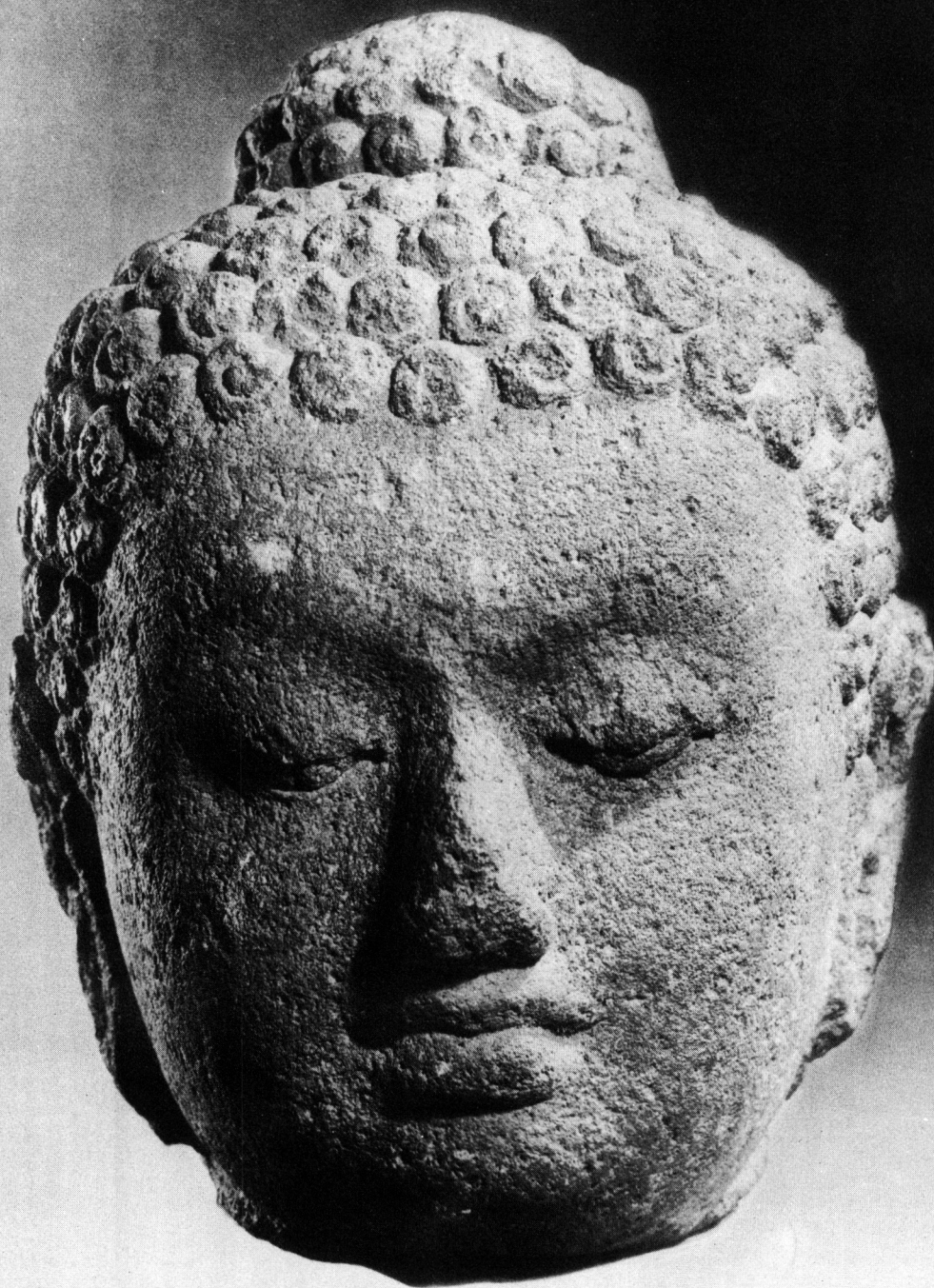


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The Quarterly Bulletin of the
National Gallery of Victoria



Soft Pottery Statuettes of Mortuary Ware.
Dancing Girls and Musicians.
T'ang Dynasty, 618-907 A.D.

KENT COLLECTION.

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Kent, the National Gallery of Victoria is fortunate in possessing a magnificent collection of Chinese ceramics, which may justly be claimed as the most important of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. Originally comprising over a hundred pieces, as well as jade, bronzes and other objets d'art, the collection has been judiciously added to from time to time by the Felton Bequest, with the advice and assistance of the original donor. Visitors to the McAllan Gallery, where these treasures are displayed under natural lighting conditions, will find an almost unlimited field for the study and enjoyment of Chinese art.

