

The David Roche Foundation House Museum



FLOWERS: PASSION. PAIN. NATION.
NOW OPEN
TUESDAY to SATURDAY 10AM to 4PM

TDRF: Club Fermoy #5

Dear friends and supporters,

Our doors have reopened and visitors are once again brightening up our exhibition galleries much to our delight. During closure everything was under shrouds to keep them protected, but it did make you feel a bit like a caretaker at Downton Abbey! With stage three COVID-19 restrictions due to come into effect in SA on 29 June I am hopeful that in July we can resume tours of Fermoy House. We will update our website and booking link as soon as we get confirmation.

The exhibition *Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation.* includes many significant Australian and European works of art. Among them is Joseph Highmore's *The artist's wife Susanna, son*

Anthony and daughter Susanna, c.1728, wherein his young daughter personifies Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers and spring. Highmore took particular enjoyment in painting his family as a personal record and by chance his descendants migrated to Australia with many of his works. Although not in the exhibition, the National Gallery of Victoria has a marvellous Highmore of his daughter, Susanna, as a young adult, c.1740, and following recent conservation they have released a fascinating vignette on their findings. The link can be found at the end of the newsletter and I hope you enjoy comparing the two paintings.

There really is great pleasure to be had in carefully exploring David Roche's collection as often the grand and flamboyant objects can overshadow the wealth of 'smalls' in his vitrines. Ian's Today's Treasure of Essex crystals is a case in point, and illustrates the breadth of David's interest. The From the Archives segment also has one of my favourite images of David absorbed in reading his Sotheby's catalogue on a plane – a favourite past-time!

Your continued support of TDRF is much appreciated and be sure not to miss *Flowers* or the unique merchandise created for the exhibition.

Best wishes,

Robert Reason
Museum Director

TODAY'S TREASURE

Now showcasing the favourite pieces of our fantastic guides in The David Roche Collection. This edition with Ian S., who has written on David's collection of delicate and stunning Essex crystal brooches that measure just 3cm in diameter.



Britain, *Brooch, Essex crystal Borzoi head*, c.1870, quartz, gold, enamel

Britain, *Brooch, Essex crystal pug*, c.1870, quartz, gold, enamel



Britain, Brooch, Essex crystal terrier, c.1870, quartz, gold, enamel



Our Favourite Pieces

There are nine documented Essex crystals in The David Roche Collection, of which the three outstanding pieces are in the Drawing Room. These are displayed in the small delightful showcase, originally used to display African Violets, that Mr. Roche repurposed for his miniatures.

Each Essex Crystal takes the form of a brooch and the subject of each is the head of a dog: a borzoi, a pug, and a terrier. Each is intricately carved on the flat back of a cabochon (domed) natural clear quartz crystal.

This truly amazing art form shows each dog realistically painted in minute detail. The deeper the carving, the more pronounced the three-dimensional trompe l'oeil effect. All three brooches display this and are of the highest quality. The trompe l'oeil technique was invented by Emile Pradier in Belgium and developed in England by Thomas Cook in the early 1860s, proving very popular through to the 1920s.

The other six Essex Crystals in the collection take the form of stick pins and are displayed in Mr. Roche's bedroom alongside his other stick pins.

The name Essex Crystal is actually a misnomer owing to the erroneous assumption that they were decorated by the enamel portrait painter William Essex circa 1860s. However, the name Essex Crystal stuck and is used extensively by the Antique Trade (as it sounds more exotic than 'reversed intaglio crystal').

One has to beware of imitations generally of poorer quality being made in pressed painted glass.

- Ian S. 2020

[View in the online collection](#)



CANINE TIDBITS

Did you know...

In 1974, in consultation with his great friend Thelma Gray, David Roche imported a German Shepherd Dog from the UK, whose name was Ausscot Beau Geste, more affectionately known as Bee Gee. David had decided to add to his household a dog that would not only be a companion and house dog, but also an extra level of security after an intruder once attempted to break into his home. Upon meeting Bee Gee for the first time at the Quarantine station (then located on Torrens Island), David commented to his staff that Bee Gee was the biggest German Shepherd he had ever seen.

At the end of the quarantine period, David brought Bee Gee home to Fermoy House. He was delighted to find a dog of exceptional character, guarding when necessary, but displaying superb temperament. They bonded over long walks to the Adelaide Botanic Park in both the morning and evening regardless of the weather. David walked Bee Gee off lead and they could often be seen in the park: in the rain, a tall man in a peaked cap and

raincoat with a big dog carrying a large branch in his mouth. At the end of the day, Bee Gee slept close to David, his bed being 'across the bedroom door'.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

In this edition of From the Archives, we have taken a snippet of a 2018 interview with our late Museum Director, Martyn Cook, who shared his memories of David's collecting habits:

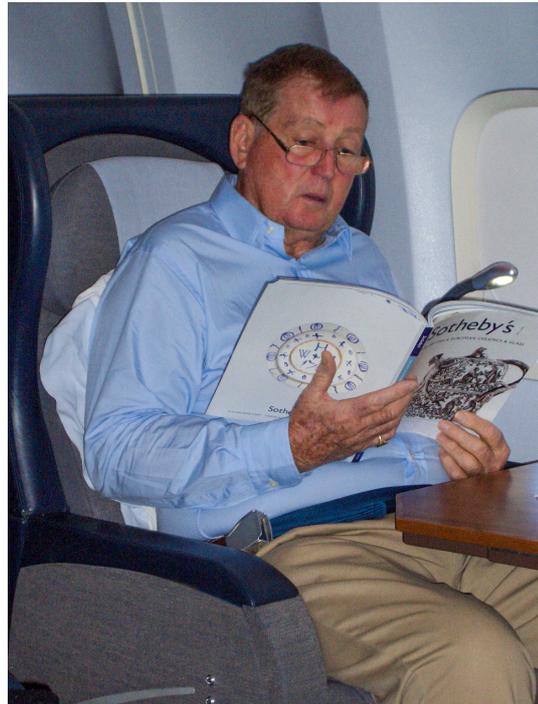
I am always asked how David collected. When it came to acquiring works, David had a number of sources. In the early days, he would often refer back to telegrams that he had received from overseas from his sister, who lived in England and Italy, as well as from various dealers he had met along the way. Of course, there were also the catalogues that would arrive from Christie's or Sotheby's or Bonhams or any of the various other auction houses. On many occasions, David would receive the Antiques Trade Gazette, and he enjoyed going through every catalogue, every page from all of the auction houses around the world.

Sometimes, he would find things while travelling around during trips abroad. In terms of going to the UK, every trip was planned around the Chelsea Flower Show and Wimbledon, where David's sister would organise tickets for him. In amongst that, David would navigate beautifully to go to dealers that he knew of in the countryside. So I would drive constantly around the UK and indeed Europe with and for David Roche in order to buy things. David bought from a lot of country dealers, and he liked to trade items, he often had a suitcase of items he would take to the UK or elsewhere to trade.

Many things upset him about auctions in the sense that he was at the tyranny of distance: the fact that your phone line would drop out, or your fax hadn't gone through correctly, or when you registered for a phone bid and they didn't call you. So he was very pleased when

the internet came into common use in the art collecting field: David was able to look online in his office in Adelaide at various auction houses that used to send him enormous amounts of documents. As I said, the tyranny of distance was something that had annoyed him because often physical items - like the Trade Gazette and catalogues would turn up late - by which time the sale was already over. So when it came to having catalogues online it was a lot easier for David to acquire items.

Whenever seeking to acquire an item, David always did copious amounts of research. He would read every single catalogue that appeared front to back and he'd mark each page with red marker, or he would dog-ear pages to refer back to. Prior to any trip, David would send to me Big Dave's Shopping List (the list of items he wanted), and it was tremendous to receive it from him. It was often the case that David would call me in my apartment in Sydney where I lived, and I was always up and down most nights and needless to say my partner at the time found it very annoying that David rang my phone almost constantly!



SHOP

Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation. merchandise



As part of the season of *Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation.*, we have produced a series of

charming souvenir items for purchase at our shop, including a floral pen inspired by the *Comte de Salvandy service* by Sèvres Porcelain, a mousepad featuring Chelsea Porcelain's ever popular *Music Lesson*, and cards of floral still life paintings by Theude Grönland and Germain Ribot.

PRICES

Flower Pen: \$2.50

Music Lesson mouse pad: \$12

Grönland greetings card: \$5

Ribot postcard: \$2

AND for this newsletter only...

Flowers pack (Flower pen, Grönland greetings card & Ribot postcard): \$8

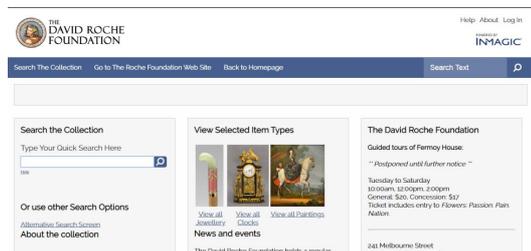
Order by phone: +61 8 8267 3677

E-mail: info@rochefoundation.org.au

or visit our Shop Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 4pm

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 Search button below.



We have been hard at work on the collection database over the last few weeks, and have added another 33 items to the online database in that time, including a striking chinoiserie *Milk jug and cover* decorated with dragons by the Worcester Porcelain Factory, a glorious yellow and gilt Meissen *Sugar box* with finely painted coastal scenes, and a series of playful Staffordshire Pottery Children's ABC plates from the 19th century.

[View the new additions](#)

[Search the collection](#)



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We are on Facebook and Instagram! We provide regular content through our social media channels. Follow us now to keep in the loop!



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Instagram

LINKS WE LOVE

This article by Carl Villis of the National Gallery of Victoria is a fascinating piece about a portrait by Joseph Highmore (1692-1780) of his daughter Susanna, c.1740, examining the development and evolution of the work, made possible by a recent x-ray examination. The article is particularly pertinent for TDRF as we currently have another painting by Highmore, *The artist's wife Susanna, son Anthony and daughter Susanna*, on display in our *Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation.* exhibition:

<https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/susanna-highmore-by-joseph-highmore-a-fathers-perspective/>

The Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery's bi-annual National Works on Paper (NWOP) acquisitive prize is on again, and is seeking entries! NWOP supports and promotes contemporary Australian artists working on or with paper. With a long and rich history, NWOP attracts leading artists from across Australia working in the fields of drawing, printmaking, digital prints and paper sculpture. It is open to entrants Australia-wide, so if you or someone you know might be interested, go to:

<https://mprg.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Exhibitions/National-Works-on-Paper>

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