

MEDIA RELEASE

7 December 2017

WHISTLER ACQUISITION A MAJOR HIGHLIGHT OF NEW WORKS AT THE NGA

In a coup for Australia, the National Gallery of Australia has secured James A. Whistler's *Harmony in blue and pearl: The Sands, Dieppe* 1885. Purchased for \$1.4million and with the support of a handful of generous private donors from Australia and the US, this rare seascape painted on a small scale belongs to a group of works described as 'superficially, the size of your hand, but artistically, as large as a continent.'*

'Notwithstanding the fact that Whistler was American, we intend to display this marvel of rapid brushwork in the room with our Australian Impressionist collection, featuring masterworks by Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin,' said Gerard Vaughan, NGA Director. 'Whistler's connection with this turning point in Australian painting—considered highly innovative and contemporary for the time—makes this work relevant to our national collection.' We are grateful to Allan and Maria Myers, Andrew and Tracey Sisson, the Dr Lee MacCormick Edwards Charitable Foundation and the Neilson Foundation for their support.

Whistler's approach to depicting landscape through flat planes of colour painted on 9" x 5" cigar box lids sparked the imagination of Australian artist Tom Roberts through his encounter with Whistler's London exhibition in 1884, which directly influenced Australia's first avant-garde exhibition, the '9 by 5 Impressions' show in Melbourne in 1889.

In addition, the NGA is proud to announce it has secured on loan from a generous private collector Frederick McCubbin's large, early masterpiece, *Bush Idyll* 1893. This iconic painting is widely recognised not only as one of the artist's finest works, but also as a key, defining expression of the creativity of the group of Australia's Impressionists; *Bush Idyll* is a milestone in the history of Australian art. The NGA is now pleased to share it with the Australian public as it takes its place amongst the other masterpieces that surround it.

These include Streeton's *The Point Wharf, Mosman Bay* 1893, painted soon after his arrival in Sydney from Melbourne, and arguably Streeton's most important Sydney Harbour view remaining in private hands. This has been recently acquired with assistance from Allan and Maria Myers, Paula Fox, John and Rosanna Hindmarsh and Maurice Cashmere and Claire Parkhurst. These new works are now on display in the Australian Impressionism galleries.

The NGA has launched a summer trail through the building to celebrate 'The Art of Giving', to recognise the many generous donors who have made so much possible through their patronage, and to show our visitors what is new. Highlights include:

- Paul Sérusier's transformative masterpiece, *Woman from Savoy (La Savoyarde)* 1890, recently added to the national collection and installed with two important works by Sérusier and Emile Bernard kindly loaned from the Kerry Stokes Collection;
- Five works from Sidney Nolan's 1964 *Antarctica* pictures, purchased by the NGA Foundation. Nolan's *Antarctica* paintings reveal his work in a new light, evoking the vast, desolate emptiness of the world's southernmost tip. Further to the loan of the McCubbin masterpiece, the same private collector has also loaned to the NGA a key work of exceptional quality from Sidney Nolan's 1962 series on Burke and Wills.

- The NGA's collection of Hockney's works on paper is one of the most extensive in the world. Thanks to the Orde Poynton Bequest, it now includes new works made on an iPad, *The arrival of spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011 (twenty eleven) – 31 May, No.2 2011*, and *Yosemite II, October 5th 2011 2011*;
- Gordon and Marilyn Darling's transformative gift to the nation of 57 Albert Namatjira watercolours allow the seminal Indigenous painter's work to be shared with generations to come.
- Tasmanian painter Philip Wolfhagen's dramatic, evocative cloud formations over the landscape in *A litany of vapours 2007*, a monumental 7 panel work, has been purchased with the proceeds of the NGA Foundation Gala Dinner Fund 2017. It hangs in the principal 'Art of Giving' gallery featuring other contemporary, and near contemporary, works recently added to the permanent collection - by Rosalie Gascoigne, donated by Hester Gascoigne, Brian Blanchflower and Ildiko Kovacs, donated by James and Jacqui Erskine, and Akio Makigawa, donated by Tom Lowenstein;
- Sam Jinks' emotive commission, *The deposition (2017)*, created especially for the current contemporary *Hyper Real* exhibition. Rendered in extreme life-like detail, with every hair individually placed, it is a triumph of the hyperreal genre;
- Five early Papunya boards (1972-3) join the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Galleries, acquired from the Allan Scott Collection with the help of generous Australian and US donors led by Tony and Carol Berg;
- An exceptionally rare and important Papua New Guinea carved figure of the man-eating god Mugus, Lord of the Pigs. Already securely dated at least to the 17th century, new scientific tests may prove that it is considerably older.