The subtle controlled and sensitive art of the Chinese craftsman is not always readily understood at first glance, nor its true significance appreciated to the full by Western eyes. It must be remembered that, for the Chinese, beauty of line and quality of texture, colour and glaze are of the first importance. This is particularly true of the earlier pieces, whose exquisite symmetry and proportion has rarely been equalled by the potters of other lands. Lovers of English and Continental china, whose charm depends very largely on exterior, or extraneous, decoration, such as floral garlands in relief, or the almost lifelike reproduction of silks and satins and smiling faces, popularised by Dresden, Chelsea or Bow, will find no parallel in the infinitely more austere and abstracted art of China. The beautiful little figures reproduced on this page are more than quaint or pretty—they have an elegance, a character, and a rhythmic flowing line which stamps them as serious works of art for all time. The same may be said for the series of T'ang horses, whose bold simplicity of design makes them akin to the best contemporary sculptors of the Western world.

The Kent Collection is particularly rich in early pottery figures, such as the musicians and dancing girls above. The famous Sung Dynasty is represented by numerous fine examples, amongst them the beautiful black and white wine jar of T'zu Chow ware, reproduced in our Bulletin No. 1. Characteristic works of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties, and of the Ching (Manchu) era, bring the collection up to comparatively modern times.

MY RECENT VISIT TO ENGLAND AND AMERICA gave me a valuable opportunity of appraising the needs of our own National Gallery and comparing them with those of other great collections overseas. The buying policy for any great collection must be governed by local factors, and must vary with individual local needs. The type of collection aimed at by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for instance, is very different from the collection I should like to see in the National Gallery of Victoria.

I am convinced that the Melbourne Gallery has a big educational duty towards the Australian public and that we should build up our collection with this specific aim in view. Owing to our isolated geographical position, the majority of Australians are unable to study fine works of art at first hand, except in our National Galleries and Art Museums. It is therefore of supreme importance that each individual picture should carry its own weight as a unit of the collection as a whole. Wall space will always be a problem, and we literally cannot afford to squander one inch of room on anything but the best pictures we can get. The National Gallery must stand for something more than a series of unrelated rooms filled with pictures—even good pictures. Students of art and literature, history and economics, as well as the large number of people who enjoy looking at pictures without any specialised interest, should find it a source of help and inspiration. Here in Australia, appreciation of local art is steadily growing, but we must encourage the public to understand and appreciate the art of other countries and other ages, so that by comparison and the creation of standards they will have a better understanding of the art of to-day.

In consideration of the enormous prices paid to-day for the few Old Masters that occasionally come on the market, it seems an impractical policy for us here in the Antipodes to try at this late stage to build up a collection on the great names of the past. Let us never forget that in every great period of art there flourished innumerable fine painters typical of their age, whose names, unhallowed with the title of "Old Masters," are long forgotten, though their works live on. It is my considered opinion that the Australian public would be infinitely better catered for if we could concentrate on getting together small groups of highly representative period works, irrespective of names, and covering the important centuries of European culture, as an educational background to nineteenth and twentieth century painting. Such pictures, arranged not according to country of origin, but in century groups, would have a high educational value for the student, who would be able to gain a knowledge of a period as a whole, rather than of one particular country. By century groups is meant the hanging of pictures belonging to the same period, without regard to nationality. Apart from the educational aspect, a room full of Dutch interiors of the sixteenth century, no matter how well painted, is apt to weary the eye and mind. In discussing this aspect of a collection with other directors abroad, I was interested to find out that "museum fatigue" is a recognised evil that has to be combatted by the judicious hanging and attractive layout of the exhibits. Even a masterpiece such as our own Van Eyck can be weakened by careless placing, overcrowding, wrongly-coloured walls, and so on.

Here in Melbourne we have vast, old-fashioned rooms, where the seemingly endless rows of pictures are a very real deterrent to the enjoyment of individual works. In the Buvelot Gallery, the light-coloured bays erected a few years ago for our best water colours have a far less monotonous and depressing effect. In the new building which we hope to have in the not-too-far-distant future, I would like to see a number of small rooms, hung as far as possible according to centuries, with the picture space broken by an occasional bit of period tapestry or a fine piece of furniture or sculpture. Such a method of showing would greatly enhance the value of the collection both from an aesthetic and educational point of view.

DARYL LINDSAY.

The cover design on this issue is the carved stone head of a Buddha from the Borobudur in Java.



