

## Rupert Bunny: Artist in Paris

26 March – 4 July 2010

*"An artist's aim should be the transmission of emotion."* **Rupert Bunny**



On 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010, the National Gallery of Victoria will open a major retrospective exhibition of the work of Rupert Bunny (1864–1947).

Melbourne-born Bunny was one of the most successful artists of his generation. Living most of his life in France, no other Australian artist achieved the accolades Bunny received in Paris in the 1890s and early 1900s.

This will be the first major exhibition of Bunny's work since 1991. Organised by the Art Gallery of New South Wales and curated by Deborah Edwards, the exhibition includes over 100 works – from his late nineteenth century symbolist inspired mythologies to his elegant Belle Époque paintings of fashionable Parisian leisure. Several of the works in the exhibition have never been seen in Australia, including paintings from the Musée d'Orsay and private collections in Europe.

Gerard Vaughan, NGV Director, said this visually stunning exhibition would provide a chance for visitors to enjoy and understand all the phases of the career of this important Australian artist.

"Bunny was the first living Australian artist to have a retrospective at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1946. It is nearly 20 years since the last exhibition of Bunny's work, so it is certainly time for audiences to re-engage with his elegant, often sumptuous paintings."

The National Gallery of Victoria is itself a major lender to the exhibition, with 18 works from the NGV Collection on display, highlights include *Endormies* c.1904, *Courtesans in the countryside* c.1920 (pictured), and *Shrimp fishers at Saint Georges* c.1910.

"The NGV has an outstanding collection of works by Rupert Bunny and we are thrilled to present them together with works from other Australian and international collections; this is a very important retrospective," said Dr Vaughan.

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Elena Taylor, NGV Coordinating Curator, said that Bunny was an artist whose work reflects the rich cultural setting in which he lived.

“At the turn of the century Paris was the centre of the art world and Rupert Bunny was very much a part of the life of the city. It was an exciting time which saw enormous change and experimentation in the arts and Bunny had a great ability to assimilate such influences, from Symbolism in the late nineteenth century, to Matisse and the Fauves in the early twentieth century,” said Ms Taylor.

Born in St Kilda and having studied at the National Gallery School, Bunny left Australia in 1884 and later settled in cosmopolitan Paris. Unlike many expatriates, Bunny moved freely in Parisian art circles and frequented prominent Salons, meeting luminaries such as Claude Debussy, Sarah Bernhardt and Auguste Rodin. Bunny was the first Australian to be awarded honours at the Paris Salon and, by the end of his long career, the French State had acquired thirteen of his works – more than any other Australian, and a greater number than almost any other foreign artist.

In 1933, after an absence of almost fifty years and recently widowed, Bunny returned to Melbourne. Despite his age he aligned himself with the modern movement and in 1946 was honoured by being the first living artist to have a retrospective exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria.

A 224 page catalogue accompanies the exhibition and will include essays by leading art historians comprehensively addressing the artist’s oeuvre.

**Rupert Bunny: Artist in Paris** will be on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Federation Square from 26 March to 4 July 2010. A range of public and education programs will coincide with the exhibition.

Admission fees apply: Adult \$15 / Concession \$12 / Child \$7.50 / Family \$42

**Principal Sponsor:** Macquarie Group

**Support Sponsors:** Sofitel Melbourne on Collins, Dulux, JCDcaux, Melbourne Airport

## Rupert Bunny: Artist in Paris



An Art Gallery of New South Wales travelling exhibition

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**Image credit:** Rupert Bunny Australia 1864–1947, lived in Europe 1884–1933 *Courtesans in the countryside (Courtesans à la campagne)* (c.1920) oil on canvas 180.5 x 180.0 cm National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1946

