



GALLERY ACTIVITIES

Administration and policies of public Art Galleries and Museums have undergone profound changes over the last thirty years, changes which have resulted in an entirely different relationship between these institutions and their public. In the early years of this century their potential as agents in the cultural growth of the community was largely unexplored; today they are taking an active part in the life of the people. In large measure the change has been due to an increased interest in art shown by a large section of the public which wishes to see something for its money, and Trustees have made necessary changes to meet a growing demand. The main functions, acquisition, conservation and presentation have remained, and will always be the departments of a Gallery's work, but each has altered or expanded with the new conditions. In buying policy, perhaps the most important of these is the gradual drying up of the sources of supply of old masters and the consequent alarming rise in market values. The realization follows that gaps in certain schools can never be filled, and policies must be adjusted accordingly. The decrease in purchasing power of the funds at the disposal of the Trustees results in more attention being given to the acquisition of contemporary works which can be purchased more cheaply. Special buying policies are required to cater for such developments as the Loan Collections and Travelling Exhibitions. These and many other factors have brought about what might be called by some a minor revolution in administration and policy.

In the sphere of conservation the changes have been no less important. New techniques have widened the scope of the restorer's activities, and sometimes produce energetic public controversy. But it is by the use of the Gallery in the service of general education that the most fundamental changes have been occasioned. Galleries the world over were once thought of, by those most interested in their welfare, as "Treasure houses," and this concept gave two principles of display: firstly the exhibitions were intended to be permanent, and secondly an effort was made to keep as much of the collection as possible on view all the time. The main emphasis was on the curatorial function of a National Collection; this meant that its role was a passive one. The activities of a modern gallery are developed around the idea that it should reach out into the community and establish itself as part of the community's life. This is an active role, and one that is closely related to Education. Galleries are now frequently re-hung and the pictures changed to show certain developments and affinities, special exhibitions are arranged, there is frequent interchange of pictures between galleries, country galleries are assisted, and the wider public is served by international loan exhibitions. At this Gallery some notable loan exhibitions have been shown, perhaps the best-known of these being the recent "French Painting To-day" exhibition. And at present an exhibition of paintings including works by Nolan, Boyd, Drysdale and Constance Stokes, is on loan abroad.

In the last ten years by far the most significant manifestation of change in this Gallery's programme has been the formation and remarkable growth of the National Gallery Society, whose activities will be the subject of a complete article in a subsequent issue of this Bulletin.

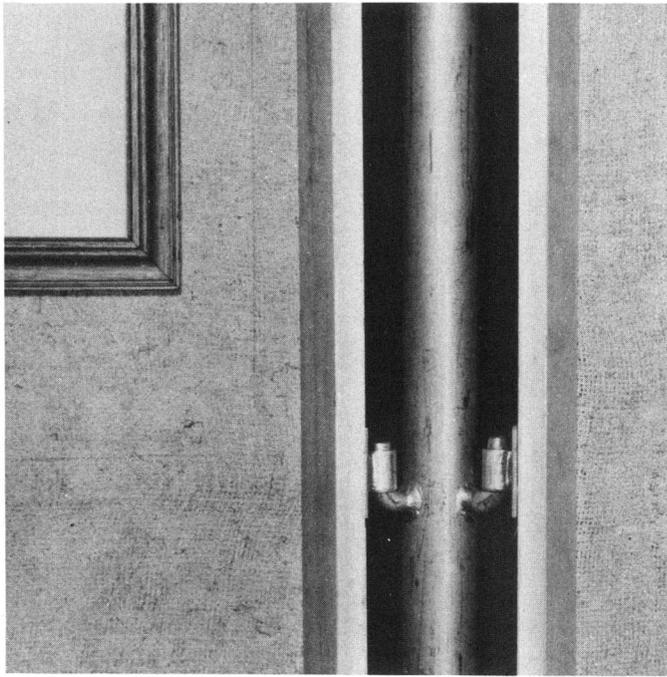
Some years ago, the Trustees, recognizing that the National Gallery of Victoria has obligations to that part of its public residing in the Country, tried an experiment in sending loan exhibitions to country centres.

The success of the initial efforts led to consideration of a comprehensive scheme for which the co-operation of the Council of Adult Education and the Education Department was sought and obtained. Screens of a pattern which has proved exactly suited to the project were designed and built so that pictures do not need to be hung from picture-rails, but are carried in groups already attached to the screens, ready for simple and rapid setting up. A portion of the exhibition visited by some students of a Victorian State Secondary School and a view of the detail of the joint by which a Screen is attached to its tubular support are shown. As well as providing the advantages of protection of the pictures and ease of

erection, the screens are capable of transforming a totally unsuitable hall into an attractive exhibition-room. The complete exhibition, with its own lighting fixtures, is carried from town to town in the National Gallery truck. The itinerary is planned with officers of the Council of Adult Education and at each show the Education Officer, or a Guest Lecturer gives a series of lectures on the pictures to adults and to groups of school children.