PHILIP, FOURTH EARL OF PEMBROKE

By Sir Anthony Van Dyck

1599-1641

Felton Bequest, 1937

The three paintings here reproduced are the work of three great exponents of British portraiture — Van Dyck, Raeburn, and the contemporary Englishman, Augustus John. All three pictures, so different in technical approach, have one essential common to every portrait worthy of the name. In each one, the artist has given us not only the character and likeness of the sitter himself, but a sort of secondary or cosmic likeness — a universal attribute inherent in his particular type. Van Dyck's Earl of Pembroke, for instance, is definitely a portrait of this particular Earl and nobody else. At the same time it typifies the kind of aristocrat who turns up in every country and period — elegant, slightly supercilious, the personality of the individual man stylised through generations of living according to a particular aristocratic pattern of life. In the same way, Admiral Deans, with his bloodshot eye and his telescope, is a person we should immediately recognise walking down Collins Street, but Raeburn has somehow managed to imbue this bluff, red-haired man with the characteristics peculiar to seafaring men through the ages. To come down to our own day, Augustus John possesses this kind of twofold insight into character in a high degree — his "Robin" convinces not only as an excellent likeness of a particular boy — he is EVERY boy.

The tradition of British portrait painting may be said to have originated with Sir Anthony Van Dyck some three hundred years ago. Born in Antwerp, and a pupil of Rubens, Van Dyck came to London in 1620 to carry out a commission for James I.



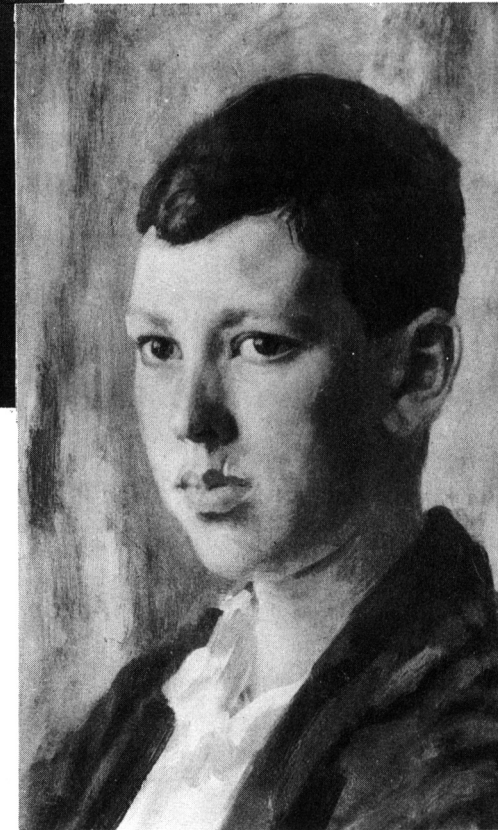
ADMIRAL ROBERT DEANS
By Sir Henry Raeburn, R.A.
1756-1853
Felton Bequest, 1911

For the next twenty years he was mainly in England, painting society beauties and the people of the Court. His burial in St. Paul's Cathedral tells us in what high esteem he was held by his adopted country. Van Dyck's influence on British art was great and lasting, and can be traced through practically all the leading seventeenth and eighteenth century portrait painters.

We find Raeburn, born in Scotland nearly two hundred years later, depicting the Scottish gentry with the same suavity and grace, fine draftsmanship and nobly planned composition that Van Dyck had taught the English to expect in their portraits of high society.

About half way through the nineteenth century British portrait painters, from various causes that cannot be entered into here, began to descend into a bottomless pit of sentimentality, from which they were scarcely retrieved by such competent individual artists as Millais.

Augustus John, born in 1878, is an important link in the tradition of British portraiture, to which he brings life and character and the distinction which first made it great.



PORTRAIT OF A BOY
"ROBIN"
By Augustus John, R.A.
1878-
Felton Bequest, 1920



HEAD OF NEGRESS
By Francis de Erdely
Drawing in Indian Ink
Purchased 1945

Francis de Erdely, two of whose drawings are reproduced on the opposite page, is a Hungarian artist, well known in pre-war Europe and now resident in California. He is represented in the permanent collections of Madrid, Barcelona, Brussels, Antwerp and many other European cities, and in various galleries in the United States.

Mr. de Erdely has a vivid pictorial imagination, which finds expression through a forceful and highly personal technique, in whatever medium he works. Here is no haphazard choice of subject matter — almost everything by this artist has some deep-lying sociological significance, which carries a sense of passionate sincerity and conviction. Many of his American drawings and paintings deal with the negro problem. An oil painting of a young negro girl, "The Red Sweater," with which he won the 1945 May Co. Purchase Prize at Denver, seems to embody the simplicity and sadness characteristic of her race. In another fine painting, "Man of the Dust Bowl," the artist symbolises the struggle of man against the ruthless forces of nature.

