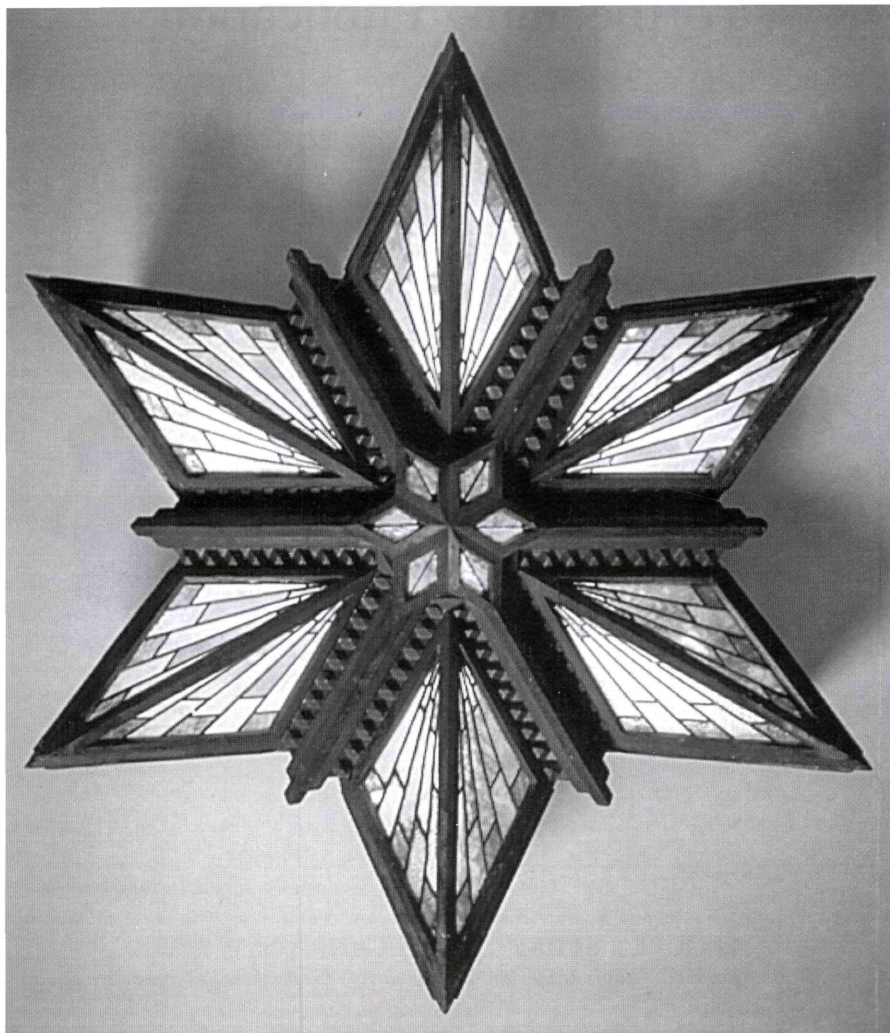

AUSTRALIANA

AUGUST 1998

Print Post Approved PP235870/00011

Vol 20 No. 3

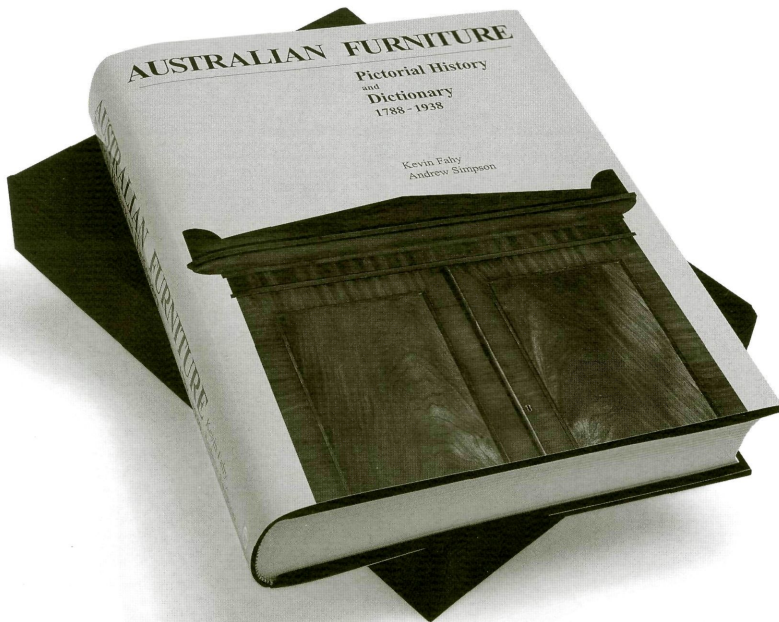




SIMPSON'S ANTIQUES

TEL/FAX (02) 9363 3424
FINE AUSTRALIAN FURNITURE

IMPORTANT Forthcoming Publication



40 QUEEN STREET, WOOLLAHRA NSW 2025
Approved Valuers Under the Tax Incentives for the Arts Scheme

AUSTRALIANA, the journal of The Australiana Society, is published in February, May, August and November.

Subscription rates (1998):

Individual & Household \$50
Institutions & Overseas \$55
Life \$500

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

All general correspondence including advertising, membership subscriptions and requests for back issues to be sent to:

The Hon. Secretary
Australiana Society
PO Box 1782
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

All editorial correspondence including the submission of material for publication in *Australiana* to be sent to:

The Editor
Australiana Society
PO Box 1782
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Committee 1997/98:

President: John Morris
Secretary: Michael Bogle
Treasurer: Caressa Crouch
Editor: Johanna Cole
Members: Elayne Jay
Ian Stephenson
Anne Watson
Roslyn Maguire
Jim Bertouch
Scott Carlin

CONTENTS

- 61 Obituary – Jim Logan
— Roger Leong and Mary Eagle
- 62 The Glory of Everyday Objects
- 65 Beyond Architecture
Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin in America,
Australia and India
- 67 The Australiana Society Lecture, 5 March 1998
— Caressa Crouch
- 69 The Fibro Frontier
— Charles Pickett
- 74 Sydney Quilt Stories: 1811-1970
- 75 Australian Furniture: Pictorial History
and Dictionary 1788-1939

BOOK REVIEWS

- 72 A Small Unsigned Painting
By Stephen Scheduling
— Reviewed by Johanna Cole

ARTICLES

- 81 John (Jaan) Kannuluik
Cabinet-maker, Melbourne
— Michael Reymond

SPONSORS

H.P.M. Industries Pty Ltd
J. B. Hawkins Antiques
Price Tiles Pty Ltd

Produced by the **GeoGraphics Group** (02) 9568 2444.

© Copyright 1998, The Australiana Society and/or individual authors. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society. The editor reserves the right to edit all articles to conform with the *Australiana* style guide. Copies are available from the editor.

Print Post Approved PP235870/00011.

Cover: Ceiling light, Capitol Theatre, Melbourne (circa 1924). Coloured glass, wood plaster and lead. The light's sophisticated and complex 'art deco' style indicates the Griffins' awareness of the latest European design trends, well before its' popularity in Australia in the early 1930s.

THE AUSTRALIANA SOCIETY

PO BOX 643, WOOLLAHRA NSW 2025



— SOCIETY PROGRAMME —

MEETINGS — 1998

Thursday
3 September 1998

The curator of the Marion Mahoney and Walter Burley Griffin exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum, Ann Watson, will address the Society and lead a walk-through of the exhibition.

There will be no "Show and Tell" this evening.

The **Annual General Meeting** will take place at the conclusion of the viewing. It will be quite brief and will consist of reports and the election of committee members for the forthcoming year. (The election of office bearers takes place at the first meeting of the new committee).

Thursday
5 November 1998

The Society is fortunate that Andrew Shapiro, Managing Director of Phillips International Auctioneers and Valuers (Aust) will give a lecture entitled *Collecting 20th Century Australiana Before the 21st Century*. He is an expert on 20th century art and design and was the consultant for the dispersal of Marjorie Graham's collection of pottery and collectibles.

Arrangements for the Australia Day Function in 1999 have not yet been completed.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Please note that Society meetings will be on the first Thursday of every alternate month: March, May, July, September, (A.G.M.), November.

They are held in the meeting room of the National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill.
Ample parking available.

Drinks served 7.30-8.00pm, followed by Australiana showcase
(bring your Australiana treasures along for general discussion).

The lecture will commence at 8.00pm.

Obituary – Jim Logan

Curator, Decorative Arts, National Gallery of Australia

Born Dunedin, New Zealand August 29, 1958. Died Canberra, June 8, 1998, aged 39.

For more than 12 years, Jim Logan stood out as one of the most lively and inspiring figures on the Australian art scene. His enthusiasm, verve and originality left an indelible mark across the field of museum practice in this country.

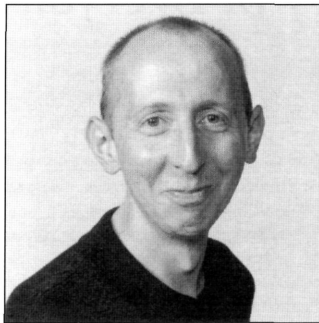
Making art meaningful and bright was Logan's special talent. Yet he always maintained that he was not a theorist. But, as everyone realised, his knowledge was as natural as breathing because it was based on direct experience. Ideas appealed to him as much as objects, but it was always in terms of imagery and anecdote that he interpreted the world around him. This he did with aplomb through the exhibitions and displays he organised, and the way he felt completely at ease with beautiful things.

Whether it was a painting, a ceramic tea set, a length of fabric, a new pair of shoes or a piece of jewellery, the choices he made on a curatorial and personal level were astute reminders of the power and beauty inherent in objects.

After leaving school he studied ceramics and textiles at the Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin, where he graduated in 1978. Shortly afterwards, Logan moved to Nelson, where he pursued a career as a potter – a time he later referred to as his “brown and chunky” phase. In 1981, he moved to Sydney armed with a nursing qualification that supported him. By 1986, he had completed two graduate diplomas at the former City Art Institute, first in painting and later in curatorial studies. From this point, Logan's life and work would

merge seamlessly.

His achievement as a curator of Australian art was to be swift and practical. During 1987, he was assistant director at Milburn+ Art, a commercial gallery. In 1988 he relocated to Hobart to assume the directorship of the Chameleon Contemporary Art Space, where he was both sympathetically local and relentlessly national in outlook. Logan made it the State's leading art space and one of the most exciting venues for contemporary art in the country.



