

THE
QUARTERLY
BULLETIN
OF THE
NATIONAL
GALLERY
OF VICTORIA



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1946

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE STREETON MEMORIAL EXHIBITION IN 1944, no other one-man exhibition held in the National Gallery of Victoria has created such interest and enthusiasm as the retrospective exhibition of works by Rupert Bunny. I would like to take this opportunity of expressing the very real pleasure it gave me as Director, to be associated with such an important and inspiring event. Restricted space in this little journal does not allow for the reproduction of more than two of the six works purchased from the exhibition under the terms of the Felton Bequest, which appear on page 5.

Our cover design in this issue is the full-length figure study, "La Belle Jardiniere," by Augustus John. This fine painting, purchased in England under the terms of the Felton Bequest in 1945, is specially valuable to our collection, in that it helps to build up a really representative group by one of the greatest living English painters. This Gallery now possesses two fine portraits—"The Artist's Daughter" and "Robin," a still life, "The White Primula," and the brilliant **tour de force** "Judge Dowdall, Lord Mayor of Liverpool"—a picture the City Art Gallery of Liverpool would like to own to-day, and of which Dr. John Rothenstein in his introduction to "Augustus John" (Phaidon Press) writes that "no better official portrait has been painted anywhere during the present century."

"La Belle Jardiniere"—apart from its importance in building up a fine panel by this artist—is a beautifully designed work of rare quality and colour, and typical of John at the height of his powers when he stamped for all time his highly distinctive imprint on British painting. This picture belongs to the epoch of the Augustus John woman. Like other great portrait painters before him, John has forever stylized on canvas a certain type of woman, just as we have the Gainsborough or Reynolds type, and in France the languid, dreamy women beloved of Greuze. Our new John is now hanging in the McArthur Gallery, and should be seen in the original by anyone interested in the actual texture of painting, which can only be hinted at in our reproduction. The colour scheme is in rich reds and blues, with the exquisite little flowers giving the necessary accent to the simplicity of the flowing jacket and dress and the purple line of the mountain beyond.

Two other exhibitions shown in the National Gallery during the last quarter were Paintings and Drawings by V. Murray Griffin, Official War Artist, and a loan exhibition from the Collection of Mrs. R. G. Casey.

The lending of attractively-framed colour prints by old and modern masters to Victorian schools and other institutions continues to be one of the most popular and worthwhile services rendered by the National Gallery to the public. Unfortunately, some two hundred new prints cannot be made available at present owing to the glass shortage.

During the last half of 1946 all loan works were recalled. The loan collection is now in process of being revised, and early in 1947 loans will again be available to municipal and country institutions. Special exhibitions of English contemporary paintings and of Australian water colours have been on circuit to the country galleries. Special loans were also made to the Kew and South Melbourne City Councils.

The transfer of the Drawing School to its new location in the former Lending Library has been successfully carried out, and the Studios brought up to date. Mr. William Dargie and Mr. Murray Griffin have embarked with enthusiasm on their new duties in the Schools.

DARYL LINDSAY.

HEAD OF A VIRGIN

Bronze

By Ola Cohn

Purchased 1945.



Ola Cohn, the creator of this arresting piece of contemporary sculpture, has exhibited with the London Group and in the Paris Salon. Her work is well known in Australia. To those who may wonder just why the sculptor has chosen to represent a virgin by this unusual type, she replies in her own words:—"I have symbolised the idea by depicting a being from another planet—a being that is incomplete. It contains both sexes, making it sexless—therefore a virgin. It closes its eyes and lives within itself—ever growing in intellectual thought and giving forth a feeling of peace that only a virgin could express."



SELF PORTRAIT By Rupert Bunny.

Felton Bequest, 1937.

Rupert Bunny Exhibition

ON THE FIRST OF OCTOBER, 1946, a retrospective exhibition of nearly a hundred works by a great Australian painter, Rupert Bunny, was opened to the public in the National Gallery of Victoria. During the seven weeks when the exhibition was on view it was visited by well over 25,000 people, and widespread interest was aroused by the scope and variety of the work, which ranged from tiny gem-like landscape notes to full length portraits and the brilliantly coloured and arresting large-scale murals.

