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CHARLES KEENE CAMBRIDGE GRISETTE, 1862.

Pen drawing, 8½ in. x 5⅝ in.

Felton Bequest.

THE QUARTERLY BULLETIN OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA



CHARLES KEENE STUDIES FOR THE JUMPING FIGURE. Pen drawing, 4¼ in. x 5½ in. Felton Bequest.

CHARLES SAMUEL KEENE, C.K. OF PUNCH
1823-1891

Charles Keene was born in Hornsey and educated at Ipswich Grammar School, so that he always called himself an East Anglian. He showed early a talent for drawing, and at the age of eighteen was apprenticed for five years to the firm of Whympers, wood engravers, for whom he illustrated boys' books, and was thoroughly grounded in the technique of drawing on the woodblock. At the end of his time he free-lanced, contributed drawings to the "Illustrated London News", and in the late fifties to "Punch", replacing Leech upon his death in 1864. Thenceforward, with the exception of the illustrations made for "Once a Week" and a book or two, he drew only for "Punch".

Keene was a rather shy, unassuming man, who expanded only with his intimate friends. He never married, so that he was spared the necessity of pot-boiling. With a taste for old books and collecting, his wish to become a historical painter was happily diverted by the necessity of illustrating the every-day humours of life for "Punch". He was a great walker, and like most quiet men who prefer watching to talking, a tireless observer of the game of life. And he was always drawing.

It seems paradoxical that an artist who loved the past — he collected old musical instruments, herbals, psalters, and flint arrow-heads — should have been the most uncompromising realist of his age. The explanation lies in the fact that he never permitted his private interests to intrude upon his work. Poetry dominated the middle nineteenth century, and the elevation of the theme was the order of the day: yet Keene's truth to character and appearance survives, whilst the idealistic work of his contemporaries today looks dated and old-fashioned.

Keene was in nothing conventional. He belongs, in truth, to the glorious band of English eccentrics, of those who never allow the world to order their habits and opinions. He played the bagpipes and smoked only the little Plague pipes of the seventeenth century, and though he conformed when necessary to social conventions, he had a rooted objection to dressing for dinner or to carrying a bag, and when on short visits to the country would put on three or four shirts, pack extra socks and collars in his sketching wallet, and divest himself of this wardrobe upon arrival: to resume it in the same way upon departure.

Keene's style is unique. It evolved from careful characterization in line to a larger impressionism in which character is placed in its natural relation to light and atmosphere. He had always drawn upon the box-wood block, and the studies in this collection are his



CHARLES KEENE INTERIOR WITH PICTURES. Pen drawing, 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Felton Bequest.

CHARLES KEENE PROPHECIC! *The Rolling Grounds of Harwich. Punch, 1885.*
Pen drawing, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Felton Bequest.