Jim Logan

Logan surfaced as the director of Melbourne's Waverley City Gallery in 1991. At Waverley he organised exhibitions to suit the Melbourne suburban community: Temple of Flora for what used to be the Garden State – and Noble Rot, for its celebration of wine and food. They were beautiful, clever exhibitions.

In 1993, he was back in Sydney as a curator with the National Trust, for whom he was transforming the Merchant's House, an 1848 building, into a museum of childhood. It was a mystifying change of scene: the nineteenth century seemed all wrong for

the curator whose achievements were in the contemporary field. Whatever his reasons for moving to Sydney, Logan never wasted anything he experienced, garnering ideas of vernacular art, archaeology and the persistence of monuments of the past for future acquisitions and exhibitions.

He was appointed curator of Australian decorative arts at the National Gallery of Australia in 1995. We were warned by his referees he was apt to regard the bureaucratic machine as extraneous to the business of curatorship. He looked to other curators for the same clear sight: what mattered was art. Art and exhibitions of art should fizz with life, touch ordinary people, have evident style. His concept of art as life meant that his taste was never academic or precious. He did not consider art as a refuge, didn't care for wisdom or correctness. He often cut across the habits of the museum.

The day he arrived for work happened to coincide with changing the works on display in the galleries right away and that he was going to change our style and, in subsequent years, the purist flow of art through galleries was interrupted by eddies of warmth and abundance, tableau arrangements, brightly coloured feature walls, showcases alive with objects and works of art displayed with genuine wit. The latest of his exhibitions-Everyday Art: Australian Folk Art-moves from Canberra to every State and Territory around Australia, ending next year in Tasmania, where Logan's professional career took off.

His contribution to the museum world extended to his involvement

with numerous professional bodies, conferences and seminars, both national and regional. An active member of the Art Museums Association of Australia and Museums Australia, he was President of the Crafts Council of the ACT.

Logan's last and perhaps most important project was a retrospective of Melbourne based jeweller Susan Cohn. The exhibition, examining nearly two decades of influential jewellers working today, was near completion at the time of his death. Drawing on numerous private collections but based on the national gallery's holdings, the exhibition is planned to tour internationally as well as nationally.

Career and life were only part of the man's magic. Art, work and everyday life were inextricably linked in Logan's world. He possessed an effervescent will to experience life at its best. The infamously irreverent humour, warm and cheeky grin and raucous laugh atomised the room wherever he went. While Jim's short life began with the early "chunky brown stage", it ended during his recent phase of "international chic" – a term coined by the writers of this obituary (Logan was never so mundane) to describe both his conduct as curator of Australian decorative arts and his clothes from the best shops around the world.

His tall thin frame, closely

cropped hair and distinctive features were the perfect foil for his striking outfits and intriguing jewellery. He was as imaginative with food as he was with objects. Above all, Logan loved people.

Jim Logan died of an AIDS related illness. With his life partner and survivor, Greg Ralph, he created a home filled with hospitality, art and friendship.

© The Australian, 23 June 1998.

By Roger Leong and Mary Eagle

(Roger Leong and Mary Eagle are Curators of the National Gallery of Australia. Their obituary was written with the assistance of fellow curators.)

The Glory of Everyday Objects

Jim Logan curated a splendid exhibition for the National Gallery of Australia entitled *Everyday Art: Australian Folk Art* which is a great tribute to his skill and imagination.

The show, which will travel around Australia in 1998-9, explores a whole range of items that can be grouped together under the term 'folk art' as well as the historical and philosophical issues related to the term. Folk art breaks all the rules especially of medium, form, notions of high and low art and at the same time it stimulates us to consider its cultural significance, our history and our national identity. In Logan's words: *The glories of everyday objects are celebrated in this exhibition.*

There is much comparison made in the catalogue essay between Australian and American folk art, although mostly they are contrasted, arising as they do from very different conditions and cultural influences.

Most American traditions of folk art sprang from settlements es-

tablished by European immigrants unified by religious beliefs or ethnic ties. If there is a sense of group in Australian communities, it is based less in shared religion than a sense of place.

The range of objects that fall within the notion of folk art is very wide: scrimshaw, quilts, some indigenous objects, skin blankets, bush furniture, hand-made and painted furniture influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, bird-scares, ceramics and embroidery. This exhibition is a wonderful showcase for the folk art collection of the National Gallery of Australia. The gallery has been collecting folk art since 1977, due to the foresight of the former Director, James Mollison and the former Curator of Decorative Arts, John Mc Phee.

Australian folk art has often come from British and European folk traditions. To quote from Logan: "*Folk art is the individual response to common experience ... [including] ... cycles of*

birth and death, marriage, children, home, transport and the migrant experience, as well as visions of the old country left behind.

This show demonstrates that folk art is produced by a wide variety of people: amateur artists, artisans and it is more akin to outsider, non-academic, naïve, primitive and provincial art. It often involves the passing down through generations of techniques, traditions and stories between family groups and particularly between women such as in the production of quilts.

The cultural context in which folk art objects were produced is highlighted in this exhibition. When examining some of the indigenous objects they reflect the influence of Western culture since colonisation "*sometimes fabricated from the detritus of settler society*". Other early objects of folk art reflected the harsh life in the bush and having to fashion an item to meet a convict or settler's needs out of the materials at hand,

the life of those at sea working on trade routes or in the whaling industry can be seen in scrimshaw items, the rise of the Arts and Crafts movement and the surge of Australian nationalism around the turn of the century.

By the 1920's, mass produced ceramics were using the same vernacular language of folk art translated into consumer products as seen in Melrose Ware. Folk art came into its own again in the depression of the 1930's, when for example people were forced by necessity to make furniture out of cast-off materials like kerosene tins

and old packing cases. Most folk art production ended with the advent of television in the 1950's and perhaps also because of the prosperity of this era.

Logan argues that folk art has

helped Australians to work out their national identity and the resulting objects are therefore of great cultural significance, but that fundamentally folk art assists "those seeking to understand the human need to make objects".

Misses Hampson

The Westbury quilt

1900-03 Tasmanian cotton 300.0 x 200.0cm

The Westbury quilt has enjoyed a degree of fame in its local area, as, since the mid-1930s, it hung on a wall in the dining room of the Fitzpatrick Inn in Westbury, northern Tasmania. The Misses Fitzpatrick, who owned the inn, were at first unsure of its origins, but later wrote that it had been bought from the brother-in-law of

the makers, the Misses Hampson, who 'owned a farm over Cluan way'. Here we have a remarkable interpretation of a traditional Turkey Red coloured quilt but worked with much humour and observation. The quilt is patchwork and appliqué with embroidery in the medallion style, with a central image panel or medallion, the surrounding images edged with a beautiful scalloped border. One square contains the line *good luck to the winner of this* so it may have been a prize in a church raffle.

The National Gallery of Australia's travelling exhibition *Everyday Art: Australian Folk Art* itinerary:

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra 25 April – 21 June 1998.

- Brisbane City Gallery
Brisbane
4 July – 16 August 1998
- Wollongong City Art Gallery, Wollongong
11 September – 22 November 1998.
- Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat
5 December 1998 – 31 January 1998.
- Art Gallery of South Australia Adelaide
19 February – 5 April 1999.
- Art Gallery of Western Australia Perth
17 April – 30 May 1999.
- Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Darwin
18 June – 1 August 1999.
- Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery Hobart
20 August – 3 October 1999.



Unknown

Chest of drawers

c. 1890 Tasmanian pine, stencil
80 x 95.5 x 45.0cm

In the second half of the nineteenth century the application of decorative finishes became a craft pastime. Furniture, objects and even walls were decorated with paint, coloured shellacs, pokerwork, découpage and stencilling. A variation on stencilling is called spatter or spattrie work and we have one of the finest examples in a chest of drawers of Tasmanian origin. This piece uses actual fern fronds to create a luminous bush effect that is sometimes referred to as *fern work*. The choice of ferns and their application is particularly fine in this example, giving a wonderful sense of depth. The piece, dated to the late nine-



teenth century, has obtained an admirable patina. The chest is made

from an unidentified pine. Nothing is known of the artist.

James Campbell and Sons, Albion Pottery, manufacturer attributed to **Patrick Walsh**, potter *Money-box*

c. 1910 Brisbane

earthenware 9.1 x 14.0 x 8.4 cm
Gift of John McPhee 1988.

The Money-box in the form of a pig is attributed to Patrick Walsh, a potter in the employ of James Campbell & Sons, Albion Pottery, Brisbane. Naive in style and quite crude in construction, it nevertheless is one of the particularly charming and funny folk objects in the collection. It came to the Gallery as part of an important gift of folk material donated by the Queensland artist Robert MacPherson in 1979. It is probably formed from the basic tube created for sanitary or indus-



trial pipe. Termed *brickies* pots they were either made for sale or the potter's amusement. The Gallery has a number of these pieces which,

through their use of Australian imagery and humour, are popular with both Australian and international visitors.

Beyond Architecture

Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin in America, Australia and India

Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin are undoubtedly among the most internationally significant architects to have worked in Australia. The exhibition *Beyond Architecture: Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin in America, Australia and India* at the Powerhouse Museum surveys their remarkable lives and extraordinarily productive careers.

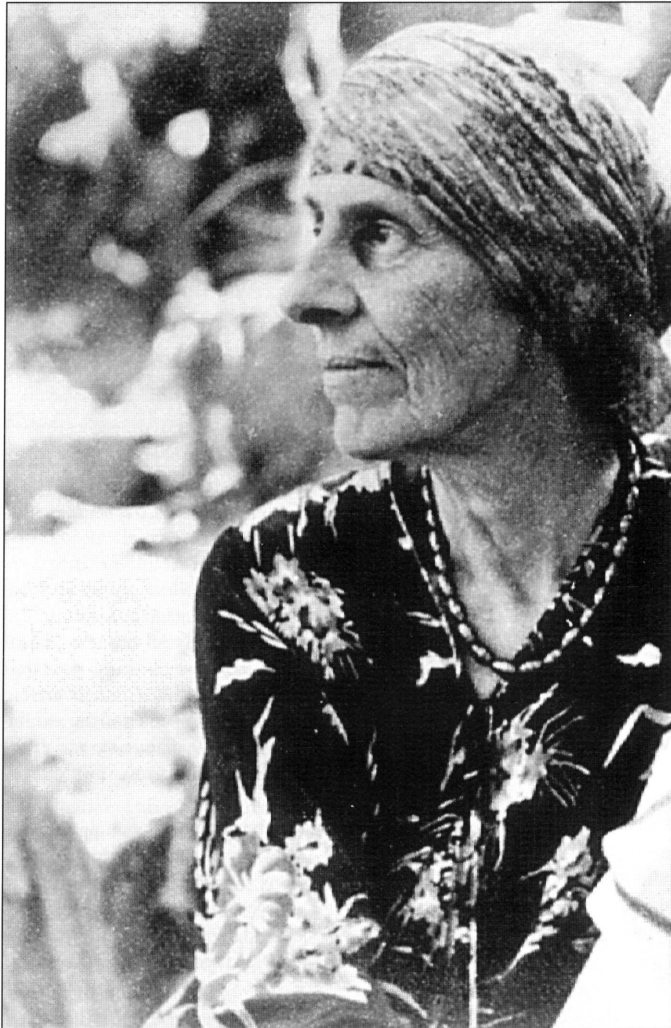
The story of the life and work of these two fascinating architects, individually and together, is an uncompromising quest for new and better ways of living through architecture, town planning and community life. This grand theme unifies their creative and social achievements and has provided the thematic foundation of the exhibition.