An added attraction to the record crowd attending the opening ceremony was the presence of Mr. Bunny, enabling visitors to see for themselves this modest and retiring man, who has long been regarded as one of the greatest influences in the history of Australian painting.

Sir Alan Newton, in officially declaring the exhibition open, paid an eloquent and fitting tribute to Mr. Bunny, both as artist and man, when he said:—

"This exhibition not only gives the ordinary man an opportunity to extol Mr. Bunny, but also enables Mr. Bunny, by the example of his work, to illumine the ordinary man with the knowledge that the rich fruits of civilisation do not fall into his lap, but must be cultivated with intense work and supreme vision: in short, with genius. It has been said, with truth, that, if the few thousand men and women in the world who possess this great quality were to die simultaneously, there would be no fruits and civilisation would vanish. And so this exhibition does us a great service by reminding us, whether we be Cabinet Ministers or cabinet makers, that there are dangers in the cultivation of mediocrity: it leads to barbarism. We are too often prone to believe that we can do anything, each one of us, if only we set our minds to it. We forget that the mind is the trouble. This exhibition of the work of a great mind will help us to remember.

"Great minds, in all walks in life, have certain features in common, and therefore I was interested to read some expressions of opinion by Mr. Bunny on the subject of impressionistic paintings. In addition to alluding to certain of these as 'frightful monstrosities,' he took occasion to point out that the principles underlying good painting are quite simple. This ability to make a difficult subject seem easy is one quality common to all great men. Another is their desire to help their juniors, and so we find that the young painters of this generation have been influenced and inspired by Mr. Bunny, who, in turn, has given them the greatest understanding and encouragement.

"I am not qualified to give you an informed criticism of the paintings in this exhibition, but I have often been struck by the fact that a good painting has a rare quality of vitality, whereas a bad painting seems dead and lifeless. Indeed, doubtless as a result of my upbringing in a surgical environment, I cannot help feeling sorry for those painters whose lifeless works continue to hang about, month after month and year after year. But no sorrow is needed for Mr. Bunny. His paintings are full of life, and will go on living."

COURTISANES
A LA CAMPAGNE

By Rupert Bunny.

Felton Bequest,
1946.



SHRIMP FISHERS.

By Rupert Bunny.

Felton Bequest,
1946.



GEMS FROM
THE ART
MUSEUM.
No. 6.

ENGLISH TABLE
CHANDELIER
in Cut Glass.

1760-1780.

Howard Spensley Collection.



The table chandelier in the illustration embraces all the intricacies of cutting employed by the English glass maker in the last half of the 18th century. The style is in the full flourish of rococo, fitting it to the company of the contemporary architecture, furniture and porcelain.

The form of the baluster stand and the scroll arms derives from the silver candelabra, but where simplicity of line occurs in the silver shape and mouldings, a riot of diamond and scale facets sweep and intersect over the whole of the glass surface, which contributes to its brilliant gem-like opulence.

The "Gothic" spears, rosettes, diamond pendants and "crescent moon," are part of the chandelier paraphernalia of the early English glass cutter, the "pear drops" and "buttons" are later additions.

Jerome Johnson, a go-ahead London glass maker and seller of his day, and a generous newspaper advertiser of his wares, was in a great part responsible for the establishment of the popularity of English cut glass at home and abroad.

There is a suggestion of his advertised "Turkish fashioned" in this piece, with its "crescent moon" top, star-shaped grease pans and twisted scrolls. At least it can be attributed to his style.

DRAWING IN PEN AND WASH
(sepia)

By George Romney,
1734-1802.



The above drawing by Romney recently acquired for the Print Room has great character and attraction as a vigorous sketch. In some respects it is more vital and interesting than some of the highly-finished portraits in oils by this master. This Gallery possesses one other example of Romney's work—the portrait of Dr. Edmund Law, Bishop of Carlisle.