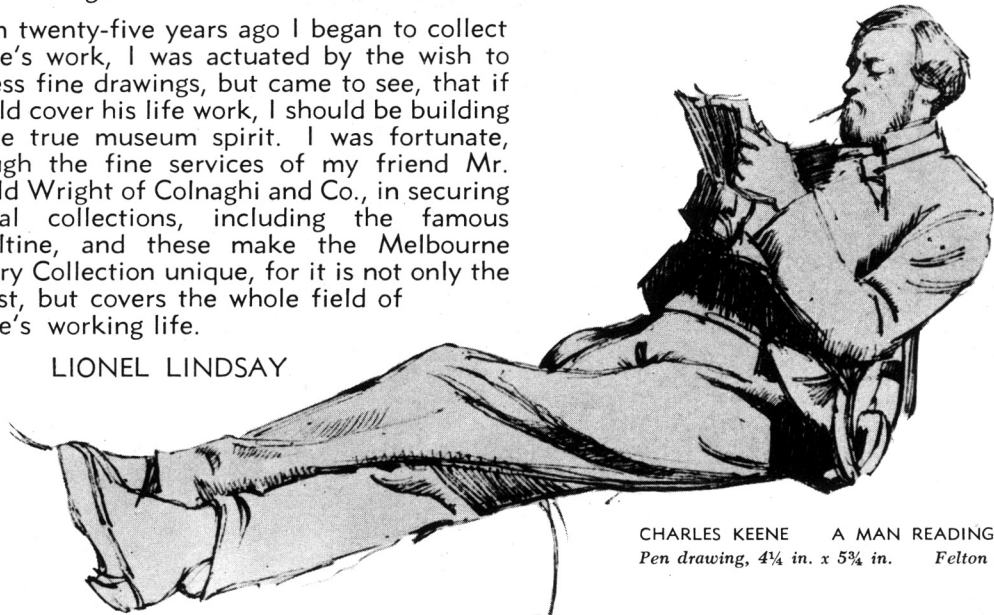


compositions traced by a stylus on to the wood. But in 1875 photographing on wood was introduced, and from that date he made his finished drawing on paper, introducing qualities never before attempted in black and white, using diluted ink, by which he attained effects of light, atmosphere, and surface modelling. His power to generalize form places him with the greatest.

To make sure of his line he drew direct with the pen, as in the Langham studies, which is the highest test of draughtsmanship. For years he carried an exciseman's ink bottle, so that he could use the pen and not the facile pencil. By going to nature for everything, he accumulated power and knowledge. By considering each joke as a focus for expression, he set up its shape in his mind, and thus never repeated a composition. He was possessed by his subject until he had given it finality, sometimes making half a dozen essays until satisfied that he had got the exact shade of humour out of a situation.

When twenty-five years ago I began to collect Keene's work, I was actuated by the wish to possess fine drawings, but came to see, that if I could cover his life work, I should be building in the true museum spirit. I was fortunate, through the fine services of my friend Mr. Harold Wright of Colnaghi and Co., in securing several collections, including the famous Heseltine, and these make the Melbourne Gallery Collection unique, for it is not only the largest, but covers the whole field of Keene's working life.

LIONEL LINDSAY



CHARLES KEENE A MAN READING.
Pen drawing, 4¼ in. x 5¾ in. Felton Bequest.

ARCHAIC GREEK STATUE IN MARBLE

This marble female statue is of a type peculiar to Greek art known as a kore. It belongs to the late Archaic Period probably between 530-470 B.C.

Figures of this kind were first used as caryatids in the Treasury building at Delphi in 530. Later the style became popular for Sepulchral portraits of women.

The Acropolis of Athens was crowded with korai of maidens dedicated to Athena. These were damaged when Xerxes sacked the city in 480. The fragments were buried and remained so until last century.

In general arrangement they are all much alike. Upright, with feet together, one hand holding a flower or some such object and the other gathering up the folds of the chiton.

There is a lovely serenity in the pose of these delightful figures, which are some of the daintiest in all ancient art. Their elegance and beauty never degenerated into mere prettiness. The vertical lines and the formal regularity of the drapery folds ensured this.

Unfortunately the Greek habit of adding limbs and other projecting parts of separate pieces of marble, not always of the same kind of marble, made their destruction easy and reassembly from a lot of fragments very difficult.

The arms and parts of the feet of this figure are missing but the sockets can be seen. The head, too, has been added. It is possible that this is not the original head.

ORLANDO DUTTON.



ARCHAIC GREEK STATUE IN MARBLE.
Height, 4 ft. 10½ in.



ERIC WILSON CHANNEL CROSSING. Canvas on panel, 16½ in. x 20½ in. Purchased.

Two recent acquisitions of contemporary Australian painting.

"CHANNEL CROSSING" by Eric Wilson

Eric Wilson was a young Sydney painter of rare ability who died in 1946 before full development of his considerable powers. A strong draftsman with a refined colour sense, Wilson studied under Julian Ashton and later in London, but cannot be neatly classified as belonging to any specific "school" of painting.

