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EYE ON ART

NGA to host one of the most exceptional art events ever to be held in Australia

MASTERPIECES FROM PARIS

From December 2009 through to April 2010, the Australian public won’t have to travel to Paris to see masterpieces by Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne, Georges Seurat, Pierre Bonnard, Claude Monet, Maurice Denis and Edouard Vuillard—they can visit them in Canberra.

“Australians will be able to experience the best of French culture in the nation’s capital over summer and autumn 2009 and 2010. This truly is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for art lovers and first-timers, students and families to see these renowned works that many have grown up with in art history books. Canberra will be the world premiere for this exhibition, which will then travel to Tokyo and San Francisco,” said Arts Minister, Peter Garrett.

Among the 114 paintings included in the exhibition are some of the best-known works of modern art. These works draw millions of tourists in Paris to the Musée d’Orsay, one of the great museums of 19th-century art.

“This is the most important exhibition to come to the National Gallery of Australia. Never before have so many famous masterpieces been brought together for one exhibition in this country. We are delighted to be co-curating this exhibition with the Musée d’Orsay in Paris, the museum with the most significant holdings of Post-Impressionist art in the world. These works almost never leave the Musée d’Orsay even singly and never before in these numbers,” said Ron Radford AM, Director National Gallery of Australia.

“We are renovating our Post-Impressionist Galleries at the Musée d’Orsay which means we are able to lend these works together for the first time. Australia will be the first country to see these works outside France,” said Guy Cogeval, President Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

Visitors will encounter van Gogh’s Bedroom at Arles 1889, Gauguin’s painting Tahitian women 1891 (below), Cézanne’s beloved Mount Saint-Victoire c.1890, and many other great examples by Post-Impressionist painters.

Where and When:
NGA, Canberra
4 December 2009 – 5 April 2010
Open daily 10am (Closed Christmas Day)

Tickets
Adult: $25
Concession: $16
Child: $6
Family: $55
Concession Family: $37
NGA Member Adult: $16

A CLOSER LOOK @ JAMES HOWE CARSE

Born in Edinburgh in 1819, James Howe Carse was the son of popular Scottish genre painter, Alexander Carse. J.H. Carse trained at the Royal Scottish Academy, of which his father was a founding member. Carse arrived in South Australia around 1867, and then quickly moved east to Melbourne before a short stay in New Zealand, returning to show works of both Victorian and New Zealand landscapes at the 1869 Melbourne Public Library Exhibition.

Our current exhibition, The Painted Vision: 1840 – 1963 includes one of Carse’s paintings from this period. In Carse’s View of Melbourne from the Botanical Gardens of 1868, one can see the original path of the Yarra river - the bend seen in this view now forming what is the present lake system in the gardens. The Botanic Gardens were designed and under the control of Baron Ferdinand von Mueller - one of the most acclaimed botanists of the 19th century - up until 1873.

The Botanical Gardens were built as the Antipodean counterpart to Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens of London, and serviced the inhabitants of Melbourne in much the same way. They quickly became a popular place for leisure activities and were considered the place to be, with ladies promenading around the grounds to show off the latest fashions while their children explored and delighted in games. This part of colonial life is elegantly portrayed...
in Carse’s landscape, with groups of men and women chatting, while some children play nearby, and a young mother is lead by the hand of her exuberant toddler. Carse’s painting is a charming portrayal of colonial life, however it is also a valuable insight into the original layout of the gardens as envisioned by Mueller. In this picture the two large trees to the left are almost certainly Australian Eucalypts, although painted in the English style. The spiky profile of Richmond pines can also be seen in the left and right middle-ground of the composition. The solid dark green trees are cypress, while palms grow further down the hill. A large American cactus can also be seen to the left of the lady with two small children. This wide variety of species shows the use to which the milder Melbourne climate was utilised.

**CALENDAR: NOVEMBER**

1st - McCubbin: Last Impressions 1907-1917 Exhibition closes  
www.nga.gov.au

15th - Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards Exhibition closes  
www.artgallery.wa.gov.au

30th - The Painted Vision Exhibition closes

**DECEMBER**

4th - NGA’s Masterpieces from Paris: Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne and beyond Exhibition opens  
www.nga.gov.au

23rd - Lauraine Diggins Fine Art closes for Christmas/New Year break until 1st February 2010

31st - The Australian Government’s 50% tax rebate for artworks stimulus package ends.

