

The David Roche Foundation House Museum



**THE DAVID ROCHE FOUNDATION REOPENS ON
9 JUNE
ONE WEEK TO GO!**

TDRF: Club Fermoy #4

Dear friends and supporters,

On Wednesday 3 June 2020 TDRF celebrates its fourth anniversary and while we could not have predicted the COVID-19 virus, everyone here is proud of what we have achieved to promote the collection and David Roche's passion for art and antiques. It remains an incredible gift to South Australia and has brought delight to the thousands who have visited from across Australia and the world. On this positive note, we look forward to welcoming you back to TDRF from Tuesday 9 June when our exhibition *Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation.* reopens to the public. Spanning over 400 years of the Western art tradition of flower painting and including some of Australia's most celebrated artists, this exhibition is a perfect remedy to the winter blues. Open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4pm TDRF will comply with current health guidelines to ensure the health and well-being of our visitors and staff. No bookings are required, but we will be monitoring our capacity and ask that you maintain social distancing measures during your visit. Hand sanitisers, additional cleaning and contactless payment are some of the new measures in place for our

reopening. Although we have to adjust to a slightly different way of sharing art, the experience will be just as enjoyable.

While Fermoy House remains closed for the moment, we thought in this newsletter that you might enjoy watching a video of the newly installed French Empire bed generously donated by our inaugural Museum Director, the late Martyn Cook, in 2019. If you also feel passionate about TDRF, I ask you to consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Foundation as we approach the end of the financial year. We are an independent self-funded museum and your contribution will ensure we can continue David Roche's legacy to make his home and collection available, that we mount important exhibitions, and programme a range of learning opportunities.

Best wishes,

Robert Reason
Museum Director

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TODAY'S TREASURE

Now showcasing the favourite pieces of our fantastic guides in The David Roche Collection. This week with Jenny J., who has written on two straw cases from the Napoleonic-era believed to be made by French prisoners of war.



possibly French prisoner of war work, *Necessaire*, c.1810, Europe, straw work



possibly French prisoner of war work, *Bodkin or cheroot case*, c.1800, Europe, straw work, metal mount, glass

Our Favourite Pieces

Displayed in one of the vitrines in David's sumptuous bedroom are two small boxes, one

dated c.1800 and the other c.1810. Both are examples of marquetry straw work, and their simplicity is in marked contrast to almost everything else in the room. Their beauty is often overlooked.

The boxes have been attributed to French prisoners of war in Britain during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It has been estimated that approximately 3000 men were captured at the Battle of the Nile alone, which raged from the 1st to the 3rd of August 1798. It appears that the rank and file of these prisoners were first housed in unseaworthy boats anchored off the British ports. Fearing that these prisoners might escape and rejoin any French invasion force, purpose-built prisoner of war depots were constructed, the first being Norman Cross Prison in 1797. In their free time these men were allowed to make and sell objects. Many of them either knew or learnt to work with straw, particularly in Norman Cross Prison.

Both boxes are constructed from short pieces of straw. Apparently a prisoner had built a straw splitting instrument. The strips had light and dark sides, the dark was the outer side of the straw and the light the inner portion. Intricate geometrical designs were created, and included pieces of straw which had been coloured with inexpensive dyes such as green and burgundy. The men sold their wares at prison markets.

The c.1800 box is fitted with a small bottle, funnel, bodkin (a thick blunt needle with a large eye) and an ear spoon for cleaning out wax. One wonders if the bottle contained perfume, or perhaps laudanum. The c.1810 box, which extends, may well have been used for handmade cigarettes or cheroots.

Behind the black lacquer doors leading into Fermoy House lie a wealth of magical historical objects and tales, while in the adjoining Gallery, just last year, an exhibition was held which included work by a modern straw marquetry artist, Arthur Seigneur.

- Jenny J. 2020

[View in the online collection](#)



CANINE TIDBITS

Did you know...

David Roche not only had an eye for the best and most beautiful dogs, but also the best canine art. To that end, in 2005, he acquired *Die Meute (The Pack)*, an oil on jute work by Norbertine Bresslen-Roth (Austria 1891-1978). During his lifetime, it hung in his Sydney house, as it was considered too modern and large for Fermoy House.

Painted in Vienna in 1952, it depicts a pack of dogs of different breeds, including Afghan Hounds (one of David's favourite breeds), Salukis and a greyhound in a landscape after a hunt. It was once said of Bresslen-Roth that she was "the greatest portrayer of animals of recent times".



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Fascinating information and photos relating to David Roche, Fermoy House or the collection. This week, we are looking back at one of David's collecting and sightseeing tours through Europe.

