



MEDIA RELEASE

AN INTERIOR LIFE | William Johnston and his Collection 2020

17 February - 22 September 2020

A visually rich display of over 400 years of art history, *AN INTERIOR LIFE* offers a glimpse into one of Australasia's best collections of its kind. William Johnston's lifetime passion for beautiful things include rare and significant items, displayed within the luscious interiors of *Fairhall* exhibition-house in the leafy green suburb of East Melbourne.

AN INTERIOR LIFE showcases Johnston's vast and eclectic collection including works on paper by one of the greatest printmakers of the eighteenth century, Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778), as well as many fine paintings including Regency miniatures by the acclaimed 18th Century miniaturist James Scouler. Considered one of the greatest inventors and craftsmen of his age, Henry Hindley's (1700-1771) exquisite longcase clock is also on display. Objects by world-renowned Wedgwood, first incorporated in 1895 as Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd., the leading animalier of the 17th Century Jay Fyt, as well as the founder of the iconic Imperial typewriter, Hidalgo Moya, are just some of the noteworthy artists and engineers on display.

One of the few exhibition-houses in Australia to be unfettered by ropes and barriers, visitors will be guided through the Museum, enjoying exotic stories of travel and tales of the past from over 1,400 objects, paintings, ceramics, furniture and *objet d'art*.

It was William Johnston's intention that, *Fairhall*, be regularly rearranged. Past rearrangements have included those by fashion designer, Akira Isogawa, architect, Pascale Gomes-McNabb, fashion-house, Romance Was Born, artist Rosslynd Piggott, Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet, David McAllister AO, milliner and artist Richard Nylon and design studio Hecker Guthrie. The experience of TJC begins at The Pullman on The Park hotel, where visitors are picked up by courtesy bus and travel a few short minutes to the Museum to begin their tour.

AN INTERIOR LIFE continues to explore one of the themes underpinning The Johnstone Collection, that *old is new again*.

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ABOUT THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION

The Johnston Collection is a place where people meet art and artists.

The Johnston Collection (TJC) is a multi-award-winning and critically acclaimed museum that invites creatives from the broader visual arts and design communities to re-interpret the Collection through a regular program of re-installation and interventions of the permanent collection.

Since 1990, TJC has provided visitors, from near and far, with transformative exhibition and educational experiences to **discover**, **experience** and **engage** with artists, objects and ideas through dynamic temporary programs, lectures, workshops and tours based on its permanent collection.

This year, The Johnston Collection celebrates 30 years of being open to the public, having welcomed more than 150,000 visitors to *Fairhall* during that time.

TJC is comprised of more than 1,400 objects mostly from the English Georgian and Regency period and is regarded as one of the best collections of its kind in Australasia.

ABOUT WILLIAM JOHNSTON

William Robert Johnston (1911-1986) was a 20th century collector, antique dealer, and property investor who amassed an extraordinary collection of 18th century English and Louis XV furniture, paintings, ceramics and *objet d'art* over his lifetime.

Johnston was born in Lilydale, Victoria in 1911, the only child of Robert Alexander Johnston, a boot-maker and Louise Friedrichs, a maid. Around the age of eight, William was given a Minton cup by his grandmother, Mary Theresa Friedrichs which became the first piece of his collection and provided inspiration for a career in antiques. After an early career in window merchandising in Melbourne, Johnston relocated to London to begin a fulltime business dealing in antiques. He purchased *Fairhall* in 1952 with money made from the sale of antiques brought back from England. Originally named *Cadzow*, built in 1860 and extended ten years later, Johnston renamed it *Fairhall* and remodelled it in order to create the appearance of a late 18th century neo-Georgian-style townhouse.

In 1972, Johnston returned to live part-time in Melbourne, gathering his collection of 18th century English and Louis XV fine and decorative arts into *Fairhall* and other properties he owned in the area. At the same time, he opened Kent Antiques in High St, Armadale.

Johnston's house, collection and estate were bequeathed to the people of Victoria after his death in 1986 '*as a place of historical and educational interest,*' now administered as an independent not-for-profit public museum by The WR Johnston Trust. *Fairhall* exhibition-house and garden was converted and presented in the English manner. The Trust also continues to acquire new works for the permanent collection.

Image | cup, France, circa 1860, porcelain, soft paste
c: 135 x 120 x 100mm s: 40 x dia 170mm
TJC Foundation Collection, 1989