GUIDE LECTURER, MR. ARNOLD SHORE, *addressing a party of school children in front of Dobson's 'Source'*





HINGES ON TRAVELLING SCREEN, *detail*.

Local Government bodies are most generous with assistance. The more progressive of the Councils are very much alive to the educational importance of the Travelling Exhibition and are anxious to help in any way. Attendances at the exhibition have been most encouraging. An innovation this year is the provision of a film projector by the Education Department. Documentary films on art topics, provided by the various Consulates and the State Film Centre, are shown in connection with the Exhibition. The screenings have been very popular. The growth of interest even as indicated in the formation of art groups and requests to the Council of Adult Education for material and reading, is indeed remarkable.

For some time one of the most important services of the Gallery has been that provided by the Guide-Lecturer, Mr. Arnold Shore,

who is shown in one of the illustrations speaking to a group of schoolgirls. His task is to introduce people to the enjoyment of their National Collection. Some, especially children, find the vast rooms and complex array overpowering, and many have learned to appreciate the fine examples in the galleries largely through his accomplished and friendly presentation.

Many adult groups are given brief talks on parts of the collection and special evening openings of the Galleries with lectures are arranged for large groups. A great number of school groups visit the Gallery and not only art teachers make appointments for class talks, but History, Literature and Social Studies classes also find them useful in their work.

Lunch-time lectures have been a feature of the Gallery programme for a long time. Since March, 1953, the lectures have been given under conditions of greatly improved comfort in the new Theatrette which has been constructed by the Trustees on the site of the former Tearooms.

Close relationship with the University is maintained, and collaboration and co-operation of staffs has been of the greatest value. A feature of the work of Fine Arts students in the Gallery has been the seminar system, under which honours students study intensively particular items of the Collection. The results of researches are presented in papers. Some interesting material has been uncovered.

The growing public interest in the arts can be gauged to some extent by the increase in daily letters and personal enquiries which come to the professional staff. These cover a variety of fields of fine and applied art.

The Print Room, of which an illustration is shown, houses many thousands of fine prints and drawings, including the great Blake Collection, portfolios of facsimiles, colour reproductions of paintings by old and modern masters. It is used not only by the connoisseur and the student but by large numbers of the general public who seek information both by letter and personal enquiry.

A very large collection of framed prints is circulated among more than two hundred Victorian schools. With the major changes in the nature of art teaching in recent years, and the

consequent rise in the status and popularity of the subject, the demand continues to increase. Prints are returned to the Gallery for inspection and exchange in June and December.

The sale of reproductions of pictures in the Gallery has shown an increase in the last ten years so remarkable as to warrant quoting the figures: annual receipts have risen from £40 to just over £1,600. To further assist in the matter of school decoration and in illustrating art study, a special set of large high-quality prints of pictures in the Collection is in course of production. This scheme has been put into operation through the generous co-operation of the Education Department.

A PORTION OF THE TRAVELLING EXHIBITION.



A limited number of sets of art museum material are made available on extended loan to schools, where they are shown in art rooms and entrance foyers. It is hoped soon to develop this influential side of the Gallery's work to meet the growing number of requests.

One of the oldest extensions into the field of education is the National Gallery Art School, which was established in 1882 under G. F. Folingsby. It is unusual to have a school of painting under Gallery direction, and the arrangement has been found to have numerous advantages. In the history of Australian painting the National Gallery of Victoria Art School holds pride of place; our most important painters have received part of their training there. Such artists as Ramsay, Longstaff, Meldrum, Bell, Bunny and McInnes, all of whom have made their mark in Europe as well as Australia, are numbered among former students.

This account of the Gallery's activities deals only with the most important; the number and scope continue to grow. The progressive policy of the present Trustees has met with such response that it is only the difficulty experienced by the small professional staff in coping with the demands which sets limits to the expansion of the service.

G. THOMSON.

INTERIOR OF PRINT STUDY ROOM.





CABINET OF DRAWERS,
in Queensland Black Bean,
BY EDWARD BARNSELEY.

