



***Grace Joel, An Impressionist Portrait* by Joel L. Schiff. Dunedin: OUP (2013). RRP: \$45. Pb, full colour, 182pp. ISBN: 9781877578861, Reviewed by Cassandra Fusco.**

The body of works superbly reproduced in this publication, mainly portraiture, mother and

child and nude studies, confirms not only this artist's knowledge of these paradigmatic genres, but also her own assured skills in observation, analysis, structure and colour and independent interpretation. JL Schiff's research reveals that Grace Joel (1864–1924) exhibited to acclaim in London and Paris in the 1890s,<sup>1</sup> and, through an historical contextual lens, he asks and diligently investigates why her self-evident achievements remain so under-acknowledged.<sup>2</sup>

Schiff first became acquainted with Joel's art in a touring exhibition of her work at Auckland Art Gallery (1981). A 30-year fascination and critical engagement began. One consequence is that Schiff has brought to life Joel's art (including several previously unknown pieces), through a deft exploration of her work and world.

*Grace Joel, An Impressionist Portrait* by Joel L. Schiff, is a generous and committed study, accessible, highly readable and most skilfully served by designer Fiona Moffat (OUP).<sup>3</sup> In several respects like studies by Joanne Drayton on Edith Collier (1885-1964) and on Rhona Haszard (1901-31)<sup>4</sup>, and that of Gregory O'Brien on Rosalie Gascoigne (1917-1999)<sup>5</sup>, Schiff's aims to bring this woman's art to wider public attention and, hopefully, inspire further research into other gaps in the history of New Zealand's art.

- 1 Grace Joel trained in Melbourne, London and Paris and held solo exhibitions in several Australasian, English and European cities.
- 2 Unlike her compatriot and near contemporary, Frances Hodgkins (1869-1947), Joel did not leave a large body of correspondence.
- 3 Complimented by rigorous editing and an excellent index by Paula Wagemaker and Diane Lowther respectively.
- 4 Canterbury University Press, 1999 and 2002 respectively.
- 5 Victoria University Press, 2004.