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**From the Stockroom**

**Arthur Streeton (1867 – 1943)**

*Sirius Cove, New South Wales* 1895  
oil on cedar panel  
signed lower right: Streeton 95  
11.1 x 29.6 cm  
(illustrated above)

Named after the frigate Sirius which docked at the cove for repairs in 1789, Greater Sirius Cove and Little Sirius Cove are part of the Mosman stretch of coastline, which lies on the northern side of Sydney Harbour. Streeton painted while Streeton was living at Curlew Camp at Little Sirius Cove, near to the present site of Taronga Park Zoo. Curlew was one of several camps established in this area during the late nineteenth century. Barry Pearce noted that by this date: “There were... colonies of tent-dwellers on some of the beaches and bay shores. Initially established in the 1880s as the weekend camps of young men wishing to escape the ‘toetid air and grittiness of the dusty, dirty city’, they become permanent dwellings in the depression of the 1890s...” (Pearce, B., *Bohemians in the Bush / The Artists’ Camps of Musman*, Sydney, 1991, p.31) Curlew Camp and the camp at Edwards Beach, north of Balmoral, were the only two locations to fall into the specific classification of artists’ camps, but it was to be Curlew that became the most famous of the camps, due to the presence of Streeton and Roberts who lived and painted there periodically between 1891 and 1897. Both the lifestyle and many of the works produced at Curlew Camp are closely related works in terms of date and predominately unpopulated so the most closely related works in terms of date and the depiction of figures on the beach are therefore *At Coogee* (National Gallery of Victoria) and *Manly Beach* (Bendigo Art Gallery). *At Cooge* depicts two child-like figures playing on the foreshore against the backdrop of a long, breaking wave but these figures are much more sketchy than the children who appear in *Sirius Cove*. *Sirius Cove* displays the tremendous charm that is the overwhelming characteristic of Streeton’s work from this period of intense creative achievement. Tones of rich blue and gold dominate the scene and the sunshine-frenched canvas bears witness to *Tom Roberts’* initial summation of Streeton’s work - that it was filled with light and air.
Want to know what else is happening in the art world?  
**FINGERPRINT POINTS TO $19,000 PORTRAIT BEING REVALUED AS £100M WORK BY LEONARDO DA VINCI**

By Simon Hewitt for Antiques Trade Gazette

**IS this 13 x 9in (33 x 24cm) portrait, in chalk, pen and ink on vellum, mounted on an oak board, a long-lost work by Leonardo da Vinci?**

That is the claim being made by Martin Kemp, Emeritus Professor of History of Art at Oxford University.

Professor Kemp's assertion is backed by scientific evidence obtained by the revolutionary “multispectral” camera pioneered by Lumière Technology of Paris.

Peter Paul Biro, the Montreal-based forensic art expert, examined the multispectral images and found a fingerprint near the top left of the work, corresponding to the tip of the index or middle-finger, and “highly comparable” to a fingerprint on Leonardo’s *St Jerome* in the Vatican (which, stresses Biro, is an early work from a time when Leonardo is not known to have employed assistants).

A palm-print in the chalk on the sitter’s neck “is also consistent in application to Leonardo’s use of his hands in creating texture and shading”, adds Biro, who is credited with pioneering fingerprint studies to help resolve authentication and attribution issues of works of art.

The Lumière camera has already been used to analyse Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* and *Lady with an Ermine*; by the Kröller-Müller, Van Gogh and Cleveland Art Museums; and by the Art Institute of Chicago.

Multispectral analysis reveals each successive layer of colour, and enables the pigments and pigment mixtures of each pixel to be identified without taking physical samples.

For the vellum portrait, Lumière have been able to establish the composition of the materials used in both the original drawing and the restoration. It transpires, for instance, that the green of the girl's costume was obtained by applying progressive strokes of black chalk to the yellowish surface of the vellum.

Lumière have identified the chalk as amphelite, a fine-grained black argillite (clay slate). Meanwhile flesh tints, and the amber tone of the iris, were achieved by leaving the vellum uncovered.

Infrared analysis reveals significant pentimenti throughout, with stylistic parallels to those in Leonardo's *Portrait of a Woman in Profile* in Windsor Castle; and shows that the drawing and hatching were made by a left-handed artist (as Leonardo is famously known to have been), whereas restoration was carried out right-handed.

