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EPSTEIN
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SICKERT

MAY 14 - JUNE 14, 1954

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL ART GALLERY

Foreword

The Trustees of the Queensland National Art Gallery are pleased to present this exhibition of paintings by Walter Richard Sickert and bronzes by Sir Jacob Epstein.

Sickert's reputation as the finest and most important English painter since Turner gains steadily and Epstein is widely acclaimed as the greatest living sculptor.

It is the first time that an exhibition of the collected works of either Sickert or Epstein, from National Galleries and private collections in Australia, has been held.

Unfortunately it was not possible for the National Gallery of Victoria to lend from their collection paintings and bronzes purchased through the Felton Bequest, otherwise the exhibition would be richer by some ten works.

This is, as it stands, an important exhibition and one that may not be seen again in Brisbane.

The Trustees wish to thank Miss Lillian Browse and Dr. Ursula Hoff for having written appreciations for the catalogue, and to express their indebtedness to lenders, both public and private, who, by their generosity, have made this exhibition possible.

ROBERT HAINES



SICKERT 1860-1942

WALTER SICKERT was born in 1860, and it seems more than likely that posterity will acclaim him the finest painter that England has produced for just on a century. During his long life he was witness to the great revolutionary changes which, parallel with contemporary thought and ways of life, the course of art had undergone; and although he was by no means unaware of them, and indeed absorbed as much as were suited to his particular temperament, he never actually belonged to any *avant garde* movement. Sickert's all-absorbing interest was in good painting; he was not prepared to sacrifice this objective to any other aesthetic problems, and for this reason it is the traditional line of the Old Masters that he takes and holds his place. If his work has ever appeared shocking it is on account of his preference for what is commonly known as the sordid side of life rather than for any violent theoretical experimentation or innovation in the art of picture making.

His background comprises a curious mixture. His father was Danish, his mother English of part Irish descent, and he, himself, was born in Munich. Of the two men who had the greatest influence on his work, Whistler was born an American, and Degas, of course, was a Frenchman. Yet, as we know only too well from many classic examples, it matters less where a painter is born than where he spends his formative and impressionable years, so that just as Whistler's art gives no evidence of the country of his birth, so Sickert—who incidentally came to England at the early age of eight—became the child of the land of his adoption. The river mists, the cloudy skies and the heavy atmosphere of London made a profound and everlasting impression upon Whistler, and he inculcated his young pupil with an appreciation for the beauty of the lower tones of the palette and the exact and sensitive degrees with which values may be handled. These foundations, laid for him by Whistler, persisted throughout Sickert's life, so that even when he used colours in his shadows out of deference to the Impressionists, and lightened his palette through the influence of his Van Gogh inspired friends of the Camden Town Group, he never ceased to regard his pigment as a medium which should be lovingly and respectfully handled. Another very English aspect of Sickert's work is its "good man-

ners" and its gentleness, traits which separate him from certain Munich painters of his time with whom he shows quite a strong affinity. For Sickert had the English characteristics of humour and modesty, and his painting, for all its seriousness of purpose, is never pretentious or exhibitionist.

In stature he may most nearly be compared with Vuillard, who was his junior by eight years. Both belong to the "initmiste" school of painting, the late 19th and early 20th century equivalent of Dutch painting of the Vermeer and de Hooch circle. But whereas the Frenchman was attracted by the tasteful salons of the wealthy Parisian bourgeois, and the excellently spread tables of a humbler strata of society, Sickert was inevitably drawn to the dismal, drab interiors of London's near-slum areas. Vuillard loved the charming surface designs of wallpapers and textiles, the use of which in lesser hands may deteriorate into merely decorative painting; Sickert found no delight in decoration of any kind. Vuillard, in later years, had occasional lapses into commonplaceness of vision; Sickert's errors were never those of conception but are generally to be found when he attempted to work on a scale beyond his range. But Sickert's love for the theatre is a characteristic which has no parallel in Vuillard. Beginning with his own early and brief experience on the stage, and subsequently encouraged by Degas' similar predilection, Sickert, throughout his long life, painted pictures inspired by the theatre and its actors, of whose number he remained ever one at heart.

