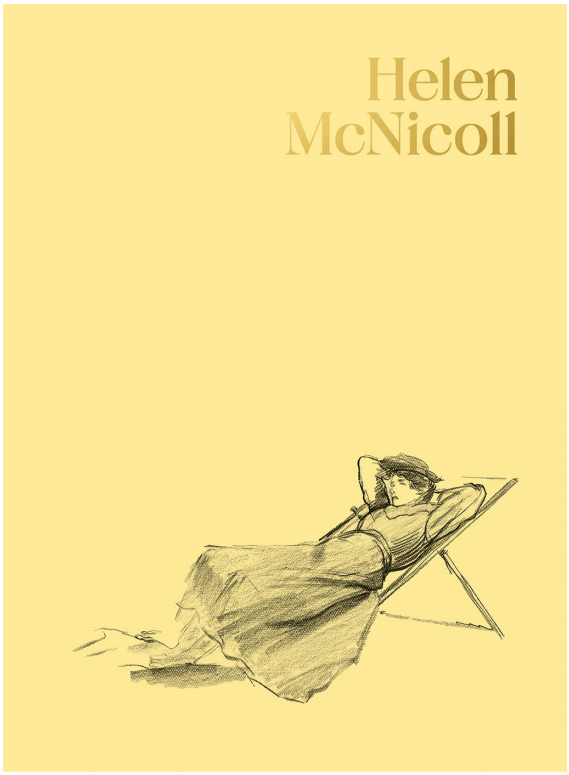
TITLE INFORMATION
Tel: +44 (0) 1394 389950
Email: uksales@accartbooks.com
Web: https://www.accartbooks.com/uk



Helen McNicoll

An Impressionist Journey

Curated by Anne-Marie Bouchard

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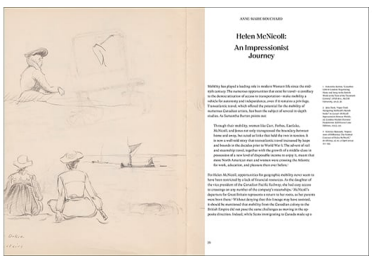
This book is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Helen McNicoll. An Impressionist Journey* at Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, Quebec City, Canada 20 June 2024 to 05 January 2025. Edited by Anne-Marie Bouchard, curator of Modern Art, the volume focuses on the idea of mobility in the life of the Canadian artist Helen McNicoll (1879-1915).

In the early 1900s, when women from well-to-do backgrounds were often confined to family and domestic life, Canadian Impressionist Helen McNicoll stood out for her love of travel and the discovery of new spaces. The artist emphasised painting outdoors and researching the effects of light and atmosphere that her numerous trips sustained. Her favourite subjects were scenes of everyday life, although she succeeded in offering an interpretation distinct from the Impressionists in that she focused more extensively on women's labour.

The *Helen McNicoll. An Impressionist Journey* exhibition presents more than 60 works by the artist, 25 of them from the Pierre Lassonde collection. Through the prism of travel, the book thus examines the themes of female independence, risk-taking, friendship, and freedom for women in the stimulating context of the struggle by English suffragettes to win the right to vote.

Text in English and French.

Helen McNicoll was born in Toronto in 1879 and grew up in Montréal in a well-to-do environment conducive to artistic practice. Scarlet fever rendered her deaf when she was two years old and her parents encouraged her to develop her artistic and musical creativity despite her handicap. She began her artistic training in the late 1890s with William Brymner at the Art Association of Montreal, then moved to England on his advice. She settled in London in 1902 and took courses at the Slade School of Fine Art, recognised for its avant-gardist precepts and its mixed instruction that promoted gender equality. She travelled in Europe and numerous exhibitions afforded her inside knowledge of developments in the realms of impressionism and post-impressionism. She began to exhibit her work at the Art Association in 1906 and received the first Jessie Dow Prize there in 1908. Elected to the Royal Society of British Artists in 1913, then to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1914, she was a prominent Québec modern artist, although her works were exhibited regularly in contemporary exhibitions in Montréal and widely appreciated by critics at the time, remained for a long time in the shadow of other Canadian Impressionists. She died in 1915 at the age of 35 following complications from diabetes. Ten years later, the Art Association of Montreal devoted a major retrospective exhibition to her encompassing more than 120 works.


ANNE-MARIE BOUCHARD

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