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## Shifting boundaries : the art of Eileen Mayo (2000)



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### Abstract

The artist, Eileen Mayo, D.B.E., was born in Norwich, England in 1906. Educated at the Slade School of Art, University of London (1923-24) and at the Central School of Arts and Crafts (1925-1928), she established a career as an illustrator, painter and printmaker in London in the 1930s. Associated with Claude Flight and the Colour Linocut Movement, her works were exhibited at the Royal Academy and extensively elsewhere, and collected by the Victoria and Albert and the British Museums. Mayo was also active as a model and features in works by leading artists such as Dame Laura Knight and Dod Proctor, another influence on her work. During the 1940s she wrote and illustrated books on natural history, a central theme in her work, as well as expanding her range as a printmaker into wood engraving and lithography. In the early 1950s she undertook a comprehensive study of tapestry design in France, rapidly distinguishing herself in this field. Mayo emigrated to Australia in 1952, becoming established as a leading printmaker, poster and stamp designer. Resident in New Zealand from 1962 until her death in 1994, she continued to develop as a printmaker, stretching the possibilities of relief and silk screen techniques, although she achieved greater recognition as a stamp designer during this period. Mayo's career is characterised by her seamless movement between the fine and applied arts, her Arts and Crafts-inspired belief in the right making of things and her uniformly high level of achievement across a wide range of media and genres. Although early works explore the theatrical world of Diaghilev's Ballets

Russes, her subject matter is overwhelmingly rooted in meticulous observation of the natural world. Her ability to find underlying patterns in nature links her work to the more conservative strains of British modernism. Mayo was an artist who undertook commercial work in order to support herself. The full range of her output across the diverse media she employed includes illustrations, books, prints, paintings, tapestries, murals, bookplates, posters, tableware, dioramas, stamps and coins and was produced against a background of artistic practice within three countries in which she lived and worked. The artist's working notes and diaries and all known works are documented in a critical catalogue.

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