

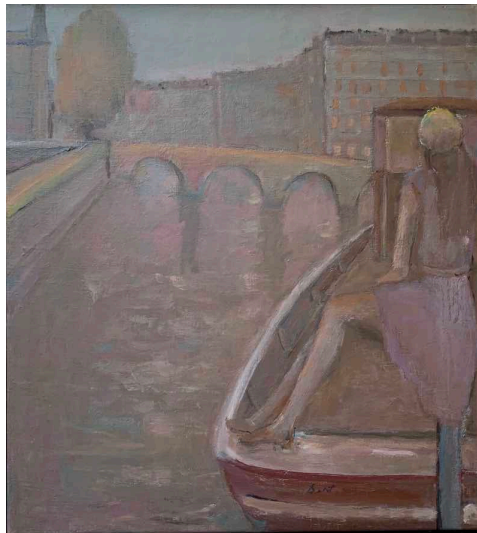
LAURINE · DIGGINS · FINE · ART

A Closer Look At ... John Dent in Paris

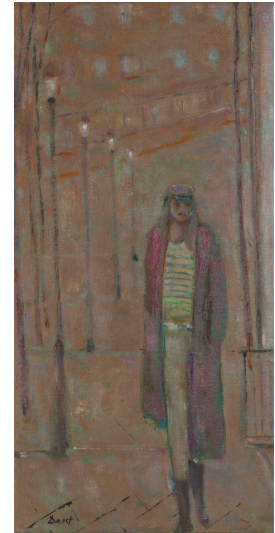
John Dent: Between Two Worlds signifies the major impact living and working in Paris had on the artist. Dent's early career in Melbourne and the guidance of key artists including George Baldessin, Roger Kemp, Fred Williams and John Olsen, as well as the camaraderie of the atelier tradition found at the Winfield Studios, were all important grounding influences that cannot be underestimated. Travel to Europe and studies in London and Rome in the late 1970s and early 1980s, pressed Dent to further his outlook. However, it was a stint living in Paris, working as an artist, attending the renowned Atelier Lacourière-Frélaut, (the printmaking studio established in 1929 and utilised by artists including Picasso and Matisse, and where Baldessin spent time in 1976) and meeting his wife and life-long supporter, Renee, which represent 'another world.'



Chat et Papillon 56 x 33 cm



Along the Seine 51 x 45.5 cm



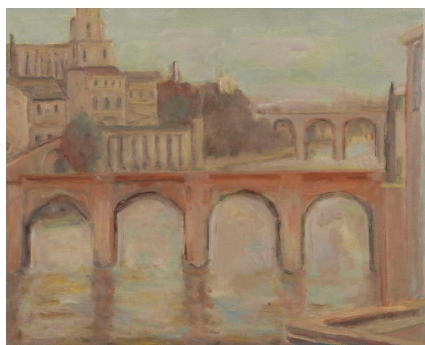
Le Rendez-Vous 61 x 30.5 cm

The skills Dent cultivated in printmaking, particularly in his use of colour and the size of his images were remarkable. In his paintings, we are immediately transported to Paris. Yes, the picturesque, romantic city of cobbled streets and cats on windowsills but more than this, the everyday reality of Paris, the commonplace and the unusual.

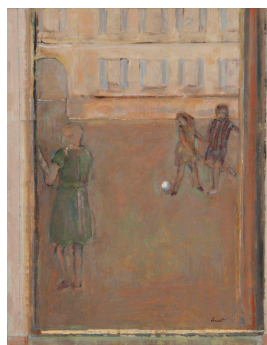


L'Institut oil on canvas 51 x 71 cm

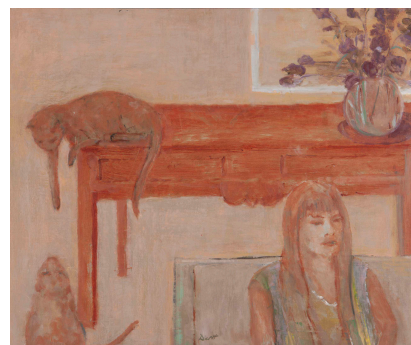
Living in Paris, Dent felt he had to start his artistic career again. The isolation of a foreign culture and language and the vast distance from Australia, with its fairly parochial and certainly Anglo-Saxon viewpoint, cannot be underestimated. Of course, within time, Dent was able to tap into the international fraternity of fellow artists, particularly at Lacourière.