*Height 4 ft. 11 in., Length 2 ft. 6 in.,
Width 1 ft. 5½ in.*

Acquired under the terms of the Felton Bequest on the advice of Mr. A. J. L. McDonnell, this chest is the first example of modern English furniture to be added to the collection. It will therefore provide an interesting comparison with the two Australian pieces in the McAllan Gallery, and with the furniture of the eighteenth century shown in the Connell Collection and elsewhere in the Galleries.

The piece is very restrained in design. The bow front deviates only three-quarters of an inch from the straight line in its length of thirty inches. The bevels of the drawers are very shallow and do not cast strong shadows: in order that their importance in the design may not be missed the arris of each bevel is lined with a narrow inlay of rosewood. Another fine rosewood line, standing this time in relief, runs around the front of each of the two components of the chest.

The timber, Queensland black bean, used also by Krimper in the larger of our two Australian sideboards, is an unusually beautiful furniture wood. The finish used is not a high polish, but one which gives full value to the grain and texture. The interior frame and the drawer runners are of oak, and the drawer trays are of aromatic cedar wood. Rosewood is used for the handles. The design is by Edward Barnsley, and the piece was made by his assistant Oskar Dawson.

G. THOMSON.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE ART MUSEUM INCLUDE:

Grandfather Clock, Queen Anne, by Windmills, from the Keith Murdoch Collection Felton Bequest
 Chest of Drawers, by Edward Barnsley Felton Bequest
 Thirteen Period Glasses, English, from the Keith Murdoch Collection Felton Bequest

GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY AND ART MUSEUM INCLUDE:

John Connell, drawing by G. Lambert Presented by Mrs. M. Harvey through the National Gallery Society
 Forty-four Drawings by Sir Lionel Lindsay Presented by the artist
 Linlithgow Castle, watercolour, by J. M. W. Turner Presented by Sir Thomas Barlow through the
 National Gallery Society
 Still Life, oil on glass, by Geoff Jones Presented by Miss Edith Alston
 Bark Paintings, N.E. Arnhem Land Presented by the Department of the Interior
 Pieta, relief, attributed to Bellano Presented by Tomas Harris, Esq., London
 Jug, silver, in form of a cockerel, by Leslie Durbin Presented by Ae. J. L. McDonnell, Esq., through the
 Felton Bequest
 Needlework picture Presented by Miss Clarice Clark, Horsham
 The Lock, The Cornfield, mezzotints, after J. Constable Presented by Oscar E. Johnson, Esq., London

TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA:

Sir John Medley, Kt., D.C.L., LL.D., M.A. (Chairman).
 Allan R. Henderson, LL.M. (Deputy Chairman).
 J. G. Burnell, M.C., B.E. (Treasurer).
 Professor J. T. A. Burke, O.B.E., M.A.
 The Hon. T. W. Mitchell, M.A., M.L.A.
 The Hon. Mr. Justice Sholl, M.A., B.C.L.
 A. T. Smithers, C.B.E.

FELTON BEQUESTS COMMITTEE:

Sir Russell Grimwade, Kt., C.B.E., B.Sc. (Chairman)
 The Hon. Sir Frank Clarke, K.B.E., M.L.C.
 The Rt. Hon. Sir Owen Dixon, K.C.M.G.
 Sir Alexander Stewart, Kt.
 A. J. L. McDonnell (Felton Bequest Advisor in London)
 Colin G. Rigg (Secretary)

| | |
|--|--|
| Director of the National Gallery Daryl Lindsay | |
| Assistant and Curator of Art Museum, Gordon Thomson | Assistant and Keeper of the Prints Ursula Hoff |
| Education Officer Gilbert Docking | Guide Lecturer Arnold Shore |
| Secretary E. N. Dewar | Secretarial Assistant Beryl Hollingsworth |
| | |
| Acting Head of the National Gallery Schools, Murray Griffin | Assistant Art Instructor Charles Bush |
| Supervisor Hector Williamson | National Gallery Society Vera Medlock |

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

Catalogue of the Gallery (5/-). Gallery Guide (1/-). Catalogue of Selected Masterpieces with 30 illustrations (1/6). Ten large colour reproductions (25/- each). A selection of small reproductions including Christmas cards.

THEATRETTE

DOCUMENTARY FILMS: Every TUESDAY at 1.15 p.m.

LECTURES: NATIONAL GALLERY LECTURE — First Thursday.

PUBLIC LIBRARY LECTURE — Third Thursday.

MUSICAL RECORDINGS — Second and Fourth Thursdays.

The cover design in this issue is a Jug, silver, in form of a cockerel, by Leslie Durbin, presented by Ae. J. L. McDonnell, Esq., through the Felton Bequest.