The drawing, "Memories of Lincoln," is described by the artist as "a symbolical representation of the negro problem since emancipation." There is something ominous and fateful about these dark, brooding faces and in the fantastic insets of the background. An atmosphere of tragic frustration has somehow been achieved without recourse to the type of literary and emotional appeal with which a subject of this kind would have been handled by the majority of the painters of last century. The "Head of a Negress" is a good, solid drawing, free of the technical affectations which beset so much contemporary drawing to-day. The technical means by which both of these drawings are carried out is of special interest. Instead of a pen, the artist has used a sharpened wooden stick, loaded with Indian ink. The same instrument is used for the finest lines and for the rubbed or wash effects of the ink. The quality of line and texture thus attained must be seen in the original drawings to be properly appreciated.



MEMORIES OF LINCOLN
By Francis de Erdely
Drawing in Indian Ink
Purchased 1945

GEMS FROM THE ART MUSEUM

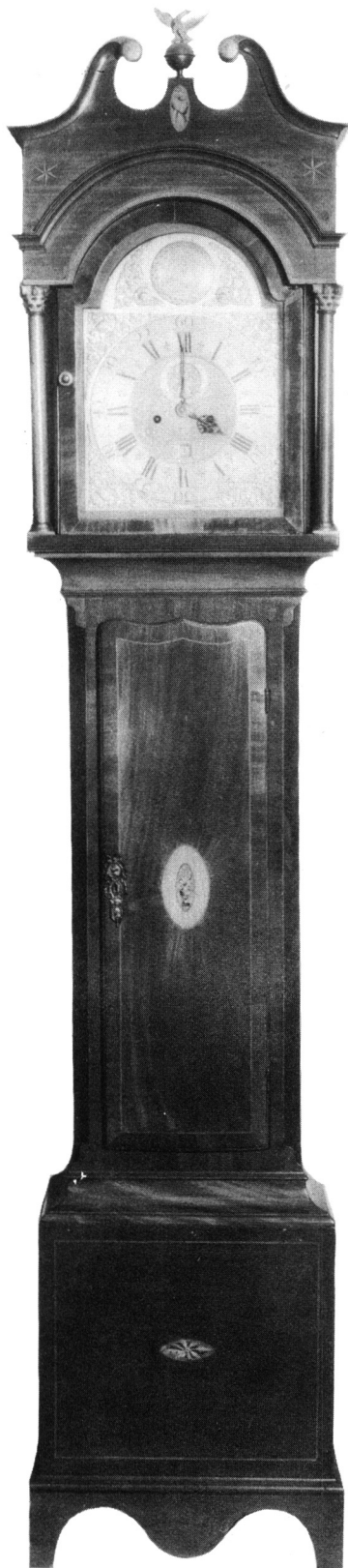
No. 4

GRANDFATHER CLOCK

By John Elliott of Plymouth

18th Century

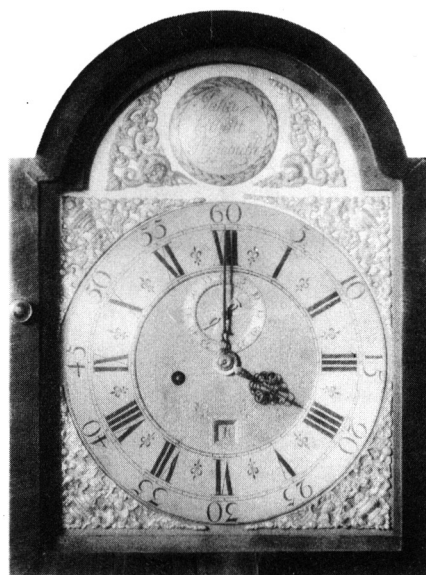
Connell Collection



The first long-case pendulum clock was made by Thomas Tompion in 1681. Since then grandfather clocks have become an established feature of English furniture — one might almost say of English domestic life. A graceful grandfather clock ticking away the hours on a staircase of old oak seems peculiarly appropriate to the English character. In the eighteenth century, grandfather clocks were designed in conformity with the prevailing style in furniture and architecture, in which great care was given to proportion in design. The simpler Georgian clocks, designed and decorated in the manner of Sheraton, Chippendale, Hepplewhite and others of the great Georgian designers, are things of beauty for their own sakes, apart from the extraordinary precision of the mechanism, which often functions as well to-day as when first constructed.

