



**THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION**  
A Museum of Fine and Decorative Arts  
*incorporating*

*Fairhall* house-museum | Lectures | Reference Library | Shop

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***JOYFUL & TRIUMPHANT***

#### ***CHRISTMAS AT THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION 2015 - 2016***

**Thursday 5 November 2015 – Wednesday 24 February 2016**

*Fairhall* house-museum will be adorned with the exquisite work of more than 170 artists and craftspeople from the Gippsland region in the spectacular ***Christmas at The Johnston Collection 2015*** exhibition ***JOYFUL & TRIUMPHANT*** which opens on 5 November.

The popular annual ***Christmas at The Johnston Collection*** exhibition is held from November to February each year, and showcases the work of country-based artists and craftspeople from around Victoria, with a particular region featured each year.

This year The Johnston Collection is delighted and honoured to present the work of craftspeople and artists from Gippsland who have created pieces inspired by the Collection and which will be displayed throughout the rooms of the house-museum, to be viewed against the backdrop of William Johnston's extraordinary collection.

Working with Creative Gippsland, a collaborative cultural tourism network, participants include Bairnsdale Lacemakers, Coinda Hill; Fusion FAN Inc.; Gum Leaf Quilters | Churchill Neighbourhood Centre; Latrobe Country Guidance Group; PAGE | Paper Art Gippsland East; Primary Patchworkers of Sale; Riviera Quilters; Sale Lacemakers; The Bond Family; The Cake Decorators Association of Victoria Inc. (Warragul Committee and Leongatha Branch); The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria (Leongatha Country Group); The West Gippy Group (Members of the Baw Baw Arts Alliance) | Bbaandit Yarners; and independent artists Susan Cock; Heather Costigan; George Crone, Marion Dawson; Beryl Farr; Cheryl Kane; Jackie McNamee; Gwenneth Poore and Jenny Romano.

The makers have been working on their pieces for over eighteen months with some individual pieces taking hundreds of hours to complete. The Sale Lacemakers for example, spent more than 600 hours creating their exquisite lacework decorations. Dollmaker, Jenny Romano, worked on her miniature figure of 'Mr Johnston' for many months. This tiny replica of The Johnston Collection's benefactor is dressed immaculately in a suit and holds two books and a tiny Christmas stocking, all painstakingly created in miniature. And for their contribution to the Christmas exhibition, the Baw Baw Arts Alliance have made a life-size boar's head using felting techniques, creating a centrepiece fit for a Christmas feast.

In the process of making their work for The Johnston Collection, the makers often continue the domestic crafting traditions of meeting to talk and tell stories while they work on their pieces. In some instances, whole communities were involved in the creation of the work. The Gum Leaf Quilters from Churchill for example, engaged a number of adults with physical or mental disabilities in the community to assist in making some of the items. Participants in this project reported that there was “wool everywhere” and “a lot of laughter and enjoyment”.

The work of spinners, yarners, patchworkers, embroiderers, lacemakers, quilters, cake decorators, glassworkers, beaders, and a host of other crafts and arts are all brought together in this truly magnificent show.

Supported by Creative Gippsland, **JOYFUL & TRIUMPHANT** is a collaborative arts initiative comprising all six Gippsland municipalities: Latrobe City, Bass Coast Shire, Baw Baw Shire, South Gippsland Shire, East Gippsland Shire and Wellington Shire. This exhibition will promote the work of Gippsland artists and craftspeople to a large state-wide audience, bringing recognition and appreciation of the extraordinary creative work from this region.

The Johnston Collection is a house-museum with an amazing collection of Regency, Georgian and Louis XV antiques arranged within a domestic setting, with three guided tours daily Monday to Friday. William Johnston (1911 – 1986) was a prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century antique dealer and collector who bequeathed his former residence, *Fairhall*, and collection to the people of Victoria.

### **For further information, images or interviews, please contact:**

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### **About William Johnston and The Johnston Collection**

The Johnston Collection is a house-museum of fine and decorative arts centred in an historic Melbourne townhouse.

William Robert 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 house-museum 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.

For nearly twenty five years, *Fairhall* has displayed works from Johnston's collection, and is currently rearranged for three themed tours per year. Today, The Johnston Collection incorporates a reference library, as well as a dedicated gallery and lecture space offering an active and engaging range of temporary exhibitions, lectures, workshops and events for all.

### **About Christmas at The Johnston Collection**

Since 2006, 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 rural 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 utilizing new designs, The Johnston Collection has helped to re-invigorate the guilds, societies and communities of participating artists.

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