

The Quarterly Bulletin
of the
National Gallery of Victoria



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1947

THE ACQUISITION THROUGH THE FELTON BEQUEST of the profile Portrait of a Lady, attributed to Uccello, reproduced on the cover of this issue, marks an important step in the building up of our collection—particularly the Italian section. Much controversy has arisen regarding the authorship of the small group of portraits painted mainly in Florence, in the middle of the fifteenth century. Even the attribution of the great examples in Milan (Pollaiuolo) and the Kaiser Frederich Museum (Veneziano) has been questioned during the last fifty years. But the fact remains that whoever did paint these profile portraits, they are, with few exceptions, by the hands of great masters of the period. It was the fashion of the day for portraits to be executed in profile, and the Melbourne example is a typical work of great rarity, character and charm. As a work of art it ranks amongst the finest possessions of our National Gallery collection.

The four paintings reproduced on pages two and three have been selected from a group of contemporary British paintings purchased in 1945. Together with similar works purchased on behalf of the Ballarat, Castlemaine and Geelong Galleries, they recently aroused much local interest when they were sent on tour to various country centres.

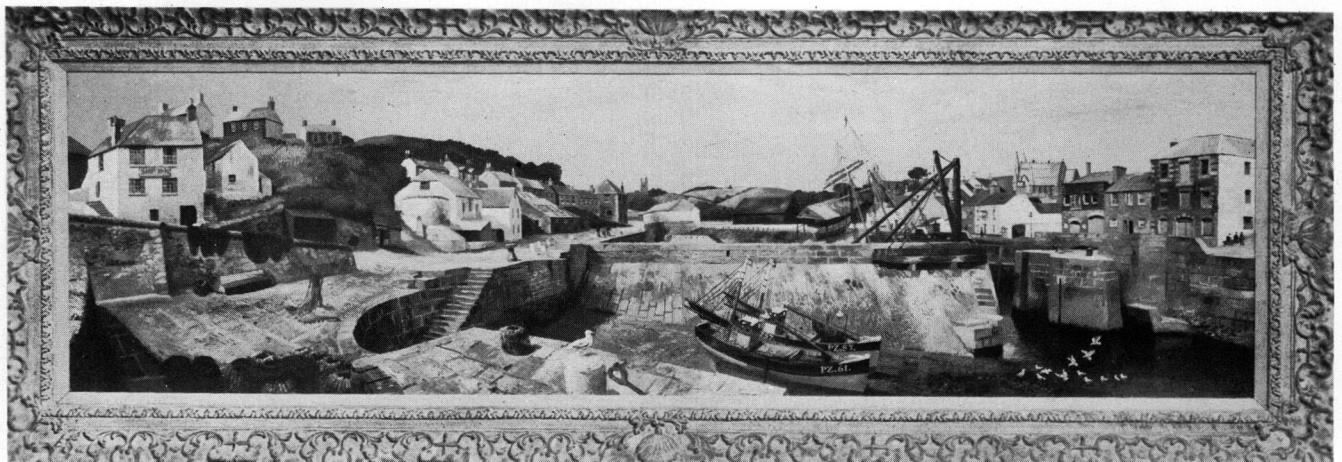
The work of Walter Richard Sickert is too well known to need comment here, but I would like to point out how lucky we are in securing such a characteristic example of his famous Dieppe period. (A later example of Sickert's work—the much-discussed "Raising of Lazarus from the Dead"—has recently been purchased in London by the advisors to the Felton Bequest). L. S. Lowrie, who painted the lively and well-designed "A Man Taken III," delights in depicting the street life of his native city of Birmingham. Richard Eurich owes something to the late Christopher Wood. His "Porthleven" is a successful blend of detailed observation and boldly original composition, with surface textures and quality of paint showing a thoroughly competent craftsman. Mary Armour is a Scottish painter well known as a sensitive and vigorous recorder of her native landscape.

A welcome addition to our collection of miniatures in the Buvelot Gallery is the portrait of Anne Jane Delaney, by an unknown artist, generously presented to this Gallery by the Misses Agnes and Judith Delaney. This portrait, together with an example by the eighteenth century French miniaturist, J. B. J. Augustin, and a miniature of Arabella Stuart, by the great Elizabethan, Isaac Oliver, is reproduced on page seven.

Though the illuminated books and manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were often decorated with small pictures and portraits, the true mastery of miniature painting as we understand it today dates back to little more than four centuries. It might be said that Hans Holbein, the younger, arriving in England in the first half of the sixteenth century, started the vogue of little portraits or "limnings," as the Elizabethans called them. His portraits of Anne of Cleves and Mrs. Pemberton set a standard in this medium that has rarely, if ever, been equalled. Holbein was followed by Nicholas Hilliard, Isaac Oliver and a small group of other artists who left to posterity the brilliant series of official "portraits in little" which give us such a valuable insight into Elizabethan life and art.

Other examples in our miniature collection worthy of special study are "Philip Melancthon," by Lucas Cranach, 1472-1553, and "Madame du Barry," by Richard Cosway, 1742-1821, from the Pierpont Morgan Collection.