The exhibition explores the careers of the Griffins in the US, Australia and India from their years with Frank Lloyd Wright at the turn of the century, to successful independent practice in Chicago, to the frustrations of the debacle over the implementation of their Canberra plans. It covers their many projects – large and small, completed and unrealised – in Melbourne and Sydney, their grand vision for a community living in harmony with nature at Castlecrag and, finally the significance of their revitalised, but short, practice in India 1935-37.

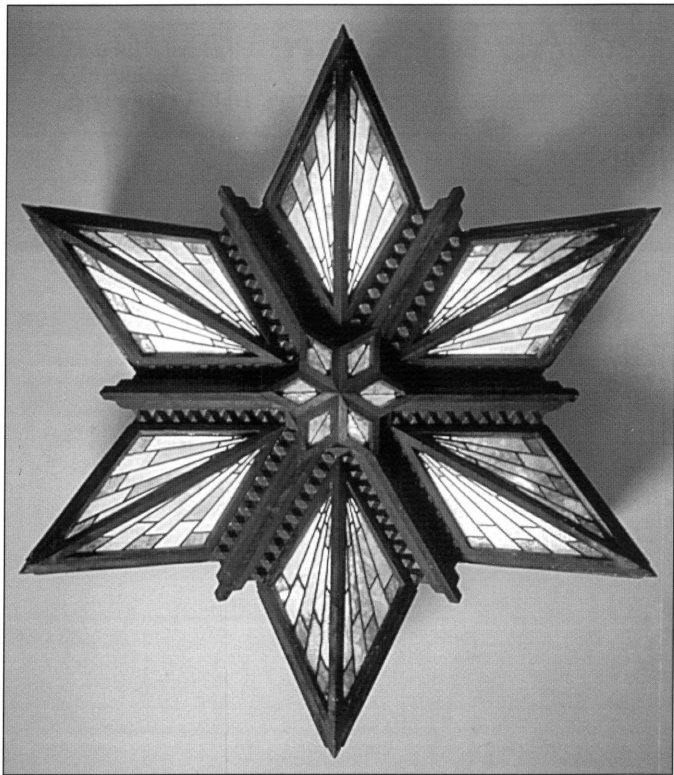
As well as specific architectural, landscape and urban design projects the exhibition examines the Griffins' interior design work, furniture, lighting, tableware and technological innovations such as their 'Knitlock' concrete block building system patented in 1917. Inclusion of Marion's

superb tree drawings and paintings records the Griffins' passionate concern for the Australian landscape and

its preservation - decades before such concerns received widespread currency.



Photograph taken in about 1930 of Marion Mahony Griffin, then around 60 years old, at Castlecrag, Sydney. (Courtesy National Library of Australia, Canberra).



Ceiling light, Capitol Theatre, Melbourne (circa 1924). Coloured glass, wood plaster and lead. The light's sophisticated and complex 'art deco' style indicates the Griffins' awareness of the latest European design trends, well before its' popularity in Australia in the early 1930s.

In her memoirs, *The Magic of America*, Marion stated that “no other language speaks so clearly and truly as architecture”. Importantly, the exhibition explores for the first time the significance of Marion’s role in the Frank Lloyd Wright office and the extent of her collaboration with her husband and partner Walter. The first female licensed as an architect in the world, Marion’s remarkable talents and achievements in an almost uniquely male profession are now given the attention they deserve.

In developing the exhibition the Powerhouse has borrowed extensively from the US and Australian public and private sources and has been given privileged access to previously

inaccessible collections of archival material relating to the Griffins. Display of this material and of other recently discovered work, together with fresh information uncovered in recent research, enables the exhibition to provide many new and exciting perspectives on the Griffins’ careers.

The exhibition includes original drawings, designs, paintings, photographs, furniture, light fittings and architectural elements, as well as objects and documents relating to issues and aspects of the Griffins’ lives and work.

Key objects, many of which have never been seen in Australia before, include a selection of Marion’s beau-

tiful architectural renderings from the collections of the Art Institute, Chicago and the Avery Library, New York and light fittings from private collections in Chicago. Also on display are a magnificent star-shaped stained-glass light and other fittings from the Capitol Theatre, Melbourne (1922-24), the complete range of furniture designed by the Griffins for Newman College, Melbourne (1915-18), architectural elements salvaged from the Pymont incinerator, Sydney (1935) and the superb drawings produced for the Canberra competition in 1911.



Walter Burley Griffin came to Australia in 1914 to supervise the construction of the city of Canberra after he won the Federal Capital competition in 1912. (Photograph courtesy National Library of Australia, Canberra).

The Australiana Society Lecture

5 March 1998

By Caressa Crouch

This lecture entitled, *The Fibro Frontier*, was presented by Charles Pickett and was held at the meeting rooms of the National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill, Sydney. Charles Pickett is Curator of Social History at the Powerhouse Museum and the author of the recently published book, also entitled *The Fibro Frontier*.

Charles explained in his illustrated lecture, that when he started investigating fibro, he thought it was a product of the 1940's and 1950's. Instead he found that the use of fibro covered a far wider time period. The oldest fibro house that he found was in Yass, in southern New South Wales, which had been built in 1911. The first fibro sheets were brought into Australia in 1903 by Mr James Hardy who was a builder. Hardy had seen the advantages of this material for use in house building.

Fibro was first manufactured in Australia by Wunderlich in 1916 with Mr James Hardy beginning to manufacture it in the following year. The product was an instant success both in Europe and in Australia. However the major difference was that in Europe, fibro sheeting was used mainly on industrial and commercial buildings, whereas in Australia it was popular as a building material for use in domestic architecture and house building.

Charles explained that this could be seen in statistical figures. In 1933 only 5% of Australian houses were clad in fibro, but at its peak of popularity in the 1960's one in five houses were clad in fibro. Charles explained that when you look at the published histories of Australian houses and

architecture, the impression is given that brick and stone are the dominant building materials. Because these books record only the homes of the wealthy, they overlook the fact that the use of brick has only become a major building material in the last twenty years. Even twenty or thirty years ago, Australians mainly used timber and fibro. In 1966 less than 40% of Australian homes had brick outer walls with the figure now being 70%. There has also been a decline in the very marked regional variations in the way people build houses and the type of materials they were using. For example there has been a change in the timber and corrugated iron formerly used to build Queensland houses.

Charles pointed out that fibro firstly became popular, not in the suburbs, but in the bush. This was because of its cheapness, ease of construction, saving of labour and its durability in the face of harsh climatic conditions and insect attack. This was largely due to the government building farm houses in the new irrigation areas on the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers. Hundreds of fibro farm houses were also built around Griffith, NSW.

Charles explained that fibro was used for all types of country homes and outbuildings. The largest fibro homestead found, was built around 1916, at Big Wallandra, which was one of the very large sheep stations, now managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Fibro was a big success in tropical parts of Australia with many houses being built in Darwin in the 1930's for Government

workers.

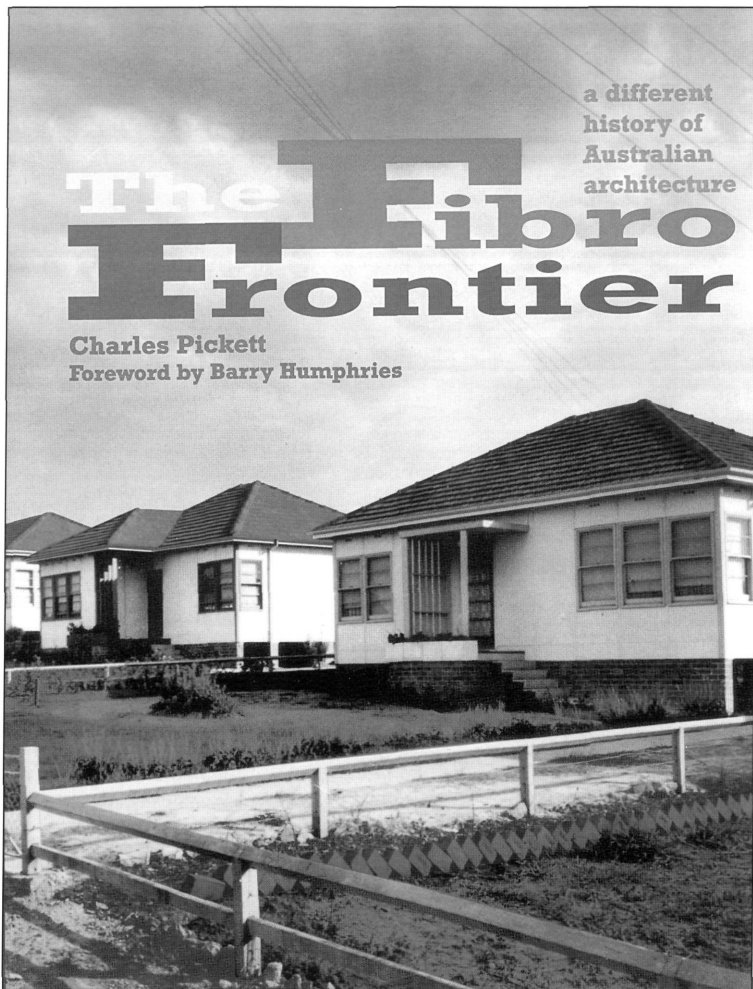
Charles also explained that fibro became extremely popular in the suburbs for various reasons. The most important was its relatively cheap cost, which allowed home ownership and home building for all people, particularly those on a modest income. Owner builders were in the majority, particularly after the second world war with labour shortages. An owner could build a house without having to resort to spending huge sums of money.

