

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

FOR RELEASE  
SUNDAY MORNING PAPERS  
SEPTEMBER 28, 1941

EXHIBITION OF AUSTRALIAN ART

The first comprehensive exhibition of Australian Art to be shown in the United States will be held at the National Gallery of Art, from October 2nd to 26th, inclusive. The exhibition has been sent to this country by the Commonwealth of Australia, under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It will be circulated by the Museum of Modern Art of New York to museums throughout the United States, going from Washington to the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

The exhibition shows the development of Australian Art over a period of 150 years. It includes oil paintings, water colors, drawings, bark drawings and sculpture, and ranges from the art of Australian aborigines, prior to the arrival of the white man, to the most modern paintings of present-day artists.

These works of art have been lent by the National Galleries of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, and Tasmania, supplemented by loans from artists and collectors, including a number of paintings from the collection of Mrs. R. G. Casey, wife of the Australian Minister at Washington.

The Australian Minister, the Honorable R. G. Casey, has written an introduction to the catalogue, which reads, in part, as follows:

"For one hundred and fifty years Australia went through stages of hardship, lawlessness and heroism similar to those that characterized the same period in American history. There were no warlike tribes like the North American Indians to contend with; but the taming of a vast continent where heat and drought, fire and flood, succeeded each other in a way calculated to break the strongest spirit, called for endurance and adventure equal to that of the bravest pioneers of history.

"Against the background of the bark paintings left by the world's most primitive aborigines, the art in the present exhibition records the progress of European and, particularly, British people in this struggle.

"A tenacious conservatism has until recently dominated the artistic scene in Australia. This is largely due to the short time that the white man has lived there, and to his natural nostalgia for the remembered old world. New ideas and stimuli from the outside world of art have been slow to reach Australia, and like all young countries she has been too busy making her own history to digest it completely and translate it into paint in her own idiom.

"The material is there in plenty: the strange and rather grim beauty of her landscape and the very individual life of her people, in whom the love of independence and of fearless experiment persists. Throughout this exhibition one can detect the pungent flavour of the Australian bush, something of the color and vitality that distinguished the Australian man in other fields.

"If the art of a nation is to flourish, her painters must have protection and encouragement. This the United States has for some time appreciated and has now laid the basis for a proud national art. It is hoped that Australia may some day contrive to do the same for her young painters so that the already strong foundations of her painting may be worthily built upon. This will doubtless happen when she emerges from the shadow that now lies upon most of the countries of the world, and when her feet are once more set upon the way of peace."

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"An Aboriginal Bark Drawing." These drawings are on sheets of eucalyptus bark; the medium used is red or yellow ochre, white clay and charcoal. They have no religious or ceremonial significance. A peculiar feature is that internal structures, such as the backbone and digestive tract, are often indicated.

This drawing, from the National Museum, Melbourne, is on view at the National Gallery of Art from October 2 through October 26, 1941, as part of an exhibition, "The Art of Australia, 1788-1941". The exhibition has been sent to this country by the Commonwealth of Australia, under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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"Sydney from the West Side of the Cove, about 1809", by John Eyre. This painting shows the town just after the rebellion against Governor Bligh, formerly the victim of the Bounty mutiny. Bligh was at this time a prisoner in the town, and the government was under the control of officers in the New South Wales Corps. The building just below the windmill was Government House.

This picture, from the Dixson Collection, Public Library of New South Wales, is on view at the National Gallery of Art from October 2 through October 26, 1941, as part of an exhibition, "The Art of Australia, 1788-1941". The exhibition has been sent to this country by the Commonwealth of Australia, under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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"Kangaroo Hunt", by Peter Purnos Smith (1913 - ). The mysteriously beautiful heart of a great continent is here formalised. In this clear air of Central Australia, where the land never seems to meet the sky, can also be seen the strange currents of the air. The occupation of the White Man is shown by the dead trees which have been ring-barked with the axe and left to die.

This picture, from the Collection of Mrs. R. G. Casey, wife of the Australian Minister to the United States, is on view at the National Gallery of Art from October 2 through October 26, 1941, as part of an exhibition, "The Art of Australia, 1788-1941". The exhibition has been sent to this country by the Commonwealth of Australia, under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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"Weighing the Fleece", by George Washington Lambert, A.R.A. (1873-1930). Merino sheep were imported from Spain as early as 1794; since then much ingenuity has been displayed by breeders in selecting strains best suited to the Australian vegetation and climate. One of the most serviceable has been found to be the Vermont strain, developed subsequently to David Humphreys' original importation of merinos to the U.S.A., soon after 1800. The average weight of such a fleece as here shown would be 25 pounds, the average price, 14d. per pound. Prize rams have brought prices up to 5,000 guineas.

This picture, from the Collection of Lieutenant C. H. Rowan, is on view at the National Gallery of Art from October 2 through October 26, 1941, as part of an exhibition, "The Art of Australia, 1788-1941". The exhibition has been sent to this country by the Commonwealth of Australia, under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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"Bailed Up", by Tom Roberts (1856-1931). This represents a holdup in the bushranging days. The bushrangers mostly came from small farms, tempted by the gold which was being transported across country to the coast. The VR under the box indicates that this vehicle is a mail coach. The quietness of the scene is said to be wholly typical of the manner in which the act was performed. Begun in 1898, this picture was largely repainted 30 years later.

This picture, from the Collection of the National Art Gallery, New South Wales, is on view at the National Gallery of Art from October 2 through October 26, 1941, as part of an exhibition, "The Art of Australia, 1788-1941". The exhibition has been sent to this country by the Commonwealth of Australia, under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.