*Charles Lang Freer and Henry Harper Benedict 1901. Freer was one of the biggest collectors of Whistler's work, which are now held in the Freer Museum, Washington DC.

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ART OF GIVING STOPS

1. **57 Albert Namatjira watercolours**

ATSI Galleries, Level 1

Painting Country: Albert Namatjira and the Hermannsburg School

Donated by Gordon and Marilyn Darling

Until 3 April

2. **Five early 1990s Papunya boards**

ATSI Galleries, Level 1

Allan Scott Collection

3. **Two new acquisitions and a private collection loan added to the national collection of Australian Impressionism, Australian Art, Level 1**

James Abbott McNeill Whistler *Harmony in Blue and Pearl: The Sands, Dieppe*, circa 1885, oil on panel, Purchased 2017 with the assistance of Allan and Maria Myers, Andrew and Tracey Sisson, and the Dr Lee McCormack Edwards Charitable Foundation

Arthur Streeton *The Point Warf, Mosman's Bay* 1893, oil on canvas, Purchased 2017 with the assistance of Allan and Maria Myers, Paula Fox, John and Rosanna Hindmarsh and Maurice Cashmere and Claire Parkhurst in memory of their mother

Frederick McCubbin *Bush Idyll* 1893, oil on canvas, kindly lent from a private collection

4. **5 new contemporary Australian art works**

Australian Art Level 1

Philip Wolfhagen *A litany of vapours* 2007, oil on beeswax linen, New Acquisition 2017, Purchased with the assistance of the Foundation Gala Dinner Fund

Brian Blanchflower *Canopy XXVIII – Stochastic cloud (Homage to Iannis Xenakis)* 1991-92, oil, pumice powder, acrylic on laminated hessian, Gift of James and Jacqui Erskine 2017. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

Ildiko Kovacs *Full moon* 2011, oil on plywood, Gift of James and Jacqui Erskine 2017. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

Akio Makigawa *MCMXCIII* 1993, Carrara marble, gold leaf, Gift of Tom Lowenstein 2017. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

Rosalie Gascoigne *Letting go* 1991, assemblage of torn linoleum pieces on weathered wood panels, Gift of Hester Gascoigne in honour of her mother Rosalie Gascoigne 2015

5. **5 new acquisitions from the series *Antarctica* 1964 and 1 private loan from the series *Burke & Wills* 1962**

Sidney Nolan

Opposite the NGA shop, Level 1

Purchased with the assistance of the National Gallery of Australia Foundation

Sidney Nolan *Burke and Wills expedition* 1962, enamel and oil on hardboard, kindly lent from a private collection

6. Two new sculptures added to the national collection

Hyper Real Level 1

Sam Jinks *The deposition* 2017, silicon, pigment, resin, fabric, human hair, Commissioned by the National Gallery of Australia 2017

Ronnie van Hout *Sitting figure I* 2016, polyurethane, fibreglass, polystyrene, paint, clothing, acrylic and stainless steel, New Acquisition 2017

7. One new acquisitions and two private collection loans

International Art Level 2

Paul Sérusier *Woman from Savoy (La Savoyarde)* 1890, oil on canvas, New Acquisition 2016

Emile Bernard *Head of a woman (Tête d'une femme)* 1889, oil on canvas, on loan from Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth

Paul Sérusier *Mother and child in a Breton landscape (Une mère et son enfant dans un paysage Breton)* 1890, oil on canvas, on loan from Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth

8. Two David Hockney iPad prints

David Hockney: Prints, The Orde Poynton Gallery, Level 2

David Hockney *The arrival of spring in Woldgate, East Yorkshire in 2011 (twenty eleven) – 31 May, No.2* 2011, iPad drawing, digitally printed on white wove paper, The Poynton Bequest 2015

David Hockney *Yosemite II, October 5th 2011* 2011, iPad drawing, printed on four sheets of paper, The Poynton Bequest 2016

9. Papua New Guinea, Morobe Province

Polynesian Gallery, Level 1

Ancestor Figure 18th Century, wood and pigment, New Acquisition 2016