Since the 1920's to the 1960's the size, cost and construction of home building has undergone dramatic changes. As banks and building societies have entered into home lending for building homes, the amount of money available for home building has gradually increased.

The other major reasons for fibro's popularity in domestic architecture is its suitability for home builders to express their own individuality and its suitability for the cleaner streamlined designs typical of modernist architectural design.

Home builders could either design their home themselves or take advantage of the Home Plan Service, available at most large department stores such as Grace Bros, where in-house architects drew up full working plans for potential home builders.

Also a major influence on contemporary modernist designs was Wunderlich, who not only supplied the fibro building product, but from the 1920's also produced house plans in catalogue form, so their designs would be with the latest. In the 1926



Charles Pickett
Foreword by Barry Humphries

a different
 history of
 Australian
 architecture

The Fibro Frontier

It was surprising to find out that this product is having a similar wave of popularity currently in America to the Australia of the 1950's. In 1980's and 1990's America, fibro has become one of Australia's outstanding export successes. James Hardy Industries now have five manufacturing factories in America, to keep up supply for the use of Hardy Boards for planking, for use in the American "clap-board" style of house design. Where Australian housing is now predominantly brick veneer, American houses are clad in aluminium, timber and increasingly fibro clapboards. The fibro clapboards in America are now considered very up-market and desirable and the new "fibro frontier" is now in America.

I personally came to this lecture, as I am sure others did, with many preconceived notions on the desirability of fibro, and the problems of asbestos, but I left the lecture with an appreciation of how much this material helped achieve the Australian dream of building a home and owning your own home. Together with all the wonderful slides

catalogue, the homes were based on the Californian bungalow style. When the rounded corners in housing design or "cruise liner style" first appeared, Wunderlich quickly manufactured curved sheeting and incorporated appropriate designs in the catalogue. James Hardy were also producing home plan catalogues based on the latest in designs.

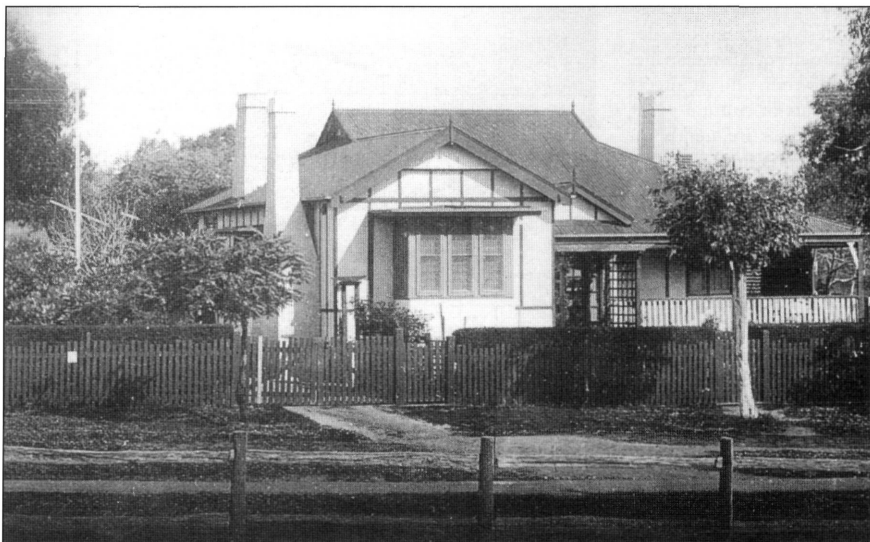
Charles pointed out that at fibro's height of popularity, its main ingredient asbestos, was seen as a wonder material with which manu-

facturers wanted to be associated. Wunderlich called their product "Durasbestos" and James Hardy's head office was known as "Asbestos House". The problems of asbestos have now created a major problem of disposal when fibro houses are demolished as well as health problems from the mining and manufacturing and other uses of asbestos. This ingredient of fibro had been removed many years ago and it is now marketed as Hardy Board, but the Australian enthusiasm for the product has waned.

of fibro houses, we gained an appreciation of the influence of this material on modern design in architecture, and how it allowed home owners to build in the modernist style, not just the very wealthy. As Charles explained, fibro is seldom regarded as part of our architectural heritage, whereas corrugated iron is recognised as such, but I am sure we all came away from his lecture with an appreciation of the impact and widespread popularity of this material in our architectural heritage.

The Fibro Frontier

A Different History of Australian Architecture



Dunshee, Yass, after extensions in 1932. Dunshee is an excellent example of the ease of making renovations using fibro.

Heritage

Most people are surprised to learn that fibro has been used in Australia throughout this century. They are also unaware that it has been made here for longer than corrugated iron, that pre-eminent symbol of Australian architectural authenticity, which John Lysaght did not begin to manufacture until 1921.

At its peak of popularity in the 1960s, fibro clad almost one fifth of Australian houses. Yet histories of housing in this country give the impression that brick has always been the dominant building medium. In fact, this only became the case in the last twenty years.

Despite its venerability and popularity, fibro is seldom regarded as part of our architectural heritage. Rather than attempting to create a

place for fibro in the heritage canon, this book pleads for a recognition of Australia's architectural diversity.

Thirty years ago, Australia displayed a distinct geography of materials, mainly fibro, corrugated iron and timber. Today, brick veneer and tile threaten to cover the continent. In 1966, less than 40 per cent of Australian houses had brick outer walls. That proportion is now approaching 70 per cent. In 1993 and 1994, 87 per cent of new dwellings were built with brick. With this overwhelming preference for brick-veneer construction, new Australian houses are looking more alike than ever.

Fibro houses offer a style and versatility that can still help us to respond to environment, lifestyle and economy. The challenge is to recover

and re-use our architectural heritage. Many contemporary architects are taking advantage of this knowledge, demonstrating fibro's continued suitability and appeal.

Fibro, the suburbs and Australia have formed an enduring association. In 1992, the English travel writer Jan Morris was describing a relationship that has existed for decades. In fact and description, Australia is primarily a suburban nation. Some writers, with a mixture of pride and regret, even describe it as the first suburban nation.

In addition to making suburbia more affordable, fibro helped to shape it. From the 1920s fibro gave people a way of investing individuality as well as money in their dwelling, since its versatility and simplicity encouraged singularity in housing design. As suburbia expanded, most Australians became property owners, and with

the help of fibro, ordinary home owners and builders became amateur architects.

Suburban architecture is the quintessential result of widespread affluence, the leading expression of democratic taste. However, the aesthetics and lifestyle of suburbia, despite their centrality of Australian life, have provoked writers and architects to recurring bouts of cultural pessimism. And novelists, frequently include fibro when creating a scene of suburban desolation.

Guinea walked along the barren platform of West Hills station. The West-erly hit her face like a blast out of a furnace and the grit oozed into her sandals ... Half a mile off she could see the square fibro house set among straggling trees at the top of the hill. Crikey, what a hell of a pull it was ... All she hoped was that the family would appreciate what she'd gone through to get home and bring these damn presents.

In 1967, at the peak of the fibro age, Donald Horne observed among suburbanites a 'positive delight in the products of technology: the newer and more "artificial" a material is, the better. The enthusiastic acceptance of the products of technology ... affronts those Australians who use the word suburban as a term of abuse'.

Like white bread and red meat, suburban houses are frequently criticised, but they are the choice of most people who can afford them. There is ample evidence that the demand for suburban housing and land 'is not highly sensitive to price – that in most circumstances people tend to favour the traditional suburban block'.

Suburban architecture has a complex relationship to architectural history. Although related, it stands apart from the chronology of architectural styles defined by historians and loved by real-estate agents. Suburban houses have their own design history, produced by the decisions of thousands of builders and buyers, and fibro had an important role in the history and the decisions.



For many postwar 'baby-boomers' fibro is associated with childhood and the pleasures of suburban backyards. The Shearer family's barbecue was photographed in 1958 for a Housing Commission publicity booklet.

A New Frontier

Suburbia offered a new type of society, creating living spaces devoid of history. Within these new spaces, individualised structures, ordered nature and private histories could be fashioned. Robin Boyd was one of many writers to recoil from the consequences of suburban development: 'Speculative builders and private owners compete with one another to reduce the bush to a desert of terracotta roofs ... The fibro frontier is pushed right to the water's edge'.

Individualist design produced the anarchic aesthetics of suburbia. In 1924, Leslie Wilkinson, Professor of Architecture at the University of Sydney, bemoaned the 'motley collections of buildings side by side of different materials and in different styles – mutually destructive of each other's comfort and effect'. But Wilkinson was delighted 'that house building has become, for the majority, a much more personal matter than in the past'.

At first, new suburbs were described by both promoters and resi-

dents in explicitly anti-urban terms, as rural refuges from the overcrowded city. But as suburbia expanded, it so overwhelmed nature that this urban-rural contrast could not be sustained. During the 1930s and later, instead of imitating rural dwellings, the houses of the suburban frontier found new inspiration in modern technology.

Fibro was the perfect medium of expression for this aesthetic. It offered both a cheaper method of building houses and an appearance sufficiently 'artistic and inviting' to reward the struggling suburban frontier mortgagee. It also gave frontier dwellers the chance to express themselves architecturally, to participate in the design of their homes, so that houses would express their owners' personality and tastes. The results are still controversial, but many people find them satisfying. Lillian Mamo came to Australia from Switzerland in 1960. Her husband Ray had arrived a few years earlier and had built their house.

When I got off the boat in Sydney I didn't know what to expect, but Ray took me down to our new house in a taxi. I was seeing all these dark brick houses and I was a bit apprehensive especially when Ray said, look you know we can't afford a proper brick house, ours is only fibro. Being from Europe I didn't really know what a fibro house was and I was worried by his apologetic look.

But when we arrived here there was this small house all in duck-egg blue, and there was a lot of free land outside and

it had big windows and was really nice and clean and new. I thought it was the best house I'd ever seen. I was wondering what he was worried about.

Suburbia, however, is culture as well as architecture, and it is not a way of life suited to everyone. Elizabeth Schaffer's refugee father lived in Kings Cross during the 1950s:

He was one of the 'refos' who lived in the Cross after the war. My mother was an escapee from small-town life in Queensland. We lived on the fringes of

bohemia and I think people thought of themselves as apart from the rest of Australian society. When my sister was born our flat was too small and we moved to a fibro house in Guildford. It was like the end of the world. Everything was flat. The street was a dirt road and there were no corner shops. My mother cried the day we moved in. She thought she'd made the biggest mistake of her life. We lived there till I was five. Then we started a gradual move back to the city, and all our houses were made of brick.

