



Helen Galloway McNicoll, *Study of a Child*, ca. 1900, oil on canvas, 61 x 50.8 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Women and children frequently appear in the paintings of Canadian artist Helen Galloway McNicoll (1879–1915). Born in Toronto, McNicoll pursued her academic training and artistic career in England and France. *Sketch of a Child* (ca. 1900) portrays an intimate moment between an infant and a young woman in a vaguely defined setting. The latter's contemplative gaze is directed at the baby, who encompasses most of the space within the composition. McNicoll's

study of the effects of light is evident in her use of pastel colours and a wide range of white and yellow hues. McNicoll establishes a relationship between the subjects by painting them with similar colours and brushstrokes, which are spontaneous and undefined. The soft and warm light pervading the picture enhances the intimacy of the moment. In a time when women Impressionist artists such as Berthe Morisot (1841–1895) and Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) were well known for their depictions of women and children, McNicoll rendered unique contemporary scenes of female domesticity and of private moments of everyday life.

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