"Channel Crossing" reproduced on this page is an excellent example of his work: a dignified and deeply considered little painting with none of the exuberance of a Manet pleasure excursion. The serious young girl absorbed in her book and the child gazing stolidly at the passing scene do not belong to the gay and sparkling world of the Impressionists. Eric Wilson here approaches his subject as a lump of humanity to be subdued and moulded to a coherent whole — a significant design made up of human shapes, rather than a group of individual human beings. The arrangement of the figures is pyramidal in plan, cleverly topped by the dark ellipse of the high crowned hat. Deliberately placed horizontals of hat brims and flying hair are repeated and finally stabilized by the heavy arm of the chair on the left hand side. Colour throughout is a sombre interplay of adroitly spaced cold and warm tones, ranging mainly through grey, green and blue to muted brown and red. Paint is applied flatly and smoothly, in perfect accord with the detachment of the artist's mood.

"STILL LIFE" by Constance Stokes

From time to time, in every country and every age, there emerge individual painters with a vision so entirely personal that subject matter is of secondary importance. Such painters possess the magic that transmutes a few potatoes in a basket or an egg in a pan into something new, beautiful and exciting. In the National Gallery of Victoria we can see the magic at work in a very small study of a fried egg by Antoine Vollon — a last century painter of still life whose world of paint was always exclusively his own.

Victorian-born Constance Stokes is a contemporary painter of the same calibre as Vollon in that everything she paints belongs to her own private world. No matter what the subject, a painting by this artist has this precious quality of giving the beholder a private and intimate glimpse "behind the scenes".

For centuries artists have been conscientiously transferring pound after pound of apples and pears to canvas. Few of them have achieved immortality, because the majority of still life painters have literally nothing to tell us about the fruits that any of us could not have said equally well — given of course an adequate technical ability. The still life by Constance Stokes on this page consists of a more or less traditional arrangement of a handful of apples and pears and a rather commonplace earthenware jar. From these homely ingredients the artist has evolved a strong design of rich and jewel-like colour, whose swelling rhythms create an extraordinary illusion of air and space.

J.L.

CONSTANCE STOKES STILL LIFE. *Masonite, 14 in. x 20½ in.* *Purchased.*



RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE ART GALLERY INCLUDE:

OILS

Romantic Landscape with Mercury and Argus	Salvator Rosa	Felton Bequest
Head of Christ on the Veil of St. Veronica	Georges Rouault	Felton Bequest
Horsemen in a Landscape	R. D. Davis	Felton Bequest
Still Life	F. McCubbin	Purchased
Still Life	Alan Warren	Purchased
Mountain Landscape	R. W. Rowed	Purchased
Road to Heyfield	Madge Freeman	Purchased

DRAWINGS

The Sir Lionel Lindsay collection of 495 drawings, 26 etchings by Charles Keene	Felton Bequest
Book of Sketches	Phil May

GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY AND ART MUSEUM INCLUDE:

Twenty period costumes and accessories from the collection of the late Sir William Nicholson

Presented by Lady Nicholson and her daughter

TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA:

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Head of the National Gallery Schools, William Dargie
Assistant Art Master V. Murray Griffin
Assistant Art Master R. S. Wakelin
Supervisor William Morphett

National Gallery lunch time talks are given on every second Thursday of each month. (There is, however, a lecture or film every Thursday, arranged by the Public Library or the Museums.)

The following publications and reproductions are on sale at the Swanston Street entrance:

Catalogue of the Gallery (5/-). Catalogue of Selected Masterpieces with 30 illustrations (1/6). Gallery Guide (6d.). Six large coloured reproductions of the following pictures: Buvelot, Waterpool at Coleraie; Roberts, Shearing the Rams; Lambert, Sergeant of the Light Horse; Cameron, Durham Cathedral; Pissarro, Boulevard Montmartre; Sisley, Hills behind St. Nicaise; Monet, Vetheuil (25/- ea.). A selection of small reproductions of varying sizes including Christmas cards and some reproductions of important pictures from the National Galleries of New South Wales and South Australia.