Unfortunately, later designs by lesser men often tend to over-elaboration of the upper part of the case, which gives an unpleasant feeling of topheaviness to the whole structure. Many clockmakers went in for elaborate metal work on the dials, while others delighted in all sorts of strange conceits, such as painted faces bearing sun, moon and stars and other devices, usually executed with remarkably good taste. One of the earliest clockmakers after Tompion was John Burgess of Wigan. Other famous designers of grandfather clocks were Pennington, Helm, Brown of Liverpool, and John Paxton of Cheltenham. Unfortunately for collectors of genuine antique grandfather clocks, the dial has sometimes been changed to suit a purchaser, or for some other reason, so that a grandfather may easily bear the wrong description as to date and maker.

The clock shown here is of Sheraton design, the dial flanked by fluted columns in the classical manner and surmounted by the classical eagle, which is such a typical feature of Georgian decoration. The dial, ornamented with rather over-elaborated brass work, bears large, easily-read numerals, with the maker's name, "John Elliott of Plymouth," engraved on a circular metal medallion above.



THE DIRECTOR RETURNED LAST AUGUST from a visit to England and America, where several important purchases were made on behalf of the Felton Bequest and Trustees of the National Gallery. A number of English contemporary oils, water colours, drawings, prints, etc., were also acquired, and these, together with eleven works purchased for the Ballarat, Geelong and Castlemaine Galleries, will be placed on exhibition on their arrival in the new year. A successful innovation in the Latrobe Gallery during the winter months was a Loan Exhibition from Victorian Provincial Galleries, who lent us pictures by the early Australian artists, David Davies, Frederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts and Walter Withers. These were supplemented by suitable works of the same period from our permanent collection, and provided interesting matter for study and comparison. Many visitors were surprised at the number of fine pictures by these artists in possession of the smaller galleries.

At the close of the Loan Exhibition the Latrobe Gallery was re-hung with a new arrangement of representative works, and the Textile Room with Australian water colours from the time of Conrad Martens up to the present day. Lack of wall space prevents the simultaneous showing of all our smaller oil paintings, but a screen has been placed at the east end of the Buvelot Gallery, carrying one or two selected works, under the title of "Small Gems from the Collection," which are changed each week.

"Australia at War," an exhibition organised by Sergeant Frank Andrew, and "The War at Sea," on loan from the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, attracted a good attendance in the Latrobe and Print Galleries respectively. The Print Gallery also showed a comprehensive exhibition of French etchings, which gave some idea of the vast resources which the Print Room offers for study and research. The Print Room reports that nine schools have been added to the scheme by which coloured reproductions of famous paintings are loaned in rotation to Victorian schools and educational institutions. Throughout the year lunch-time lectures in the Latrobe Street Lecture Hall have been enjoyed by those who attended, but we should like to see a larger audience when they become better known to the public. The first lecture for 1946 will be held on Thursday, 7th March, at 2.15 p.m.

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Assistant Keeper of the Prints	- - -	Dr. Ursula Hoff
Guide Lecturer	- - -	Andrew E. Anderson
Head of the National Gallery Schools	- - -	Charles Wheeler
Drawing Master	- - -	William Rowell

Recent acquisitions to the Art Gallery include:—

OILS

Twilight at Ivanhoe, David Davies	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	Purchased
Afternoon in August, Lloyd Rees	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Waratah, Margaret Preston	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Waterloo Street, George Lawrence	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	Felton Bequest

WATER COLOURS

Spanish Boats, George Bell	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	Purchased
The Woodland Track, Ethelbert White	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	Purchased
Open Door, Enid Cambridge	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	Felton Bequest

MISCELLANEOUS

Two Water Colour Drawings, Sydney Ure Smith.
 Coloured Chalk Drawing, Arnold Shore.
 Seventeen Reproductions, Twin Prints.
 Drawings by Francis de Erdely, Erwin Fabian, Alan Warren, Glyn Philpot, Augustus John, William Rothenstein.

Generous presentations include sixteen etchings and drypoints of American Birds by Emerson Tuttle presented by the artist; three pages from the sketch book of John Varley, presented by Mrs. Montague Grover, and nine drawings by Henry Tonks presented by Mr. H. C. Collins Baker, of the Huntington Art Gallery. Miss Nora Gurdon presented the Art Museum with various articles of early nineteenth century French wearing apparel.

A selection of postcards, coloured reproductions, illustrated catalogues, etc., etc., are on sale at the Swanston Street entrance to the Gallery. An up-to-date catalogue of the Art Gallery is now available; price, one shilling.