Australian Bungalows

The advent of fibro coincided with the appearance in Australia of an imported design idiom, the 'Californian' bungalow. Although literature prompting the Californian style was available in Australia as early as 1907, its popularity dates from around 1916 when the first bungalow display homes appeared.

One of these was a 'ready-cut' bungalow built by the timber merchants George Hudson and Son for the 1916 Sydney Royal Easter Show. Hudson's had established a substantial market for their cheap prefabricated houses, and the company's

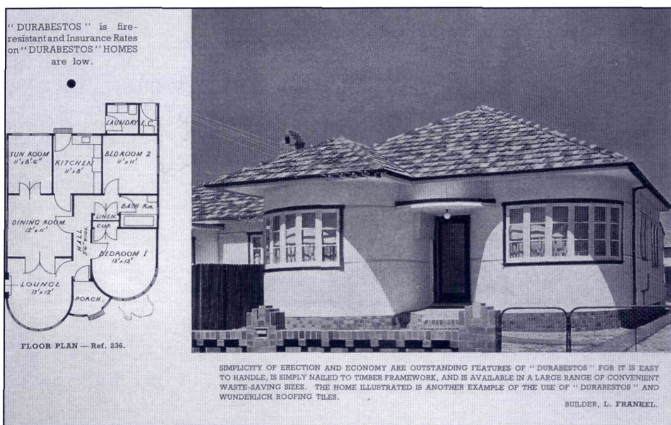
embrace of the new style helped it to enter the budget end of the market.

From the start, the bungalow style and fibro formed a successful alliance. Hudson's, for example, offered to 'use asbestos sheets for outer and inner walls and ceilings'. In 1917, a real-estate guide to Sydney's suburbs commented on the number of 'artistic' bungalow homes 'constructed at very modest figures' in fibro. Architectural writers noted that 'everywhere nowadays one sees better-type houses of artistic design built with exterior walls of Asbestos Cement Sheets ...

The suburban bungalows were not merely local transplants of a Californian style. They owed as much to the Australian workman's cottage as to North American prototypes. Frequently they were unembellished double-fronted cottages with the main rooms opening from a short entry passage. Most bungalows in Sydney's frontier suburbs were 'Californian' only in their low-pitched gabled roofs, wide eaves and small verandahs – all inexpensive features.

The shortening of the entry hallway was the most significant design innovation, and it dramatically reduced the amount of wasted interior space. Robin Boyd later argued that the double-fronted cottage, with its projecting front room and hallway running the length of the house 'persisted in the suburbs .. for a full century from 1850'. Yet *Commonwealth Home* magazine was able to state in 1926 that new small homes no longer consisted of rooms 'arranged on either side on a long narrow passage, so that one could stand on the front door mat and look at the yard at the rear'.

This change resulted from the marketing of designs for small homes. For the first time, design and marketing professionals devoted their attention to maximising the cost-effectiveness and the attractiveness of cheap homes.



Extracts from *The Fibro Frontier* by Charles Pickett are reproduced with permission of the Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, © Copyright 1997. *The Fibro Frontier* is available from the Museum at \$29.95.

A Small Unsigned Painting

by Stephen Scheduling

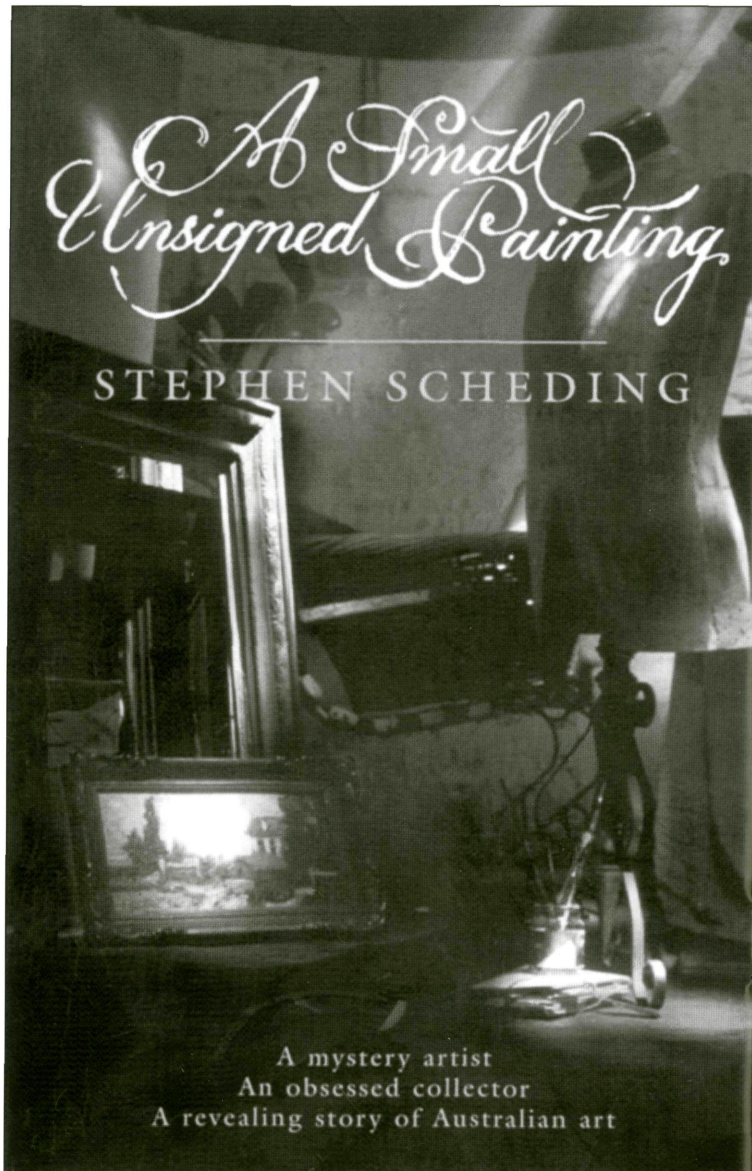
Reviewed by Johanna Cole

This small volume was written by Stephen Scheduling (psychologist by day, moonlighting as an art researcher). Contained within it a mystery about a painting: *by someone who knew something about a picture, had experience and is, therefore, most likely to be recorded somewhere.*

But who? And where?

It is a completely enthralling account of purchasing a small 20th century landscape at auction in Melbourne and obsessively searching for its origins. Scheduling has woven together a gripping tale involving close observation of the object, comparison with other similar art works, piecing together the meticulous detail connected with the work of art, the assistance he receives from experts, details of artists' lives, those of their friends and relatives and the tenacity of the author himself in order to try to ascertain the artist, the subject, the date of the work and the circumstances in which it was produced.

I am sure this account will surprise many people who are not familiar with the work carried out by art researchers, collectors and curators. Often the public are presented with only the seamless results of such research in catalogues, exhibitions and in captions accompanying works of art. This can lead to an underestimation by the general public of the amount of time spent in research to allow the production of art books, exhibitions and in displaying and in assembling collections of art and objects in galleries and museums. Unlike the final scene in many of Agatha





Christie's novels when the detective Hercule Poirot dramatically demonstrates "who done it"; for art collectors and curators there is not always a solution to the questions raised by a work of art and loose threads may remain, hopefully for the next generation to try and solve.

Scheding writes in such a frank, accessible and appealing way and reaches into his own psyche to gain further understanding.

"Perhaps Australians, for some perverse reason, are more interested in failure than success.

"Is this perversity the reason I have taken on such an impossible task? Creating a mountain of information in the weird, unlikely hope that I can prove who painted that one small, unsigned painting?"

He allows the reader into his personal world such as the hilarious way, due to the well known art dealer Frank Mc Donald, Scheding began researching art works. The reaction of his wife and child to the process

and the hours and resources he devotes to this search are also revealed in the book. His contacts in the art world such as Frank Mc Donald and the conservator David Stein who is highly respected for his skills, figure in the search for more information about the painting as do the various artists' friends and descendants.

Many of the biographical details of Lloyd Rees' early career bring him to life for the reader such as the poignant account of his reaction to his wife's death.

Scheding also includes a story about some mural panels sold to the Art Gallery of New South Wales by Frank Mc Donald and the varying opinions among experts about who actually produced them. We can then see that this book is a microcosm of the issues that can arise in any museum, gallery or private collection.

This book is important in several ways. It is not a dry academic account, but it is in fact very readable

and is aimed at the general public. It demonstrates the need for detailed and meticulous research of art works, particularly while all the protagonists and contemporaries of the artist are still alive. This publication might encourage artists to at least sign and date, if not more precisely label their works with a view to the future interpretation of their art. It provides insight into the activities of researchers, collectors and curators in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia in the late twentieth century, in a way which would be just as interesting to a collector, curator or member of the general public in London or New York.

Most of all Scheding has created a rich and fascinating tapestry around the small unsigned painting consisting of all the threads of his own life, those of his family, his art world contacts, the auction scene, the lives of the artists involved and the artists' friends and relatives. The remaining loose threads enhance the veracity of the account and the texture of the tapestry itself.

Sydney Quilt Stories: 1811-1970

Elizabeth Bay House, 20 June – 27 September 1998

Quilts, rugs and waggas made in Sydney, brought to Sydney, about Sydney.

This unique exhibition of quilts, tablecloths, rugs and waggas assembled from private collections tells the stories behind a rare selection of Australian patchwork survivors: their makers, their histories, their fabrics and their workmanship.

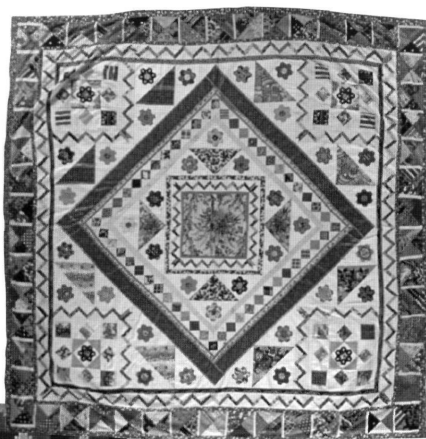
Brought together for the first time by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, in collaboration with the Sydney branch of the Australian Quilt Study Group, *Sydney Quilt Stories: 1811-1970* shows quilts and patchworks with Sydney histories dating from convict times to the mid 20th century.