There is no other known work by Leonardo on vellum, although Professor Kemp (citing a passage in Leonardo's Ligny Memorandum) points out that, when French court painter Jean Perréal visited Milan with Charles VIII in 1494, Leonardo quizzed him about the technique of using coloured chalks on vellum.

Professor Kemp suggests that Leonardo used vellum here because the portrait was intended to adorn a book of poetry.
in honour of the sitter; three needle holes along the left edge of the vellum indicate it was once bound in a manuscript.

The sitter's costume and elaborate hairstyle reflect Milanese fashion of the late 15th century. Carbon-14 analysis of the vellum, carried out by the Institute for Particle Physics in Zurich, is consistent with such a dating [it gave a date-range of 1440-1650].

But who is the wistful, peach-skinned, flaxen-haired teenager?

After originally code-naming her La Bella Milanese, Professor Kemp – who dubs her profile “subtle to an inexpressible degree” – upgraded her to La Bella Principessa after identifying her, “by a process of elimination”, as Bianca Sforza, daughter of Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan (1452-1508), and his mistress Bernardina de Corradis. Kemp believes the portrait must date from around 1496 when, aged 13 or 14, Bianca married the Duke’s army captain, Galeazzo Sanseverino (a patron of Leonardo’s). Tragically, she died four months after the wedding. This would be Leonardo’s first known Sforza ‘princess’ portrait, although he painted two of the Duke’s mistresses: Cecilia Gallerani (Lady with an Ermine in the Czartoryski Museum, Cracov); and Lucrezia Crivelli (La Belle Ferronière in the Louvre).

After centuries of oblivion, the portrait resurfaced at Christie’s New York on January 30, 1998, as lot 402 in an Old Master Drawings (part II) sale as a Young Girl in Profile in Renaissance Dress – catalogued as “German, early 19th century”, with a $12,000-16,000 estimate. It sold for $19,000 (hammer) to New York dealer Kate Ganz, who sold it (for about the same sum) to the Canadian-born, Europe-based connoisseur Peter Silverman in 2007.

Ganz had suggested the portrait “may have been made by a German artist studying in Italy… based on paintings by Leonardo da Vinci”.

Silverman, an underbidder at Christie’s sale, had other ideas and mentioned the work to Dr Nicholas Turner, formerly Keeper of Prints & Drawings at the British Museum, when he bumped into him at the Polidoro da Caravaggio exhibition at the Louvre in January 2008.

Turner, who had seen a transparency of the work a few months earlier, told Silverman he suspected Leonardo’s involvement because of the “very high quality of the work overall, and the left-handed shading – his signature feature”, and directed Silverman to the renowned Leonardo specialist Martin Kemp.

Professor Kemp’s first reaction was that “it all sounded too good to be true – after 40 years in the Leonardo business, I thought I’d seen it all!” But, as he pursued his research, “all the bits fell into place like a well-made piece of furniture. All the drawers slotted in”.

Silverman is coy about the work’s current ownership, and the portrait has yet to be shown in public since its reattribution. However, Professor Kemp has recently completed a 200-page book about it (so far unpublished) in conjunction with Lumière Technology’s Pascal Cotte.

Attempts to display La Bella in a museum are said to have faltered because of financial concerns linked to insurance – as a Leonardo, the portrait has been valued by London dealer Simon Dickinson at £100m.

The portrait is now due to go on display next March at a show called And There Was Light: The Masters of the Renaissance Seen in a New Light to be held in the Eriksbergshallen, Gothenburg.

The exhibition’s artistic director is Alessandro Vezzosi, Director of the Museo Ideale in Vinci, Leonardo’s home town, and the first man to publish the portrait as a Leonardo in his book Leonardo Infinito last year. Professor Vezzosi is one of a growing roster of Italian art historians who believe the portrait is an autograph work, including Mina Gregori, Professor Emerita of the Florence University and President of the Fondazione Longhi; Dr Cristina Geddo, an expert on Leonardo’s Milanese followers; and Professor Claudio Strinati, Head of the City of Rome Museums, who states that “the portrait constitutes a valuable addition to Leonardo’s oeuvre”.

To Professor Carlo Pedretti, head of the Fondazione Pedretti for Leonardo studies and widely considered the doyen of Leonardo da Vinci expertise, “this could be the most important discovery since the early 19th century re-establishment of the Lady with the Ermine as a genuine Leonardo”.

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