Throughout his life, David Roche would travel overseas to visit interesting and important locations that might inspire him with regard to his house and gardens, as well as checking in at the various antique dealers and auction houses of Europe along his way.

One such trip occurred in June 2008, when, accompanied by Martyn Cook, David travelled through London, Paris, Berlin and Stockholm. Along the way, he visited such important historic locations as Monet's Garden at Giverny and the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, where he can be seen in the photographs above and below to the right, and below to the left respectively.

David was particularly keen to visit the Menagerie because of its Napoleonic connections, but even more so because of a First French Empire plate in his collection by the Pierre Neppel factory that showed kangaroos in the Napoleonic era - David simply loved the idea of having been to such a famous French landmark that he looked at daily in his house.

Scouting for new art acquisitions was always high on David's list of things to do, and this trip was no different - while in England, he is known to have visited *Christie's* and *Sotheby's* London auction rooms, *the Weiss Gallery*, *Edward Hurst*, *Thomas Coulborn*, *Ellison Fine Arts*, *O.F. Wilson* and *Christopher Preston*. This was followed with visits to the Parisian dealers, *Sylvain Levy-Alban*, *Seve & Flore* and *Matthieu Monluc*, *Seidel u. Sohn* in Berlin and *Polstjerman Antikvieter* and *Rehns Antikhandel* in Stockholm.

David was active and keen as ever to make a number of fine acquisitions, which ultimately included an ormolu mounted *Mirror (with swan motif)*, France, c.1810-30, and a *portrait medallion of the Emperor Caligula*, Italy, c. 1790, both now in David's main bedroom.



SIDA OPPORTUNITY

The SIDA Foundation and The David Roche Foundation Curatorial Research Fellowship in Interior Design and Decoration University of South Australia is offering a unique opportunity for a practitioner or academic to explore new fields of knowledge across the allied professions of interior design, architecture and furniture and product design. The successful Fellow will present a curated installation at The David Roche Foundation and engage in aligned public programs including lectures and exhibition essays.

Fellowship funding

Fellows will be entitled to \$15,000 to fund a pre-approved two-year program of research and creative activity.

Who can apply?

The Fellow will be appointed through a competitive application process. It is anticipated that applications will be received from both academics and practitioners.

Prospective applicants must attend an information session at The David Roche Foundation House Museum.

Applications are due at 5.00pm, Wednesday 24 June 2020.

To register or for more information email aadresearch@unisa.edu.au

SHOP

Blooms and Brushstrokes

Love flowers? Can't wait to see our *Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation.* exhibition? Well, while you're waiting for us to reopen on June 9, why not pick up a copy of this bright and colourful publication written by mother-and-daughter team Penelope Curtin and Tansy Curtin? *Blooms and Brushstrokes* takes you on a journey through the history of Australian art, one flower at a time. This fascinating tour begins in the late eighteenth century, with its early botanical illustrations, and takes us into modern times and contemporary art. This spectacular book is one for art lovers, flower lovers and history lovers.

Hardcover, 210 pages, printed 2019.

Order your copy now!

Preview the book



Only \$55

(plus postage and handling)
(or pickup at the door)

Order by phone: +61 8 8267 3677

or email: info@rochefoundation.org.au

MULTIMEDIA



New acquisition - Royal French Empire bed

[\(Video not working? Click here!\)](#)

DIGITAL COLLECTION

Did you know that many of the items in The David Roche Collection are available online? Find your favourite piece or discover something new. Click the button below.



[View the collection](#)



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LINKS WE LOVE

The Georgian Papers Programme is a fascinating database being formed by the Royal Collection Trust and King's College London "to digitise, conserve, catalogue, transcribe, interpret and disseminate 425,000 pages or 65,000 items in the Royal Archives and Royal Library relating to the Georgian period, 1714-1837". Of particular interest is the section devoted to George IV, and which includes his correspondence with foreign royalty (including the Russian Emperor Alexander I) and 38 boxes of bills relating to purchases made by him:

<https://georgianpapers.com/explore-the-collections/collections/george-iv/>

The Afghan Hound Times is an online database about the Afghan breed, of particular note for The David Roche Foundation is a page that includes an extract from an interview with David Roche first published in Afghan Hounds Australasia in 2000 about how he became a breeder of Afghans:

<http://afghanhoundtimes.com/roche.htm>



**The David Roche Foundation
House Museum**

**241 Melbourne Street
North Adelaide 5006**

T: [+61 8 8267 3677](tel:+61882673677)

E: info@rochefoundation.org.au

W: www.rochefoundation.com.au



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