The quilts, tablecloths bedcovers, rugs and waggas displayed in *Sydney Quilt Stories: 1811-1970* provide important social and historical documentation of their times. All related, whether by place of origin or final destination, to Sydney.

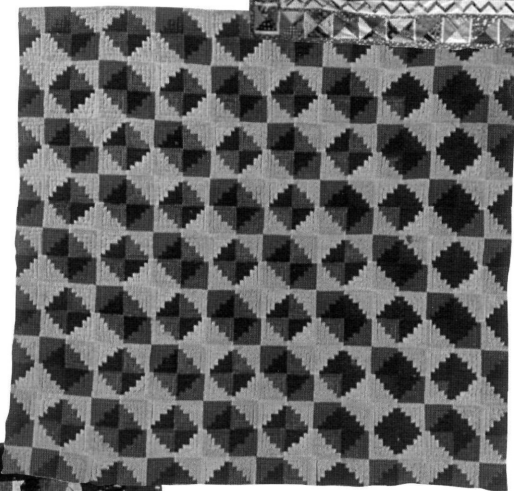
The exhibition provides a rich array of traditional and unusual quilts and piecework, from "Log Cabin" quilts to traditional Durham

wholecloth quilts, 1930s floral applique designs to velvet hexagons. The brilliant fabrics of an exquisite unfinished chintz medallion style bed cover top contrast with the wagger style bed covers made from 1920s tailors' samples.

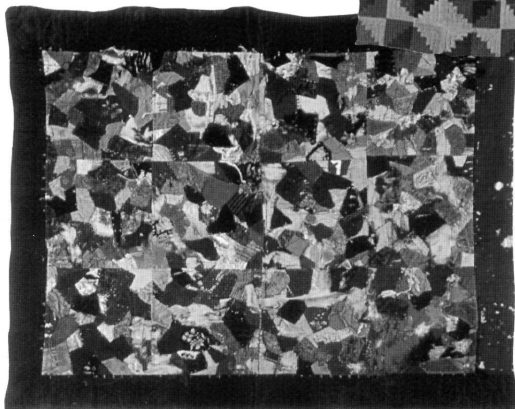
The research into the stories behind these pieces provides a unique historical record – from



▲
Roebuck Frame
Style Patchwork
c. 1845



◀
James Thomas Log
Cabin Patchwork
c. 1900



◀
Bessie Rouse's
Crazy Patchwork
Sofa Rug c. 1890

the early wallaby skin pieced rugs made by settlers moving westward; to the exquisitely embroidered and embellished later patchwork products of more leisured lives; to the wagger bed covers born of necessity in the depression years. All are now part of Australia's National Quilt Register.

Utilitarian and extravagant, old and new, cotton, synthetic, velvet and fur, these quilts wear their journeys with modesty and pride.

Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938

Decades of experience and research by Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson have culminated, at long last, in *Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938*, due for publication in late August by Casuarina Press, Sydney.

Australian Furniture is the most comprehensive survey of quality furniture, its marks and makers, yet undertaken in this country. Published as a companion to *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture* (1985), it is planned as a fully self-contained work of reference, designed to further assist in the accurate identification and dating of furniture made in this country prior to the outbreak of World War II.

Divided into two sections, the first is a dictionary which includes over 660 biographical entries of makers, retailers and designers by whom an item of furniture is known to survive. Professionals and amateurs are entered alike, as are the previously marginalised endeavours of immigrant cabinet-makers and female furniture decorators. Picture frame makers are also included. The second section is a pictorial history of Australian Furniture containing 600 full colour plates illustrating the best and

most representative examples of each furniture type and providing impressive evidence of the amount of quality work produced in Australia during this period.

Each plate is accompanied by a detailed caption in which the evidence for the object's attribution is complied. Drawing on the eye of the trained connoisseur to identify timbers and catalogue stylistic features of the item of furniture, combined with an encyclopaedic coverage of documentary evidence; including contemporary references from newspapers and illustrated journals, furniture pattern books and catalogues as well as relevant secondary source material; a practical framework is supplied for the accurate dating and critical assessment of a range of Australian-made furniture.

It is through the content of these captions that we gain an insight into the equal but complimentary balancing act which is the partnership of Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson. The gentleman scholar and the young enthusiast cum antique dealer joined forces in the 1970s, having the mutual aim of bringing together like-minded souls, resulting in the formation of the Australiana Society. Both

remain well known to members of the Society, which is now in its twentieth year. Their initial association sowed the seeds of a seven year collaboration to produce their first joint publication, *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, the definitive study of the subject.

Kevin Fahy's enthusiasm for collecting early Australian furniture predates most others and led to his co-authorship, with Clifford Craig and E. Graeme Robertson, of *Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* (1972). An Honorary Associate of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, and Honorary Life Member of the National Trust of Australia (NSW), he is an active member of several historical, restoration and preservation organisations. His lectures and articles in various journals and magazines over the past four decades have greatly encouraged the present public awareness and appreciation of Australian colonial decorative arts.

Since establishing Simpson's Antiques in 1978, which specialised in nineteenth century Australian furniture from the outset, Andrew Simpson has become one of the foremost dealers in colonial furniture and

Australian Furniture is the most comprehensive survey of quality furniture, its marks and makers, yet undertaken in this country.



decorative arts in the country. Twenty years of examining and identifying furniture of local manufacture and acquiring an unerring understanding of native and imported timbers and construction techniques, has led to his development of a true discernment for the characteristics of Australian-made furniture, patterns of production and use, across the continent.

He has a long memory for the previously unearthed object and a constant eye out for the newly discoverable.

On the following pages, we have published extracts from both sections of *Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938*, in a representative sampling of the range of furniture makers encom-

passed. Makers have been selected for whom a mark and an example of work have been included in *Australian Furniture*.

Extracts from *Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938* by Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson are reproduced with the permission of Casuarina Press, Sydney, © Copyright 1998.

Debney, George Robert (act. 1846-75)

Furniture manufacturer, Adelaide

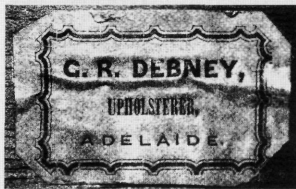
George Robert Debney (c.1817-97) arrived at Adelaide from London in 1838. By 1846 he had commenced business as a furniture warehouseman. He was later described as a cabinet-maker and upholsterer. A detailed description of his furniture workshop and stock-in-trade appeared in the *Adelaide Observer*, 22 October 1859. Apart from imported goods, he manufactured a wide range of furniture in native timbers such as red cedar and imported woods such as walnut and rosewood. Probably Adelaide's most important furniture manufactory during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, it was claimed that 'no other establishment equals that of Mr Debney for extent or completeness'. The tragedy that stalked his personal life was eventually to enter his business world. In about 1875 financial misadventure resulted in the sale of his furniture business to P. Gay (q.v.). Debney continued to practise as a licensed valuer and, at the time of his death, was described as a commission agent. A Huon pine library table by Debney is illustrated in *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture* (pl. 453).

1847-75 Rundle st

Paper labels: * G.R. DEBNEY./ Cabinet Maker Upholsterer &c/ Rundle Street/ Furnerals Furnished/ ADELAIDE/ [Valuations made in Town or Country]



* G.R. DEBNEY./ UPHOLSTERER./ ADELAIDE.



Plates: 44, 237

Represented: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

References: E. Warburton, *The Paddocks Beneath: A History of Burnside, Burnside (SA) 1981*; J. Brown & B. Mullens, *Town Life in Pioneering South Australia*, Adelaide 1980; M. Raymond, 'Brief Notes on Two Early Adelaide Identities', *The Australiana Society Newsletter*, May 1980; C. Menz, *Australian Decorative Arts: 1820s-1990s*: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide 1996.

Coogan's (act. 1880-1938+)

Furniture manufacturers, Ec., Hobart, Launceston Tas.

William Coogan (1857-1940) was born in Melbourne. In 1876 he came to Hobart, where he worked as an upholsterer shortly before moving to Launceston. He rented premises in Charles Street and moved to Brisbane Street in 1880, establishing W. Coogan & Co., a furniture factory which grew rapidly. Showrooms were opened at Brisbane Street in 1886, and continued until sold in 1886. Several factories and other outlets were later opened around Tasmania. The business became a private company in 1923. Coogan's furniture was exported to all the Australian states. In 1956 the Launceston manufactory closed down, confining manufacturing to the Hobart factory until its closure in 1957. The business still continues in Hobart as a retailer. Furniture by Coogan's featured Tasmanian oak and blackwood, many examples of which were illustrated in *Coogan's Latest Catalogue of Modern Ideas for Home Furnishing* (1913). The firm was an exhibitor at the Australian Native's Association Exhibition, Launceston 1908.

1887-92 Brisbane st, Launceston
 1894-1909 114 Brisbane st
 1905 65 Cameron st
 1910-23 114-116 Brisbane st
 1910-23 79 Collins st, Hobart
 1920-23 247 Elizabeth st
 1909-35 Burnie
 1925-30 Ulverstone

W. Coogan & Co. Pty Ltd
 1924-38+ 114-116 Brisbane st
 1924-38+ 79 Collins st, Hobart
 1924-38+ 247 Elizabeth st

Paper label: * COOGAN'S/ TASMANIA./ Job No. ... Order No. .../ Design No. ... Bench No. .../ Dept. ... Exd. by ...



Plate: 397

References: *Mercury*, 30 November 1963, 29 October 1985 & 14 June 1989; M. Morris-Nunn & C. Tassell, *Launceston's Industrial Heritage: a survey: Part One*, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston (Tas.) 1982; *Coogan's Latest Catalogue of Modern Ideas for Home Furnishing*, 1913 (Reprint, Hobart 1994); L. Dickens, *The First 120 Years: The History of W. Coogan & Co. Pty Ltd, Part 1*, Tasmania 1996; Tasmaniana Library, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart.

Twynam, Emily Rose (act. c.1900-07)

Woodcarver, designer, Etc., Goulburn NSW

Emily Rose Twynam, née Bolton (1845-1910), was an exhibitor at the First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work, Melbourne 1907, of a carved hall chair in the Medieval Revival style.

Carved inscription* A.D. 1907/ E. Twynam/ ERT fet



Plates: 150, 307

Represented: National Trust of Australia (NSW) - Riversdale, Goulburn

References: S. Thomas, *Trust the Women: Works by Women in National Trust Collections*, catalogue, Sydney 1995; *Official Souvenir Catalogue of the First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work, Melbourne 1907*; D. Dysart (ed.), *Treasures of the National Trust*, Roseville, (NSW) 1992; J. Kerr (ed.), *Heritage The National Women's Art Book*, Roseville (NSW) 1995; A. Toy et al., *Heath & Home: Women's Decorative Arts & Crafts 1800-1930*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, catalogue, Sydney 1988.

