



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***JUBILATION: Diamonds & Pearls*** ***Christmas / Summer at The Johnston Collection***

1 December 2020 – 23 February 2021

TJC has collaborated with The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria to present *JUBILATION: Diamonds & Pearls*, our annual *Christmas / Summer at The Johnston Collection* exhibition.

2020 marks both the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the public opening of *Fairhall* exhibition-house.

*JUBILATION | Diamonds & Pearls* features works by members from among the eleven Branches and one Country Group of The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria. These will be seen along with works from the Guild's collection of textiles from Australia and abroad collected over some 60 years and an array of new works made especially for TJC's annual 'inspired by' show.

Guest co-curators Alison Cole and Yvonne Walton have hand-picked some remarkable contributions from Guild embroiderers who have exhibited work in over fifteen years of Christmas exhibitions at TJC.

The Johnston Collection is delighted to present works of embroiderers who have created new pieces and returning items displayed throughout the rooms of *Fairhall* the exhibition house against the backdrop of William Johnston's own extraordinary collection.

Dorothy Morgan, TJC Exhibition Coordinator says that, "It is wonderful to welcome back to The Johnston Collection old friends, as well as to see some of the treasures of The Embroiderers Guild's Collection of historic embroidery and embroidery tools."

*JUBILATION | Diamonds & Pearls* features over fifteen years of work by Victorian-based embroiderers made for our popular exhibition which began in 2003. In the first invitation to exhibit in 2003, Nina Stanton, then Director put a challenge to Guild members and asked them to decorate select rooms at *Fairhall* as a home for Christmas.

What did we get? A truly spectacular seasonal delight for anyone interested in arts, crafts, antiques and holiday season decorating. That year embroiderers created decorations inspired by the collection and *Fairhall*, and created a truly elegant and unique Christmas display. "The results are even more wonderful than we had imagined," said Nina. "The hours each group has put into the work, and the types of decorations they have created make the holiday season very special."

Since the initial Summer exhibition of groups and guilds, TJC has criss-crossed the State from Ballarat (2006) to Bendigo (2008); Geelong (2009) to Gippsland (2015); Warrnambool (2010) to Wangaratta (2011), as well as Castlemaine (2007), the Mornington Peninsula (2013) and the Surf Coast (2014) embracing nearly all groups of The Embroiderers Guild in Victoria.

Over that time hundreds, if not thousands, of Guild members have participated in making new works inspired by the Collection, bringing recognition and appreciation of extraordinary creativity found throughout the regions of Victoria.

Now, in 2020, Alison Cole, guest co-curator remarks that, "The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria is proud to present *JUBILATION: Diamonds & Pearls* at The Johnston Collection. It is the culmination of three years of planning and creating for your visual pleasure."

Each room of *Fairhall* has works that are grouped by various themes. The Green Drawing Room feature works based on *Christmas*, whilst other rooms have works grouped under the themes of *Wedding and Opulence; Dressing For An Evening's Outing* and *Apparel & Accessories*. The exhibition culminates in a magnificent *Wonder Room* bursting with numerous embroidered and embellished butterflies and other creatures.

Wendy Findlay, State President, EGV, has reminded us that "In this, our 60<sup>th</sup> year, *JUBILATION* features 75 stitchers – a broad cross section of our membership from across the State. City and country, young and young at heart, new members and those that have been with us for 60 years – a celebration of our membership and the embroidery that they love."

By design, TJC's annual exhibition is based on our benefactor, William Johnston's own craft-related skills, in which he was encouraged to make things at an early age. Johnston, the son of a bootmaker, was a competent knitter, and was taught basic sewing and tailoring skills, as well as upholstery, all of which led him into an early career in soft furnishings.

Inspired by the Collection, a gift from William Johnston to the people of Victoria, our annual Summer exhibition responds to traditional ways of making through makers' thinking and practices.

*JUBILATION | Diamonds & Pearls* offers an 'inspired' display in Fairhall and celebrates 60 magnificent years of making by The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria.

## **MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

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## **SELECTED QUOTES:**

### **ALISON COLE | Co-curator *JUBILATION: Diamonds & Pearls***

“The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria is proud to present *JUBILATION: Diamonds & Pearls* at The Johnston Collection. It is the culmination of three years of planning and creating for your visual pleasure.”

“The Room of Wonders awaits you – embroidered butterflies, dragonflies and flowers created by the members of The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria.”

### **YVONNE WALTON | Co-curator *JUBILATION: Diamonds & Pearls***

“Celebrating the Pearl anniversary of The Johnston Collection and the Diamond Anniversary of The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria, *JUBILATION: Diamonds & Pearls* is a visual feast of embroidered textiles.”

“There’s more to embroidery tools than thimble, scissors, and thread. What’s an etui, what’s a bodkin?”

