



MEDIA RELEASE

OBJECTS OF MY AFFECTION: Stories of love from The Johnston Collection

Tuesday 9 March – Tuesday 24 August 2021

OBJECTS OF MY AFFECTION: Stories of Love from the Johnston Collection will be a memorable opportunity to see objects gathered with affection by William Johnston over his lifetime. Johnston's Collection will be displayed alongside objects from other collectors and donors inspired to support the Collection over the past 30 years, curated within an English Georgian-inspired domestic interior in Johnston's beloved East Melbourne house, *Fairhall*.

Fairhall, and its collection, was bequeathed with love by Melburnian, William Johnston (1911-1986), to the people of Victoria. The museum is a hidden gem amongst Melbourne's cultural icons.

Over 100 years ago, Johnston was given a small Minton **cup** by his adored grandmother Mary Theresa Friedrichs when he was about 8 years old. The delicately hand-painted *coffee cup* with its band of flowers, gilt edges and stippled with golden dots remind us of William Johnston's life-long love of collecting, enjoyment of gardening, and passion for flowers.

William Johnston kept the tiny cup all his life, later recalling that this *coffee cup* started his desire for collecting.

After a lifetime of dealing in antiques, acquiring real estate, and collecting art and objects, Johnston decided to leave the legacy, and love, of his collection to care of the people of Victoria to appreciate. It would be his personal act of affection to future generations, who he hoped would be as passionate about his things as he was.

The museum now holds a selection of objects from William Johnston's estate and it is a veritable treasure-house of English 18th century antiques, decorative arts, and *objet d'art*.

It was Johnston's intention that his collection could be added to, to enrich its interest to visitors. Over time, other like-minded people have shared and added their own objects of affection and interest to the Collection.

OBJECTS OF MY AFFECTION will include works donated by other Melbourne collectors such as the late Nina Stanton, who was passionate about 18th century porcelain and Alywnne Jona AM whose parents kind-heartedly encouraged an enthusiasm for porcelain as well. Ambassadors to TJC, Andrew Dixon, and the late Roger Brookes, also passed on items of silver and glass which will showcase their delight in collecting superb one-off pieces. Also on display will be donor Christine Bell's collection of 18th century enamel patch boxes are intimate tokens of romance and celebration of love.

Fairhall is one of the few exhibition-houses in Australia to be unfettered by ropes and barriers, visitors will be guided through the exhibition-house, enjoying remarkable stories of desire and affection from the past and of the present from over 1,400 objects, paintings, ceramics, furniture and *objet d'art*.

Johnston intended that *Fairhall* be regularly rearranged. Past rearrangements have included those by fashion designer Akira Isogawa, architect Pascale Gomes-McNabb, fashion-house RomanceWasBorn, 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.

After a challenging 2020, TJC has designated 2021 as *A YEAR OF LOVE*. We look forward to sharing new exhibitions and events with you all - celebrating William Johnston's love for his collection, our love for you: our wonderful community, and your love and support of us in return.

OBJECTS OF MY AFFECTION: Stories of love celebrates the 30th Anniversary of *Fairhall* opening to public on 19 November 1990. Continue with us as we celebrate our remarkable milestone of 30 glorious years of sharing Johnston's gift of love to the people of Victoria.

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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 will celebrate 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 bootmaker 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 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.

ABOUT THE DONORS AND SOME OBJECTS



This little **cup** is the most significant object in TJC.

William Johnston's maternal grandmother (Grandma Friedrichs) gave it to him when he was about eight years of age. He kept it all his life and stated that it was this cup that started his passion for collecting.

It reminds us of William Johnston's life-long love of collecting, enjoyment of gardening, and passion for flowers.

Minton & Co., Stoke-on-Trent, est. 1793 – Thomas Minton's pottery and porcelain factory

Thomas Minton period, Staffordshire, circa 1809-17

cup, England, circa 1812-15
porcelain (bone china), enamel, gilt | 64 x 72 x 90 mm

The Johnston Collection (Foundation Collection, A0660-1989)



TJC has several patch boxes, and my five have joined them. All except one were given to me by my husband as Valentine's Day presents, and in 2009 they were joined by another which bears the message 'A Trifle from London'. There was almost a sixth, which I found in Geelong, but there was a major repair to the base, and it was

WILLIAM JOHNSTON (1911-1986)

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CHRISTINE BELL

Christine Bell, Ambassador (2018), has donated to TJC and supports the acquisition of English 18th century furniture, works on paper, ceramics, glass, and silver.

Christine Bell has had a long and distinguished career as an archivist and picture Librarian, working internationally, and finally at the State Library of Victoria

After retiring as a librarian 2007, Bell became involved at TJC as a volunteer guide. She brought her vast knowledge of the fine and decorative arts to her guiding. Appointed as an Ambassador in 2016, Bell actively supports TJC through the donation of items.

decided that five were quite enough for one person.

Christine Bell

maker unknown

patch box, with motto "Love the Giver",
England, 18th century

enamel on metal | 40 x 35 x 35 mm

The Johnston Collection (A1360-2014)

gift of Christine Bell, Melbourne



This early English soup *tureen* bears the armorial of Thomas Stonor and his wife Catherine Blundell and was probably added in 1795 to celebrate their love, betrothal, and marriage.

