharing his research, knowledge and extraordinary recipes with me.

I am thankful for the assistance of the staff at the Australian War Memorial, particularly Alex Torrens, Anthea Gunn, Ryan Johnson and Stuart Bennington for their untiring help; the National Archives of Australia, Canberra and Melbourne; the National Library of Australia; the State Library of New South Wales; the State Library of Victoria; the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, especially Sharon Lee; the National Gallery of Canada, particularly the always enthusiastic Philip Dombowsky; Library and Archives Canada; the Canadian War Museum; the Imperial War Museum, particularly Sara Bevan; and the Parliamentary Archives, London.

A number of scholarships and grants supported my research for this book. I would like to express my gratitude to the Australian Prime Minister's Centre at the Museum of Australian Democracy for a Summer Scholarship; to the International Council for Canadian Studies for awarding me a Graduate Student Grant in support of my overseas research; and the Australian Academy of the Humanities for a Travelling Fellowship. The number of images in this book was made possible by an award from the Australian Academy of the Humanities Publication Subsidy Scheme for which I am very thankful as well as the generosity of the Army History Unit. Special thanks go to Andrew Richardson of the AHU for tracking down the paintings and sketches.

I am deeply grateful for the constant support and understanding of my friends and family. Thank you especially to Meleah Hampton, who has been there to encourage and commiserate since day 1; and to Alessandro Antonello, Alexis Bergantz, Robyn Curtis, Kim Doyle and Emily Robertson for the many inspiring conversations about all things academic or otherwise. Thank you to my father whose own passion for learning and fine, inquiring mind inspired me to take this path and for his patient reading of numerous drafts; to my mother whose strength, resolve and unwavering love I simply cannot live without; and to Abbey and Steve for their indulgence and the many welcome distractions of life outside the history department. Finally, thank you to Tristan, my fellow explorer on this quest for knowledge, for sharing the excitement and challenges of the life of the historian. This book is dedicated to him because without his patience, counsel, understanding and love, it would simply not have been possible.

Margaret Hutchison
Brisbane, 2018

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography
AFC	Australian Flying Corps
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AWM	Australian War Museum (after 1925, Australian War Memorial)
AWMAC	Australian War Museum Art Committee
AWMC	Australian War Museum Committee
AWRS	Australian War Records Section
BBK	Beaverbrook Papers
BWMC	British War Memorials Committee
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CWM	Canadian War Museum
CWMF	Canadian War Memorials Fund
CWRO	Canadian War Records Office
FRBL	Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
IWM	Imperial War Museum
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NGC	National Gallery of Canada
NLA	National Library of Australia
NWRO	National War Records Office
PA	Parliamentary Archives
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales
SLV	State Library of Victoria
VC	Victoria Cross