



THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION

A Museum of Fine and Decorative Arts

incorporating

Fairhall house-museum | Lectures | Reference Library | Shop

MEDIA RELEASE

'T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS **CHRISTMAS AT THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION 2014 – 2015**

Thursday 6 November 2014 – Tuesday 24 February 2015

The rooms of *Fairhall* house-museum are sparkling with exquisite decorations created by over 55 artists and craftspeople from the Geelong, Bellarine and Surf Coast area in the spectacular ***Christmas at The Johnston Collection 2014-2015*** exhibition ***T'was The Night Before Christmas*** which opened on 6 November.

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

This year The Johnston Collection is honoured to have artists and craftspeople from the Geelong, Bellarine and Surf Coast region creating pieces inspired by the Collection which will be displayed throughout the house-museum, against the backdrop of William Johnston's extraordinary collection.

Working collaboratively as part of the Geelong Artisans Group, participants include members of Geelong & District Porcelain Painters, Geelong Handweavers & Spinners Guild Inc, Geelong Patchworkers & Quilters' Guild Inc, Leopold Lacemakers, The Bead Society of Victoria (Geelong branch), The Embroiderers Guild of Victoria (Geelong branch), The Trolley Dolly Cloth Doll Club Inc, as well as individual artists.

The makers have been working on their pieces for over eighteen months with some individual pieces taking hundreds of hours to complete. Displayed in the house-museum's Kitchen for example, is a finely hand-sewn teacosy made by lace-maker Wendy Rowe which took her more than 230 hours to complete, and a milk jug cover that she worked on, using 158 lace bobbins, for more than six months. The painstaking art of delicate beadwork is displayed in the Bead Society of Victoria's (Geelong branch) many works throughout the exhibition. These include a draughts set in The Study, constructed entirely from tiny beads - 12,000 of them, in fact, were used in the making of this striking piece.

This is the second time that creatives from Geelong have presented works at *Fairhall*, their first Christmas Tour being held here from November 2009 - February

2010. Other regions who have participated in The Johnston Collection Christmas tour previously include Bendigo, Castlemaine, Ballarat, Wangaratta and north-east Victoria, Warrnambool and south-west Victoria, and the Mornington Peninsula.

Christmas at The Johnston Collection 2015 promotes the work of Geelong, Bellarine and Surf Coast artists and craftspeople to a large state-wide audience, bringing recognition and appreciation of the 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 20th 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:

Felicity Cook or Fil Natarelli

T: 03 9416 2515

M: 0412 460 450

E: admin@johnstoncollection.org

W: johnstoncollection.org

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 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 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 crafts people 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.

For further information, images or interviews, please contact:

Felicity Cook or Fil Natarelli

T: 03 9416 2515

M: 0412 460 450

E: admin@johnstoncollection.org

W: johnstoncollection.org