Alexander Johnston (English, fl. 1733 – 1748?)

soup tureen, assayed London, 1755
Sterling silver | 263 x 390 x 200 mm
makers mark for Alexander Johnston on base

engraved coat of arms of a later date
combination of the coat of arms of the Stonor family and that of the Blundell family
The Johnston Collection (A1255-2005)
purchased with funds provided by Mr. Clive Hele (Roger) Brookes, Melbourne, 2005

She has a prodigious love of all things 18th century, as well as sharing her love of collecting with us and our visitors, and now through the items she has donated.

CLIVE HELE (ROGER) BROOKES (1929 – 2020)

Roger Brookes was an Honorary Life Member (2006), and an inaugural Ambassador (2008-2017) has donated to TJC and assisted with the acquisition of English 18th century furniture, ceramics, glass and silver.

Roger Brookes came from three generations of collectors and lovers of silver.

His English maternal grandfather Albert Henry Heal offered his father Wilfred Brookes a Georgian silver *tankard*, his father-in-law's favourite piece. As an expression of kindness and devotion, baby Roger Brookes was given an early 19th century *tumbler cup* as a christening present from his Aunt Eudora and this became his first piece of silver.

In the 1960s, his father, Sir Wilfred Brookes became a serious collector of silver both to use and display. He stopped collecting when his wife Betty died. The collection remained dormant until it was passed on to son Roger in 1997. Since then, Roger added to and refined his collection.

As an act community engagement and philanthropy, knowing that TJC also needed to enhance its own collection he donated many pieces over time.



This portrait of **of Lord Chancellor William Cowper** was painted in the same year that Cowper married his beautiful second wife, Mary. Cowper may have had his portrait painted in all his finery, by one of England's finest artists, Jonathan Richardson, as a dedication to the love of his fiancé and wife, and a celebration of their betrothal.

after Jonathan Richardson, [1665-1745]
after [Jonathan Richardson "the Elder"
(English, 1667 – 1745)]
untitled (portrait of Lord Chancellor William Cowper), England, 1706
oil on canvas | 763 x 635 mm
The Johnston Collection (A1259-2006),
purchased with funds provided by Andrew
Dixon



Minerva was the Roman goddess of wisdom, medicine, commerce, handicrafts, poetry, the arts, and later, war. In many ways she similar to the

ANDREW DIXON

Andrew Dixon was President of The Friends of TJC (2003-2005), was appointed Honorary Life Member (2006), and made an inaugural Ambassador (2008). He has donated to the collection and supports the acquisition of English 18th century ceramics, glass, silver, as well as additions to the Reference Library.

Dixon became involved at TJC as a volunteer in mid-2000, soon after Nina Stanton's arrival as the Director. He was impressed with how she shared her deep passion for the appreciation of the stories and characteristics of beautiful objects.

Dixon recalled that, "*Stanton was very encouraging of my interest I got great satisfaction from researching items in the Collection.*"

Over time, Dixon's appreciation of TJC grew and was reinforced by generous donations to the fine art, silver, and glass collections to complementing Johnston's legacy.

ALYWNNE JONA OAM (1926-2012)

Alwynne Jona OAM was an inaugural Ambassador (2008-2012) of TJC. In 2013 the Trust received donations from her personal collection of English porcelain along with a bequest to be used for the purchase of 18th century porcelain.

Alwynne Jona began collecting ceramics with her parents Mr & Mrs Burley. It was a shared passion that brought parents and daughter together on many occasions to look at objects. They bought objects they liked.

The collection is a source of pride and enjoyment and maintains the loving link between Alwynne and her parents.

Greek goddess Athena. So adored as a goddess, she had important temples constructed in her honour in Rome. She is often depicted with her sacred creature, an owl which symbolised her association with and promotion of wisdom and knowledge.

Derby porcelain factory, Derby
est. circa 1748-1848
figure, woman [Athena / Minerva],
England, circa 1785-85
porcelain, soft-paste, enamel decoration|
340 x 140 x 120 mm
The Johnston Collection (A1311-2013,
bequest of Alywnne Jona OAM)



This transfer printed *dish* depicts an idyllic and tranquil garden-scene with a seated genteel lady is being kissed on the hand by a gentleman kneeling before her. It is a celebration of the portrayal of nature and love - passionate and intimately romantic.

detail from | Bow porcelain factory, (active circa 1747-1764, closed 1776) Bow, London
dish (L'Amour (version 2)), England, circa 1756-58
porcelain, transfer print | dia 210 mm
The Johnston Collection (A1342-2014)
purchased with funds provided by The Nina Stanton 18th century Porcelain Bequest

NINA STANTON (1948–2009)

Nina Stanton was Director of TJC (2000–2008) and Founding Chairman of The Copland Foundation. In 2009 the Trust received a significant bequest for the acquisition of 18th century porcelain in her name.

Stanton said “When I was offered the position of Director / Curator of the only house-museum in an historic house in Australia at that time with a European collection of fine and decorative arts, it was 28 years from the moment I made a commitment to myself that I would develop engaging ways for people to learn about objects.

Objects, I believe passionately, can take one on a journey of beauty, history, friendship, and self-knowledge.

During her time at TJC, Stanton came to love objects made of porcelain, so much so, that she bequeathed funds for the acquisition of 18th century porcelain in her name.