



THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION

A museum of fine and decorative arts

incorporating

Fairhall exhibition-house | Lectures | Reference Library | Shop

MEDIA RELEASE

'RETURN TO THE CITY' | Christmas at The Johnston Collection (2016)

With artists collectives **Hotham Street Ladies**, **The GLAD Rappers** and **The Melbourne Tapestry Weavers Collective** and individual artists **Anne Bolitho**, **Lewis Brownlie**, **ChiliPhilly**, **Amanda Dziedzic**, **Sai-Wai Foo**, **Irianna Kanellopoulou**, **Abbey Rich**, **Robyn Rich**, **Sharron Okines**, **Louise Saxton** and **Ellen Sorensen**.

Monday 3 October 2016 – Tuesday 31 January 2017

New works commissioned from some of Melbourne's best contemporary makers are presented in **'RETURN TO THE CITY' | Christmas at The Johnston Collection 2016** in Fairhall exhibition-house until 31 January 2017.

'RETURN TO THE CITY' includes:

- an installation from artists collective **Hotham Street Ladies** renowned for their subversive baking and who famously turned the foyer of the NGV into an icing-coated share house for the *Melbourne Now* exhibition. For **RETURN TO THE CITY**, the Hotham Street Ladies have transformed the Green Room into 'a night after' scene from an imaginary party hosted by William Johnston on his return to Melbourne from Swinging London in the 1960s. This royal icing installation is based on the wreckage and debris left by the departing guests after a night of debauchery.
- textile artist **ChiliPhilly** who has been featured in the Huffington Post, the BBC and Buzzfeed, has created an installation featuring crochet hats and a crochet portrait of William Johnston and his friend Ahmed, in the Blue Room
- in the Bedroom, artist **Louise Saxton**, who creates stunning pieces from reclaimed needlework, along with the whimsical sculptural paper works of artist **Sai-Wai Foo**, are featured in the Bedroom
- architectural illustrator **Lewis Brownlie**, has made his mark in the Study with his distinctive intricate line-work, this time in wire
- painter **Robyn Rich**, textile designer **Abbey Rich**, printmaker **Sharon Okines**, and ceramicist **Irianna Kanellopoulou** have installed their pieces inspired by objects in the Collection in the White Room
- **The GLAD Rappers** have turned up and yarn bombed the Yellow Room
- artist **Amanda Dziedzic** is showing her exquisite glass vegetables in the Kitchen

'RETURN TO THE CITY' | Christmas at The Johnston Collection 2016 features the work of Melbourne-based makers for the first time in over a decade. This popular series which commenced in 2004, commissions makers from a different region in Victoria each year to create new works drawn from aspects of the Collection or relating to the life of William Robert Johnston (1911-1986).

The commissioned work is displayed against the back-drop of William Johnston's extraordinary collection of Regency, Georgian and Louis XV furniture, paintings, ceramics and *objet d'art* arranged in a domestic setting. William Johnston (1911 – 1986) was a prominent 20th century antique dealer and collector who bequeathed his former residence, *Fairhall*, and collection to the people of Victoria.

Since it first opened to the public in 1990, The Johnston Collection has commissioned and exhibited contemporary art and design in dialogue with its historic collection.

'RETURN TO THE CITY' | Christmas at The Johnston Collection 2016 promotes contemporary responses to the Collection by encouraging makers to challenge traditional practice and to explore new contemporary practice and ideas. This exhibition offers an 'inspired' interpretation of the Collection.

'RETURN TO THE CITY' will bring together the work of Melbourne's contemporary makers in one magnificent show.

For further information, images or interviews, please contact:

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About William Johnston and The Johnston Collection

The Johnston Collection is an exhibition-house of fine and decorative arts centred in an historic Melbourne townhouse. William Robert Johnston (1911-1986) was a 20th century collector and antique dealer who amassed an extraordinary collection of Georgian, Regency, and Louis XV furniture, paintings, ceramics and *objet d'art* over his lifetime. His collection was bequeathed to the people of Victoria after his death, and is displayed in a constantly changing domestic setting in his former residence, *Fairhall*.

Johnston was born in Lilydale, Victoria in 1911, the only child of Robert Alexander Johnston and Louise Friedrichs. His father was a boot-maker and his mother, before her marriage, worked as a maid at Stanford House, East Melbourne.

Around the age of eight, William was given a Minton cup by his grandmother, Mary Theresa Friedrichs (nee Clarke). This became the first piece of his collection and provided the inspiration for a career in antiques that took Johnston around the world.

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 Georgian-style townhouse. The interior rooms were converted into three rental flats.

By 1972, Johnston decided to return to live part-time in Melbourne, and gathered his expanding collection of Georgian, Regency and Louis XV fine and decorative arts into

Fairhall and other rental 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 museum by The WR Johnston Trust. *Fairhall* was converted into the exhibition-house and a garden was designed in the English manner to highlight Johnston's love of gardening. The Trust also acquires new works for the permanent collection, which now cares for over 1300 items.

This year The Johnston Collection celebrates 25 years of being open to the public, having welcomed more than 100,000 visitors to *Fairhall* during that time. The Johnston Collection displays the works from Johnston's collection in *Fairhall* in three themed exhibition-house tours 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 Christmas at The Johnston Collection

Since 2004, artists and craftspeople from a different region of Victoria have been engaged by The Johnston Collection to create works inspired by *Fairhall* and the Collection for the *Christmas at The Johnston Collection* house-museum tour.

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 November 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.

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Since 1999, The Johnston Collection has provided visitors, from near and far, transformative exhibition and learning experiences to discover, experience and engage with artists, objects and ideas through dynamic temporary programmes based on its permanent collection.

As an 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.

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