DARYL LINDSAY.





Above BEN MORE, FROM BALFRON,
By Mary Armour.
Purchased 1946.



Left A MAN TAKEN ILL,
By L. S. Lowrie.
Purchased 1946.

Right ADMIRAL DUQUESNE, DIEPPE,
By Walter Richard Sickert.
Purchased 1946.

Left PORTHLEVEN, CORNWALL,
By Richard Eurich.
Purchased 1946.





L'HIVER,

By Gustave Courbet,
1819-1877

Felton Bequest, 1923.

FOUR WINTER LANDSCAPES.

The four paintings reproduced here can be roughly classified as winter landscapes. In each case the artist has used the fundamental theme of winter as a sort of jumping-off ground, but beyond a certain similarity of subject matter, they are poles apart in treatment and aesthetic approach.

Just how important is the subject matter of a work of art? Is a Botticelli angel of greater ultimate significance than a Velasquez dwarf? And is the disciplined formality of a mural by Puvis de Chavannes less exciting in the aesthetic sense than the turbulent rhythms of Courbet or Delacroix, to whom the emotional appeal of the subject meant so much?

Courbet 1819-1877, a curious mixture of romanticism and realism, was a revolutionary, both in art and life, whose pictures were often confiscated by the French Government in lieu of fines. It is evident that the subject matter of Courbet's gloomy "L'Hiver" has been passionately felt, although subordinated to the sinister design of the picture as a whole, with its stark verticals and arresting division of the canvas into two main tones.

Puvis de Chavannes 1824-1898, who gave such a powerful stimulus to modern decorative art, has used the wintry forest mainly as a basis for design. His "L'Hiver" is serene, static, with emotional content almost nil. The figures in this picture have practically no human significance, and we feel the artist is concerned with them only as component parts of a noble composition. Our painting is a greatly reduced replica of Chavannes' large mural in the Hotel de Ville, Paris.

Buxton Knight, a well-known English Academician of the late nineteenth century, is absorbed in the actual texture of the



L'HIVER,

By Pierre Puvis de Chavannes,
1824-1898

Felton Bequest, 1910.



THE HAMLET—WINTER SUNSHINE,

By J. Buxton Knight.

Felton Bequest, 1910.

various surfaces. Subject and design are of secondary importance to this artist, who has, however, succeeded admirably in rendering the atmospheric envelopment of his subject in cold wintry light. In his unconcern with the subject matter, Buxton Knight cannot be classed as a typical Victorian painter for whom—like the surrealist today—subject matter was supremely important. In Buxton Knight's "Hamlet" we have no Christmas card robins, no children romping in the snow—in fact, no human interest except the houses, which might equally have been in Timbuctoo, and which seem to be considered solely as plane surfaces under the play of light.

Contemporary Australian artist Lina Bryans is attracted to her subject by its abrupt and striking colour contrasts. Vigorous brush strokes help to give a sense of life and vitality to the scene, as if the earth were alive and stirring under its white mantle. Unlike Buxton Knight, this artist makes no attempt to reproduce the texture and quality of sparkling snow.

It is impossible in our limited space to give further examples of the endless diversity of individual expression on a common theme. However, the four winter landscapes, selected more or less at random provide interesting food for thought on the relative importance of subject matter in the appraisal of a work of art. Courbet, Chavannes, Buxton Knight and Lina Bryans—whether consciously or unconsciously—have all regarded their subject matter almost entirely as a means of personal expression. Not one of these paintings aims at a literal representation of a winter's day.



SNOW IN AUTUMN, HARRIETVILLE,

By Lina Bryans.

*Purchased 1944 under the terms of the
Allan R. Henderson Donation Fund.*



GEMS FROM THE ART MUSEUM
No. 7.

St. George and the Dragon.

EARTHENWARE GROUP,
STAFFORDSHIRE,

by

Ralph Wood. Probably after a
model by John Vayez. Circa
1775-1780. Felton Bequest.

Our photograph shows one of the most important examples of Staffordshire pottery in the collection, from the hand of the famous maker, Ralph Wood. The Wood brothers, Ralph and the lesser-known Enoch, specialized in pieces of strongly individual character, particularly Biblical characters and Toby Jugs.

Purchased by the well-known English connoisseur, Bernard Rackham, "St. George and the Dragon" is not only interesting from a collector's point of view, but has real character and a sense of form sometimes lacking in later examples of Staffordshire, which often become insipid as they achieve a more obvious realism. Although measuring only eleven inches high, this little group has something of the monumental quality of a piece of sculpture. Painted in coloured glazes, the clear green of tunic and dragon tones admirably with the soft brownish pink of the horse. As is often the case with early figures of this type, no attempt has been made to colour the flesh tints realistically—arms, legs and face being a purely formalized white.

"St. George and the Dragon" and other pieces by the Wood brothers may be inspected in the Verdon Gallery.

FROM THE PRINT ROOM.