### **DOROTHY MORGAN | TJC Exhibition Coordinator**

“As an embroiderer myself I am very excited about the way this exhibition brings together so much from the world of textiles - there is something for absolutely everyone.”

“It is wonderful to welcome back to The Johnston Collection old friends such as the rather superior and knowing angel ‘Octavia’ and a playful family of soft sculpture rabbits, as well as to see some of the treasures of The Embroiderers Guild’s Collection of historic embroidery and embroidery tools.”

### **WENDY FINDLAY | State President, The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria On the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria**

“From its inaugural meeting of The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria in June 1960, enthusiastic women have met at Embroidery House in Malvern to share in their love of embroidery as well as enjoying the friendship of like-minded individuals.

Many special interest groups meet throughout the month, for members to support each other in a range of embroidery techniques, as well as conserving our collection of historic embroideries and looking after our vast resource library.

In this, our 60<sup>th</sup> year, we started the celebrations with an exhibition featuring 60 Stitchers – a broad cross section of our membership from across the State. City and Country, young and young at heart, new members and those that have been with us for 60 years – a celebration of our membership and the embroidery that they love – kicked off with a *Champagne Soiree* on a

stormy January evening. The Guild was resplendent - decorated with over 650 embroidered diamonds made by our members from across the State.

As a special memento for our members to embroider, an exceptional band sampler was created by a team of talented members featuring traditional patterns and typical Australian flora and fauna. We also purchased engraved scissors, pens and pins as keepsakes of our special anniversary.

While COVID-19 has curbed our celebrations and we have had to cancel special workshops with international tutors and postpone our celebratory high tea and annual member exhibition, we have kept creating at home - working towards *JUBILATION: Diamonds & Pearls* at The Johnston Collection.”

## **ABOUT CHRISTMAS AT THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION**

Since 2003, artists and craftspeople from a different region of Victoria have been invited by The Johnston Collection to create works inspired by *Fairhall* and the Collection for the annual Christmas at The Johnston Collection exhibition. Hundreds of makers are involved in producing the work for this popular tour each year.

The artists work on their projects for up to 18 months before the show and then from October to February, the works are displayed in *Fairhall* against the backdrop of William Johnston’s collection.

Through working with the creative guilds, craft societies and communities of artists across the State, The Johnston Collection has been able to support the continuation of the traditions of crafting and artistry in Victoria.

When creating work for the Christmas tour, makers are encouraged by The Johnston Collection to use their craft in new and challenging ways. By supporting the continuation of old crafts utilising new designs, The Johnston Collection has helped to re-invigorate the guilds, societies and communities of participating artists.

## **ABOUT THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION**

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

The Johnston Collection (TJC) is an exhibition-house of visual art and design centred in an historic Melbourne townhouse. A gift to the people of Victoria by William Robert Johnston (1911-1986) it is administered as an independent not-for-profit museum by the WR Johnston Trust.

Since 1990, The Johnston Collection has provided visitors, from near and far, with transformative exhibition and learning experiences to discover, experience and engage with artists, objects and ideas through dynamic temporary programs based on its permanent collection.

As a multi award-winning and critically acclaimed museum, The Johnston Collection invites creatives from the broader visual arts and design communities to re-interpret the Collection, offering special tours, study days and lectures throughout the year, that share stories and inspire communities.

This year The Johnston Collection will celebrate 30 years of being open to the public, having welcomed more than 150,000 visitors to *Fairhall* during that time. TJC displays the works from Johnston's collection in *Fairhall* in themed exhibition-house each year.

The Johnston Collection also incorporates a reference library, as well as a lecture space offering an active and engaging range of lectures, workshops and events for all.

## **ABOUT WILLIAM JOHNSTON**

William Robert Johnston (1911-1986) was a 20<sup>th</sup> century collector, property investor and antique dealer who amassed an extraordinary collection of English Georgian, Regency, 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 scullery 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 18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian-style townhouse.

In 1972, Johnston returned to live part-time in Melbourne, gathering his collection of 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

William 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.'

It is now administered as an independent not-for-profit public museum by The WR Johnston Trust. *Fairhall* was converted into an exhibition-house with a garden designed in the English manner. The Trust also acquires new works for the permanent collection, which comprises over nearly 1500 items.

## SAMPLE IMAGES



Alison Cole  
*detail of 'tree topper' Jubilation!, 2020*  
Goldwork embroidery  
Photography Credit: Alison Cole



Alison Cole  
*Lemon Meringue Pie, 2020*  
Cotton threads over cotton base fabric,  
silk habotai, pearls  
Photography Credit: Alison Cole



Sue Senewiratne  
*Butterflies, 2020*  
machine embroidery, beading  
Photography Credit: Alison Cole