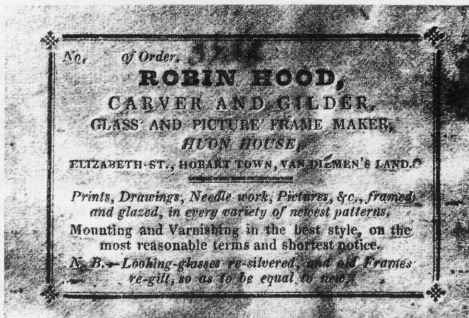
Hood, Robin Vaughan (act. 1836-51)

Carver, gilder, looking glass & picture frame maker, Etc., Hobart

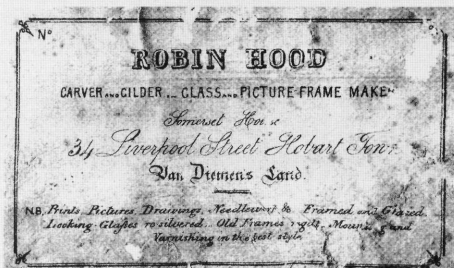
Robin Vaughan Hood (1802-1888) arrived in Hobart from London in 1833. He is first listed in directories in 1836 as a carver, gilder and bookseller. In 1851 he retired from the business, which was continued by his son, Robin Lloyd Hood (q.v.). In that year R.V. Hood was an exhibitor of Huon pine, musk and myrtle picture frames at the Great Exhibition, London 1851.

1836 1 Murray st.
1838-40 108 Elizabeth st. (Huon House)
1841-51, 1856 32-34 Liverpool st. (Somerset House)
1852-57 54 Liverpool st

Paper labels: * No. of Order./ ROBIN HOOD./ CARVER AND GILDER./ GLASS AND PICTURE FRAME MAKER./ HUON HOUSE./ ELIZABETH-ST., HOBART TOWN, VAN DIEMEN'S LAND./ Prints, Drawings, Needle work, Pictures, &c., framed/ and glazed, in every variety of newest patterns./ Mounting and Varnishing in the best style, on the most reasonable terms and shortest notice./ N.B. Looking-glasses re-silvered, and old Frames/ re-gilt, so as to be equal to new.



* ROBIN HOOD/ CARVER AND GILDER.- GLASS AND PICTURE-FRAME MAKER./ Somerset House/ 34 Liverpool Street Hobart Town/ Van Diemen's Land./ N.B. Prints, Drawings Needlework &c. Framed and Glazed/ Looking-Glasses re-silvered. Old Frames regilt. Mounting and/ Varnishing in the best style.



No. of Order./ ROBIN HOOD./ CARVER AND GILDER./ GLASS AND PICTURE FRAME MAKER./ SOMERSET HOUSE, (No.34)/ LIVERPOOL-ST. HOBART TOWN, VAN DIEMEN'S LAND./...

* R.V. HOOD/ Carver/ GILDER & PICTURE FRAME/ Maker/ LIVERPOOL STREET/ HOBART TOWN/ Looking glasses re-silvered and old Frames re-gilt/ so as to be equal to new.



Plates: 294, 555

Represented: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart; Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart

References: M. McArthur, 'A Brief History and Chronology of the Hood Family and Their Picture Frames', *Australiana*, vol. 10, no. 2, June 1988; C. Craig, *The Engravers of Van Diemen's Land*, Launceston (Tas.) 1961; J. Kerr (ed.) *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*, Melbourne 1992; *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations 1851. Official Description and Illustrated Catalogue*, vol. 3, London n.d.; T. Mulford, *Tasmanian Framemakers 1830-1930: a directory*, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston (Tas.) 1997.



Ink mark: SUSMAN/ KORNBLUM & Co/ BALLARAT
 Plates: 475, 588
 Represented: Ballarat Fine Art Gallery
 Information: Kornblums Furnishings Ltd

References: A. Sutherland, *Victoria and Its Metropolis: Past and Present*, Melbourne 1888; T. & J. Dixon, *Colonial Character: Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, catalogue, Ballarat 1995; T. & J. Dixon, 'Marketing Colonial Furniture, Early Ballarat Style', *Carter's Antiques & Collectables Annual 1995*.

Svensson, Andreas (act. 1872-1913)

Cabinet-maker, Melbourne

Andreas Svensson established a cabinet workshop in Melbourne in 1872. He is recorded as the maker of several elaborately carved wardrobes, one of which is illustrated in *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture* (pl. 134).

| | |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 1878-84 | Kent st, Richmond |
| 1885-86 | 133 Kent st |
| 1887-88 | Latrobe st |
| 1888-91 | 133 Kent st |
| 1890-96 | 171 Latrobe st |
| 1895-1909 | 175 Kent st |
| 1897-1913 | 169 Latrobe st |

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| A. & Y. Svensson | |
| 1914-16 | 169 Latrobe st |
| Svensson, A.B. | |
| 1917-51 | 169 Latrobe st |

Impressed mark: * A. SVENSSON/ 169 LATROBE St.



References: Leonard Joel, auction catalogue, Melbourne October 1990.

Susman, Kornblum & Co. (act. c.1888-94)

Furniture manufacturers, &c., Ballarat Vic.

The furniture manufactory and warehouse established in 1853 by Emanuel Steinfeld at Ballarat, became known as Steinfeld, Levinson & Co. (q.v.). From 1881 it was managed by Steinfeld's nephews, Alfred Susman and Alfred Kornblum (?-1932), who took over the business in about 1888. In 1894 the partnership was dissolved and Alfred Kornblum joined his brother, Ernest, a wholesale upholsterer in Melbourne. Susman continued in business at Ballarat, as A. Susman and Co., for a few years before moving to Adelaide where he became an indent merchant.

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1889-94 | 53-55 Bridge st |
| A. Susman & Co. | |
| 1896-97 | Curtis st |

Metal label: * SUSMAN/ KORNBLUM & Co./ BALLARAT



Chiffonier

c.1860 Adelaide
 Materials: Musk, blackwood, mountain ash, mirrored glass; (secondary) cedar
 Condition: 19th century patina
 Dimensions: 150 x 123.5 x 55.5
 Collection: Private



From the workshop of George Robert Debney (q.v.) and bearing his paper label as an upholsterer only, the use of finely figured musk veneer for this chifferoni is rare in Australian furniture. It has a shaped, mirrored back with a moulded surround and fret-work decoration to the top with carving on the sides of the base. The cabinet consists of a moulded drawer projecting above two glazed cupboard doors with applied fret-work carving forming a curved arch. The doors are flanked by opposing blackwood barley-sugar twist columns on blocks projecting from the plinth base, which has mountain ash crushed bun front feet and square pad rear feet.

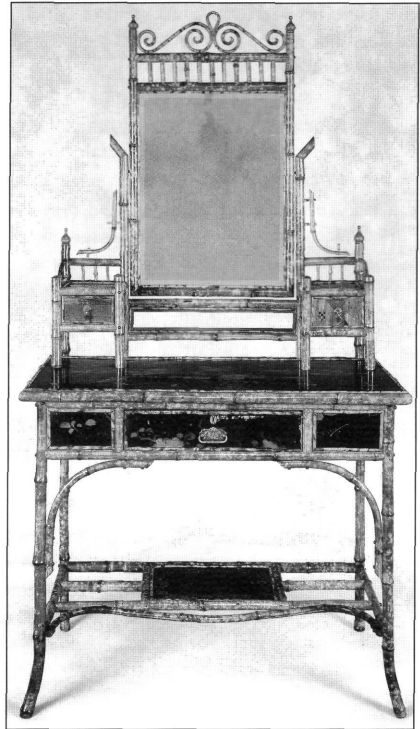
Hall Stand

c.1910 Tasmania
Materials: Blackwood, mirrored glass, tin, oxidised metal, brass; (secondary) blackwood
Condition: Original, replaced umbrella rails
Dimensions: 224 x 107.5 x 40
Collection: Private



A catalogue (1913) issued by Coogan's (q.v.) illustrates a 'Very Quaint Hall Stand' available in blackwood or Tasmanian oak and of almost identical design to this blackwood example. Attributed to Coogan's, this hall stand is decorated with sinuous tulip and foliage cut-outs in the Art Nouveau manner which flank the shaped bevelled mirror at the centre. Below a bank of seven shaped slats and a single drawer, with pressed metal handles, the four turned legs support a shelf which extends beyond the sides of the stand and contains two japanned tin trays.

References: *Coogan's Latest Catalogue of Modern Ideas for Home Furnishing, 1913* (Reprint, Hobart 1994).



Dressing Table

c.1895 Ballarat Vic
Materials: Imported bamboo & panels, mirrored glass, brass; (secondary) American redwood, kauri pine, cedar
Condition: Original
Dimensions: 182.5 x 99.5 x 52.5
Collection: Private

Part of a bedroom suite (see Plate 588) bearing the metal label of Susman & Co., who continued the business of Susman, Kornblum & Co. (q.v.) from 1894, this bamboo dressing table is in the Anglo-Japanese style popular in Australia during the late nineteenth century. In this example the use of bamboo is both structural and decorative. The upper section consists of a bevelled swing-mirror surmounted by a gallery with a scrolled cresting between turned posts with turned finials. Its shaped side supports include a pair of small drawers, with wooden knobs, standing on bamboo posts. The lower section has a central single drawer, with a pressed brass handle, set

into the frieze between two panels, all of which have painted decoration. The four out-swept legs with curved supports are connected by a platform shelf.

References: T. & J. Dixon, *Colonial Character: Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, catalogue, Ballarat (Vic.) 1995.

Hall Chair

1907 Goulburn NSW

Materials: Queensland maple, steel

Condition: Original

Dimensions: 99 x 77 x 73

Collection: National Trust of Australia (NSW) - Riversdale, Goulburn

In the Medieval Revival style, this elaborately carved armchair was made by Emily Rose Twynam (q.v.) for Riversdale, her home, and was exhibited in Melbourne and Sydney at the First Exhibition of Women's Work, 1907. The embellishment of furniture with carved decoration was a popular leisure activity for women at the turn of the century. The carvings on the arms, rails, shaped back support, arched legs and stretchers of this chair depict entwined oak leaves and acorns, while lion heads and paws adorn the arm rests and feet, which are on steel castors.