Line drawing belongs to the oldest form of artistic method, and particularly beautiful examples may be found among works of the Chinese-Japanese tradition. An exhibition of Japanese colour prints held from February till April in the Print Gallery showed how, in the hands of such masters as Utamaro and Hokusai, pure line can be expressive of vastly different ideals of beauty and characterization.

Recognizing the importance of the recent revival of drawing, both for artists and collectors, the Victorian Artists' Society has inaugurated annual drawing exhibitions, establishing prizes together with the Herald and Weekly Times. One of the prize-winners of 1946, Eric Thake's "Head of a Japanese Soldier" (reproduced on this page), is now in the possession of the National Gallery.

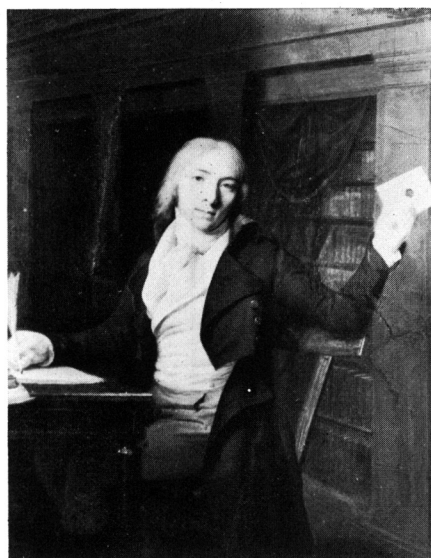
The extensive use of drawing is one of the features of the Post-Impressionist pre-occupation with abstract forms of design. Pure line as used by Eric Thake is an intellectual symbol, and the artist sacrifices tone and modelling for the sake of an expressive pattern.





PORTRAIT, SAID TO BE LADY ARABELLA STUART
By Isaac Oliver, 1551/6-1617

*From the Pierpont Morgan Collection.
Felton Bequest, 1936.*



PORTRAIT OF FRANCOIS CORBAUX,
By Jean Baptiste Jacques Augustin,
1759-1832

*From the Pierpont Morgan Collection.
Felton Bequest, 1936.*



PORTRAIT OF ANNE JANE DELANEY,
By an Unknown Artist, circa 1813

Presented by Misses Agnes and Judith Delaney.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE ART GALLERY INCLUDE—

OILS.

The Rewards of Philosophy, Paul Veronese	.....	Felton Bequest.
The Raising of Lazarus, Walter Richard Sickert	.....	Felton Bequest.
La Tour Eiffel, 1913, Maurice Utrillo	.....	Felton Bequest.

WATER COLOURS.

Red Rigi, J. M. W. Turner	.....	Felton Bequest
Kangaroo Paw, Margaret Stones	.....	Purchased.
Red Wall, Ormiston Gorge, Edwin Parercultja	.....	Purchased.
Tree Study, Len Annois	.....	Purchased.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Nude, drawing in red chalk, Alfred Stevens	.....	Felton Bequest
Two Women, gouache, Donald Friend	.....	Purchased.
Study of a Woman Seated, pencil drawing, Jean Bellette	.....	Purchased.

ART MUSEUM.

Gala, Bronze Head, Lyndon Dadswell	.....	Purchased under the terms of the Felton Bequest, 1944. Cast, 1946.
Court Cupboard, oak, Jacobean	.....	Purchased.
Chest of Drawers, walnut, circa 1675	.....	Purchased.
Daybed, red lacquer, Queen Anne	.....	Purchased.
Dressing Commode, satinwood, English eighteenth century	.....	Purchased.
Pair of Seven Light Empire Candelabra, bronze and ormolu	.....	Purchased.
Pair Torchères, Robert Adam	.....	Purchased.

GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY AND ART MUSEUM INCLUDE—

Eight nineteenth century hand-coloured costume designs	Presented anonymously.
Pair Pomade Jars, English, circa 1840	Presented by Mrs. E. H. O'Reilly.

TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA.

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Hon. Curator of Chinese Art	- - - - - H. W. Kent
Head of the National Gallery Schools	- William Dargie
Drawing Master	- - - - - V. Murray Griffin

In February, 1947, Mr. Robert Haines was appointed Assistant Director of the National Gallery and Art Museum, in which post we wish him every success.

Important new purchases made in England by Sir Kenneth Clark and Professor Randolph Schwabe on behalf of the Felton Bequest (see list above) will be more fully dealt with in our next issue.

Free lunch-time lectures in the new Lecture Hall, Swanston Street entrance, were resumed on Thursday, 27th March, at 1.15 p.m., and will be held on the second and fourth Thursday of every month until further notice.

The editor of the Bulletin regrets a typographical error in our last issue, in which Miss Ola Cohn's description of her "Head of a Virgin," should read, "... a being that is complete."

Catalogue of the Art Gallery (unillustrated, price one shilling), and a selection of postcards, coloured reproductions, illustrated catalogues, etc., etc., are on sale at the Swanston Street entrance to the Gallery.