Added interest is attached to the drawing by the possibility that it is a sketch for the proposed picture of Lady Hamilton as Cybele referred to in Romney's letters from Naples. The composition of the drawing does not correspond to any known picture of Lady Hamilton by Romney, but research supports the theory that it may be the sketch for the unfinished picture of Lady Hamilton which was destroyed or stolen at Hampstead.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE ART GALLERY INCLUDE—

OILS.

Paysage de Bretagne, Roland Oudot	....	....	....	Purchased
Black Mountain, Canberra, Roland Wakelin	....	....	....	Purchased
Canberra Mail, C. Lloyd Jones	....	....	....	Purchased
The Open Valley, Canberra, Douglas Dundas	....	....	....	Purchased
The Orchard, Desiderius Orban	....	....	....	Purchased
Boy with Fetish, Donald Friend	....	....	....	Purchased
Two Children, Russell Drysdale	....	....	....	Purchased
Bush, Arnold Shore	....	....	....	Purchased
Through the Trees, John Farmer	....	....	....	Purchased
The Fair-Haired Girl, Douglas Watson	....	....	....	Purchased
Portrait of a Lady in a Black Dress, Tom Roberts	....	....	....	Purchased
The Law Court, S. Herman	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Nausicca's Serving Maids, Rupert Bunny	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Courtisanes a la Campagne, Rupert Bunny	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Rupert Bunny	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Shrimp Fishers, Rupert Bunny	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Hercules in the Garden of the Hesperides, Rupert Bunny	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Paradise of Mahomet, Rupert Bunny	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Still Life, Duncan Grant	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Street Scene, Melbourne, Alan Sumner	....	....	....	Allan R. Henderson Donation Fund.

WATER COLOURS.

Newcastle Steelworker, F. Macnamara	....	....	....	Purchased
River Flats, A. H. Cook	....	....	....	Purchased
Boatshed at Bayview, Enid Cambridge	....	....	....	Purchased
Bombed Houses, Koepang, Eric Thake	....	....	....	Purchased
Girl Reading, Barse Miller	....	....	....	Purchased
Scene in Patagonia, Conrad Martens	....	....	....	Felton Bequest

MISCELLANEOUS.

Le Paravent. (Lithograph in four sections). Pierre Bonnard	....	....	....	Purchased
Drawing, George Romney	....	....	....	Purchased
Portrait of Dorelia, Drawing, Augustus John	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Court Ladies of the T'ang Dynasty	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
An Ancestor in a Red Robe	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Painting of a Horse	....	....	....	Felton Bequest

ART MUSEUM.

Head of a Bodhisattva (Pair)	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Shallow Porcelain Bowl, Wang Li	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Perforated Porcelain Vase, Ming Dynasty	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Pair Plates—famille rose, Yung Cheng period	....	....	....	Felton Bequest
Collection of Balkan and Eastern European Needlework—fifteen pieces	....	....	....	Felton Bequest

GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY AND ART MUSEUM INCLUDE:—

		Presented by—
Twenty-nine examples of Rubbings of Monumental Church Brasses	....	Victoria and Albert Museum.
Miniature Portrait of Anne Jane Delaney	....	Misses Agnes and Judith Delaney.
Nine Steel Engravings after T. S. Gill	....	Essington Lewis, Esq.
"Wrecked Douglas, Wau." Drawing by James Cook	....	Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League.
Drawing of a Head, by Eric Thake	....	Victorian Artists' Society.
Vase and Cover, French late 18th Century	....	Mrs. Charles Tilburn.
Armchair, Marquetry Inlay, English Regency Period	Mrs. Charles Tilburn.
Dacca (Bengal) Sari	Mrs. R. G. Casey.

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Head of the National Gallery Schools	-	William Dargie
Drawing Master	-	V. Murray Griffin

We regret that in our last issue of the Bulletin Mr. Missingham, Director of the National Gallery of New South Wales, was incorrectly referred to as Director of the National Art College.

Free lunch-time lectures in the new Lecture Hall, Swanston Street entrance, have been well attended, and will be resumed on the first Thursday in March, 1947, at 1.15 p.m.

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.