The back support displays the family crest and coat of arms with the motto 'NON INFERIORA SECTUS'. The maker's name and initials and the date of carving are found on the rear of the back support. The seat is simply slatted. Similar designs, after the manner of the ancient curule chair, can be found in English furniture design books from 1807 to 1910.

References: S. Thomas, *Trust the Women: Works by Women in National Trust Collections*, catalogue, Sydney 1995; D. Dysart (ed.), *Treasures of the National Trust*, Roseville (NSW) 1992; A. Toy et al., *Hearth and Home: Women's Decorative Arts and Crafts 1800-1930*, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Catalogue, Sydney 1988; E. Joy (intro.), *Pictorial Dictionary of British 19th Century Furniture Design*, Suffolk (UK) 1977.



Picture Frame

c.1840 Hobart

Materials: Huon pine, gilt gesso, glass; (secondary) pine

Condition: 19th century patina

Dimensions: 46 x 37.5 x 7.5

Collection: Private

With the paper label of Robin Vaughan Hood (q.v.) at 'Huon House', this Huon pine frame features the pronounced S-shaped profile found on several examples of Hood's work, both labelled and unlabelled.

References: T. Mulford, *Tasmanian Framemakers: a directory 1830-1930*, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston (Tas.) 1997.

John (Jaan) Kannuluik Cabinet-maker, Melbourne

Michael Reymond

John Kannuluik was a cabinet-maker active in Melbourne from about 1890 to his death in 1929. He is to be featured in a forthcoming book on Australian furniture by Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson.

Kannuluik is said to have been born in 1854 at Werro Kries, Carolen, Livand, in Estonia, and to have arrived in Melbourne in about 1880. He travelled to Australia with Peter Hansen, a Danish artist. Hansen had studied art in Munich and brought out with him a number of his copies of the great Masters including Rubens. For a time he lived with Hansen in Fitzroy, a Melbourne inner suburb. He was naturalised as an Australian citizen in 1902.

Kannuluik worked with Emil Hitzler, a cabinet-maker in Queen Street, Melbourne and in 1890 moved to Malmsbury Street, Hawthorn where he established his home and factory. He and Peter Hansen married two sisters, Caroline and Anne Fankhauser. They also worked together on many commissions.

Kannuluik's business is recorded in the Melbourne Directories at the following addresses in the following years:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 1893-1912 | 26 Malmsbury Street, Hawthorn |
| 1897-1901 | 310 Queen Street, Mel- bourne |
| 1902-15 | 306 Queen Street, Mel- bourne |
| 1916-20 | 246 Burwood Road, Hawthorn |
| 1921-33 | 238 Burwood Road, Hawthorn |
| 1934-39+ | 238 Burwood Road, Hawthorn (John Kannuluik & Son) |

His business prospered and he received many commissions from churches, insurance companies, banks and other commercial institutions as well as private work. He made frames for Stations of the Cross for various Catholic churches which Hansen then painted in the panels. Hansen was to go on and decorate the ceilings of both the Hawthorn and Fitzroy Town Halls.

In 1914 Kannuluik received a commission to supply the whole of the furniture required for Australia House in London. This order amounted to about 140 pieces of furniture. At this time his son, Oscar, was apprenticed to him. Designs and samples of carving for the Australia House furniture were sent out from London to Kannuluik's factory. Some of the timbers used included Queensland maple and blackbean and some tables had New Zealand green stone-tops. The order was completed and sent to London in 1917. Photos of the furniture were apparently illustrated in Melbourne newspapers at this time and an illustrated brochure was prepared on behalf of Australia House.

Another famous commission at about this time was Helena Rubenstein's salon in Collins Street, opposite Georges, where all the furniture was upholstered in pure white leather on antiqued whitewood which was the first use of this type of furniture in Melbourne. The firm also made furniture for Joseph Lyons (1879-1939), Tasmanian Premier and later Prime Minister of Australia.

Kannuluik also worked with a number of architects including, Butler and Bradshaw, Blacklett and

Forster, A. A. Fritch, H. Desbrowe Annear, Stephenson and Meldrum and Reid Smart & Tappin. The following is a list of the more important commissions he received:

Christchurch, Hawthorn - screen 1901

Presbyterian Church, Hawthorn - furniture

St Columb's Church, Hawthorn - pulpit

Christchurch, South Yarra - choir stalls

Mission to Seamen, Flinders Street - chapel furnishings

St Monica's Essenden - Stations of the Cross 1913

Catholic Church, Glenhuntley - furnishings and general work

St Laurence's Catholic Church, Leongatha - altar

Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church, North Fitzroy - general furnishings

St Paul's Cathedral - the Grimwade Memorial Choir Screen

Independent Church, Collins Street - choir stalls and the Elders' Chairs

Church of England, Manly NSW - organ case

Kannuluik died on 14 June 1929. His son, Leonard Oscar (1899-1974), carried on the business until World War II.

At the time of his death in 1929 John Kannuluik's house and factory in Burwood Road, Hawthorn were described in the inventory accompanying the probate papers as consisting of "a two-storey brick dwelling of 10 rooms and conveniences requiring renovating throughout ... a brick

factory and galvanised iron workshop ... (with) wooden floor and ceiling and with show windows and cantilever verandah in front and at the rear ... a six roomed dwelling partly of brick in the course of reconstruction and renovation ..." all valued at £4,600.

There then followed a description of his furniture-making tools and equipment together with the following list of stock in his shop prepared by his son, Oscar:

- 2 Sideboards unfinished and unpolished
- 1 Revolving bookcase unfinished
- 12 Blackwood chair frames unpolished
- 15 Blackwood chair frames unpolished
- 4 Gent's robes unfinished and unpolished
- 1 Bed suite unfinished and unpolished

- 1 Carved table unfinished and unpolished
- 4 Second hand office tables
- 2 Second hand mantels
- 1 Second hand mantel
- 4 Second hand mantels
- 1 Hall stand unfinished
- 1 Bed without mattress unpolished
- 3 Second-hand sideboards
- 1 New sideboard
- 1 Small writing desk unfinished
- 1 Extension table
- 1 Dinner wagon half finished
- 1 Second-hand 2-piece suite
- 3 Red gum chests of drawers unfinished and unpolished

Some of the timber in stock included Caledonian pine, hardwood, blackwood, maple and cedar as well as new and second-hand jarrah.

Kannuluik's furniture reflected the designs and styles of furniture made during the period 1900-1930

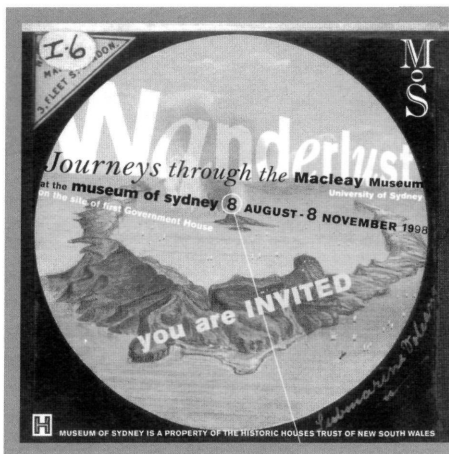
which designs and styles are illustrated in surviving contemporary catalogues of this period. The only mark so far seen is an ink stamp mark-

J. KANNULUIK, / 308 QUEEN STREET / MELBOURNE"

Australian furniture made between 1900 and 1940 is currently enjoying a growing collector interest. One shop in a Melbourne suburb is currently specialising in Australian furniture of this period. No doubt with the forthcoming publication of their latest book by Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson collector interest in this period will grow.

References and Sources

- Manuscript material in the Kannuluik Papers, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.
- Probate and inventory papers, Supreme Court of Victoria, Melbourne.
- T. Lane, Senior Curator, National Gallery of Victoria, Interview, 22 January 1998.



You are invited to visit the
Museum of Sydney

to view

Wanderlust

an exhibition of over 1000 objects
from the collection of the

Macleay Museum

until 8 November 1998.



Contributions Please ...

We require articles urgently for our *Australiana* journal.

We would appreciate if our members doing research into aspects of *Australiana* "would put pen to paper and let us have the fruits of your labours for publication".

Please forward your submission to: The Editor, *Australiana*, PO Box 643 Woollahra NSW 2025.





INDUSTRIES PTY LTD
4 HILL STREET
DARLINGHURST 2010

Tel (02) 9361 9999

Fax: (02) 9332 1294

Australia's leading
manufacturer of
Electrical Accessories

*Available throughout Australia
at all major hardware
and lighting stores*



33 FLOOD STREET, LEICHHARDT 2040

Phone (02) **9560 6022**

Fax (02) 9569 7246

*Distributors of Australian
ceramic wall and floor
tiles, adhesives and
accessories to merchants
throughout Sydney and
New South Wales.*

WORLD-WIDE IMPORTERS OF CERAMIC TILES
from MAJOR overseas manufacturers

PETER R. WALKER PTY LTD

ACN 076 031 064

Dealers in Fine Art

- Early Australian Artwork and Items of Historical Interest
- Pre 1840 British and European Decorative Paintings

WANTED

Good Australian Artworks of all periods.

Confidentiality Assured.

We are particularly keen to purchase works by
Conard Martens at this time.

By appointment

PO Box 648 South Yarra Victoria 3141 Australia

Tel (03) 9820 0437 Mobile 0418 552 548 Fax (03) 9867 6652

HOUSE 02 4868 2726
OFFICE 02 4869 1190
FAX 02 4868 3212
MOBILE 018 420 438



WHITLEY
OLDBURY ROAD
MOSS VALE 2577
NEW SOUTH WALES
AUSTRALIA

J. B. HAWKINS ANTIQUES



A magnificent pair of male and female New Zealand Huia's, mounted and labelled by Henry James Burton of Wardour Street, London, who was taxidermist to Sir Walter Buller author of the *A History of the Birds of New Zealand*, published 1887-1888, second edition in which he notes "Whilst we were looking at and admiring this little picture of bird-life, a pair of Huia's, without uttering a sound, appeared in a tree overhead, and as they were caressing each other with their beautiful bills, a charge of No. 6 brought both to the ground together. The incident was rather touching, and I felt almost glad that the shot was not mine, although by no means loth to appropriate the two fine specimens."

This would appear to be the self same pair, the last fully authenticated sighting was Christmas 1907 from which point they have proved to be EXTINCT. Prized by the Maori for its tail feathers, kept in "Wakahuias", finely carved and collectable Maori wooden boxes, they were worn with sacred significance in battle as a war plume of twelve and also given as tokens of friendship, or bestowed as marks of respect.