Albi 53.5 x 66 cm

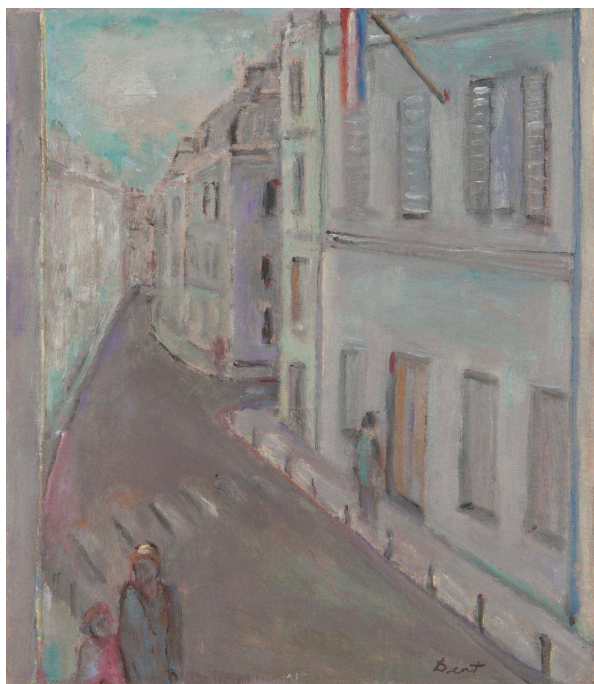


Le Match 71 x 56 cm



Intérieur Rue Claude Bernard 53.5 x 63.5 cm

The paintings of Paris by John Dent are redolent with atmosphere, indicative of his ability to absorb the sense of place he discovered there. Mostly, these are quiet introspective moments, a captured snapshot in time. The street scenes take the viewer on a promenade with the artist around Paris, as he explores the city. If the imagery is sometimes romantic, it is because this reflects the everyday reality of the city and these are scenes actually encountered – an arched bridge over the river; a flag hanging from a terraced building; lovers entwined in a park. Equally, Paris is a city of unexpected surprises and strange contrasts, casual witness to nuns in full habit kicking a soccer ball.

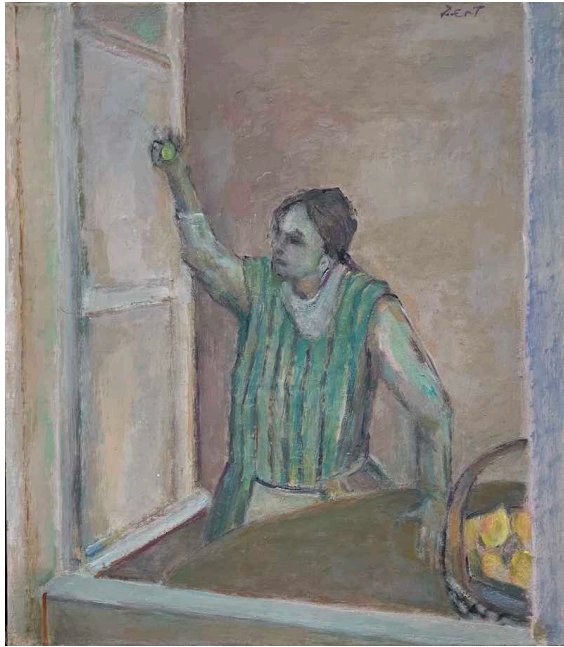


Rue Blanche oil on canvas 40.5 x 35.5 cm

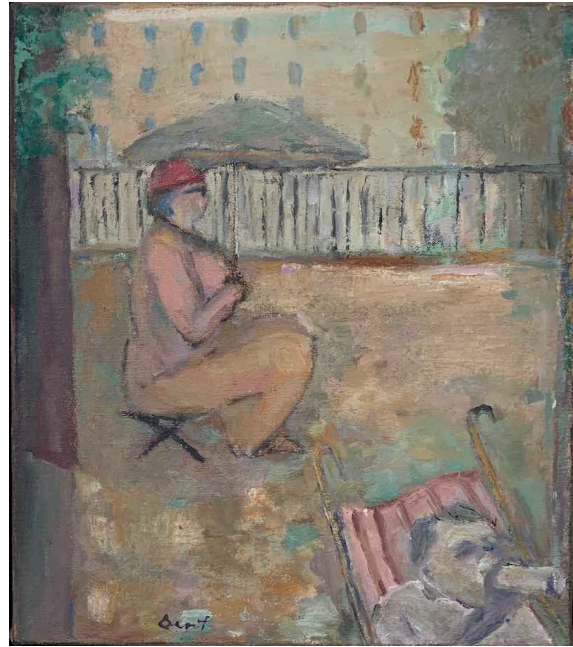


Les Bénédictines du Sacré-Coeur oil on canvas 71 x 56 cm

At other times the subject is almost mundane, a woman with a striped apron in her window; or tinged with humour, the upright nanny on duty with her sensible umbrella shading her from the sun contrasted with the lounging figure enjoying a drink on the deckchair.



