

Nurses in art

Since the beginning of the 20th century, military nurses have been represented, at work and at rest, by many different artists. From quick observational sketches completed by recovering soldiers, to detailed works by official war artists.

Examine the following works of art.



Frank Crozier, *Nurse and patient, 3rd Australian CCS France* (c. 1918, oil on wood panel, 23.8 x 27.4 cm, [ART13338](#))

George Coates, *First Australian wounded at Gallipoli arriving at Wandsworth Hospital, London* (1921, oil on canvas, 154.5 x 128 cm, [ART00200](#))



George Lambert, *Balcony of troopers' ward, 14th Australian General Hospital, Abbassia* (1919, oil and pencil on wood panel, 32 x 45.6 cm, [ART02815](#))

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Bruce Fletcher, *Medical evacuation, 2nd Field Ambulance, Vung Tau, Vietnam 1967* (1967, oil on canvas on hardboard, 39.2 x 49.4 cm, [ART40580](#))

Ivor Francis, *Energy of war 1940* (1940, oil on canvas on cardboard canvas, 44.2 x 34.2 cm, [ART28831](#))



Laurence Howie, *Interior of ward, 3rd Australian General Hospital, Abbeville France* (1919, watercolour with pencil on paper, 25.8 x 47.2 cm, [ART93081](#))

Activities

- 1) How are nurses represented in each of the above images? What are they doing? Are they passive or active? Why? Consider the time period, role of women and the artist.

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- 2) Where have these works been produced? How can the location and period be seen in the work (look at environment and uniforms, for example)
- 3) What techniques have been used to capture the subject? (Note application of paint, colour, style and detail) Why?

Research

Research one of the artists whose work is shown above: Frank Crozier, George Coates, George Lambert, Bruce Fletcher, Ivor Francis or Laurence Howie.

What is their story/background? How is the artist's background reflected in their art?

What was the artist's role in war? What effect might this have had on their depiction of nursing?

All of the artists of the above works of art are male. How might this affect their depiction of their subject?

Ivor Francis's work is often identified as giving expression to an anti-war sentiment. Examine his painting. How does this sentiment feature in the work? What role does nursing play in *Energy of war*? Why was a nurse included in the painting?

None of the works depict specific portraits of nurses; rather they offer a general depiction of nursing and nurses in war. Why?

Case Study

Read the following case study on artist Nora Heysen. Compare her images with those you have just examined. How are they similar? How are they different? Give reasons for your answer.