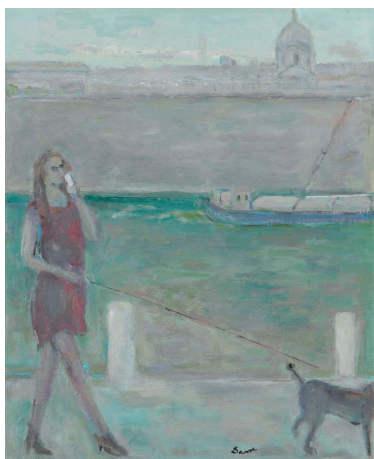
Lemons oil on canvas 40.5 x 35.5 cm



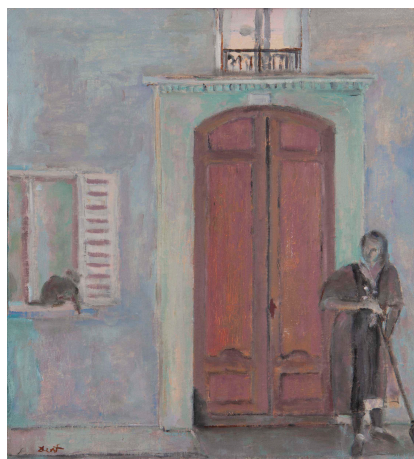
The Nanny oil on canvas 40.5 x 35.5 cm

In these Parisian paintings, Dent again highlights his skill as a colourist, with the overall effect of a subtle and subdued palette, yet on examination, the rich layering of colours and the shimmering effect this achieves becomes evident, particularly notable in the areas of negative space within the composition – the river, a wall, a road. Often, the ‘action’ is sidelined (a figure walking; a waiter leaning in a doorway; *La Concierge* with her broom; a fisherman or a boat on the water) pulling our gaze across the canvas, as if we were indeed just glimpsing these scenes from the corner of our eyes as we traverse Paris.

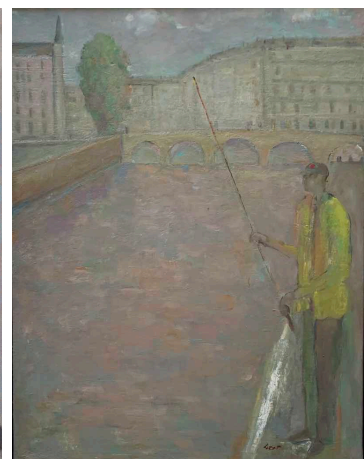
Another aspect highlighting Dent’s astute use of colour found in many of the Parisian scenes is the juxtaposition of one strong element of colour against a more subtle palette – a red door or dress; a yellow basket of lemons or fishing jacket, a white soccer ball. Some paintings find this colour echoed throughout the composition, leading the viewer’s eye, like the red, white and blue flag matching the red, white and blue outfits of the couple strolling down the street in *Rue Blanche*. This effect can also be seen in several compositional elements – the long legs and jacket in *Le Rendez-Vous* reiterated in the tall elongated lampposts; repeated archways or part of a boat leading us across and along the river; or a dog leash or fishing line directing our gaze.



Walkin' the Dog 56 x 46 cm



La Concierge 61 x 56 cm



Fisherman on the Seine 66 x 50.5 cm

The elegant larger oil painting on paper, *Rue des Ursulines* is a culmination of much that is to be admired in Dent’s artwork, evoking a reflective and dreamy atmosphere with a seated female figure framed by a window. This is an “interior” in all senses of the word, depicting a comfortable Parisian apartment with the subject shown in a contemplative mood, content with her own thoughts than the world of Paris seen outside her window.

The skilful use of colour, of decorative patterning and the skewed picture plane are all elements of focus in Dent's still life paintings (which you can also take *A Closer Look At...* on our website by clicking [here](#)). Indeed, the still life is actually included, with the elements on the table. We can also find the use of daubs of colour to help guide our eye around the picture, particularly the touches of yellow.

The significance of Paris and its art scene has been a major influence for many artists throughout history and has certainly shaped Dent's oeuvre, evident in many aspects but essentially in the very real French atmosphere captured in these paintings.



Rue des Ursulines 1987 oil on paper 129 x 63 cm (sight)

Preview the paintings in the exhibition [John Dent: Between Two Countries](#) on our website www.diggins.com.au

where you can download the illustrated catalogue, view videos of the exhibition opening and read further about aspects of John Dent's painting by taking *A Closer Look At...*

Showing at Lauraine Diggins Fine Art until 25 June 2021 EXTENDED

Gallery Hours: Tues – Fri 10am – 6pm or by appointment

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