Sickert's contribution to English Art is bifold. He is its greatest "democratic" painter, one who, like Millet and Daumier devoted his attention to the "underdog"; but unlike the former, his milieu was the city, and unlike the latter, he had no political dogma to preach. He has also established a school of painting which is more in evidence now than immediately after his death. His way of seeing things, his choice of subject, and his beautiful handling of colour and pigment are the heritage which he has handed on to a younger generation of artists who, ignoring the Expressionist and Abstract ideals generally favoured today are seeking a contemporary form of expression through the language of this very fine artist.

LILLIAN BROWSE

CATALOGUE

SICKERT PAINTINGS

1. *Florence Pash*

Oil on canvas 18 x 15 ins.
Unsigned
Painted circa 1885
Formerly in the collection of Major F. Lessore (Sickert's brother in law)

Private Collection, Brisbane

This is one of the first paintings exhibited by Sickert on his return to London after his meeting with Degas. The portrait is of Florence Pash, who later became Mrs. Holland and was painted when she had a stye on her eye

2. *Gatti's Hungerford Palace of Varieties, Second Turn of Katie Lawrence*

Oil on canvas 32½ x 38 ins.
Unsigned
Painted circa 1888
Reproduced 'Sickert' edited by Lillian Browse
Formerly in the collection of Mrs. J. B. Priestly
Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

3. *Flower Sellers, Dieppe*

Oil on canvas 18½ x 21½ ins.
Signed
Painted circa 1895-1900
Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

4. *Nocturne: The Dogana and Santa Maria Della Salute, Venice*

Oil on canvas 18 x 24 ins.
Signed
Painted 1896
Formerly in the possession of Lt. Col. the Hon. John Fremantle
Lent by J. R. McGregor, Esq., Sydney

There are several similar pictures and all are almost identical in composition with the Guardi in the National Gallery, London. Painted during Sickert's first visit to Venice

5. *La Guiseppina*

Oil on canvas 20 x 16 ins.
Signed
Painted circa 1903
Formerly in the possession of Dr. Robert Emmons
Lent by R. E. Smith, Esq., Sydney

La, Guiseppina was a favourite Venetian model of Sickert's and he painted her many times

6. *Nude in a Mirror, Venice*

Oil on canvas 20 x 16 ins.
Signed
Painted circa 1903
Formerly in the collection of Colonel R. C. Pritchard

Private Collection, Brisbane

The model is La Guiseppina and the room is a top-floor studio which Sickert had at 940, Calle dei Frati

ILLUSTRATED

7. *Landscape near Dieppe*

Oil on canvas 13 x 16 ins.
Signed
Date unknown
Lent by J. R. McGregor, Esq., Sydney

8. *Maison Sadolet, Dieppe*

Oil on canvas 24 x 20 ins.
Signed
Date unknown
Private Collection, Brisbane

9. *Camden Town Bedroom*

Oil on canvas 15 x 12 ins.
Unsigned
Painted circa 1913
Formerly in the collection of Major F. Lessore
Private Collection, Brisbane

The picture belongs to the Camden Town series of Sickert's paintings and the models are "Hubby" a childhood friend of Sickert's who had fallen on bad times; and Sickert's servant, Marie Hayes.

10. *Landsdowne Crescent, Bath*

Oil on canvas 23¼ x 25 ins.
Signed
Painted circa 1917-1918
Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

11. *Whistler's Studio*

Oil on canvas 36 x 26 ins.
Signed
Painted circa 1919
Formerly in the collection of Sir Keith Murdoch.
Queensland National Art Gallery

Presented by Lady Murdoch in memory of her husband the late Sir Keith Murdoch
The picture was painted at No. 8 Fitzroy Street which had at one time been Whistler's. It is described by Osbert Sitwell in his preface to "A Free House", the writings of W. R. Sickert, Edited by Osbert Sitwell

12. *The Hanging Partridge*

Oil on canvas 24 x 12 ins.
Signed
Painted circa 1920
Formerly in the collection of Major F. Lessore
Private Collection, Brisbane

A similar painting but of different dimensions was in the possession of Dr. Robert Emmons

SICKERT DRAWINGS

13. *Girl Seated*

Lent by the National Gallery of South Australia

14. *Portrait, Venice*

Private Collection, Brisbane

15. *Jack Ashore*

Queensland National Art Gallery
Purchased 1954

16. *Dieppe Street*

Queensland National Art Gallery
Lucy Carrington Wertheim Gift, 1951

17. *Dieppe* (squared for a painting)

Private Collection, Brisbane

18. *Woman Seated on a Bed*

Private Collection, Brisbane

19. *Young Lady Sketching*

Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales
Presented by the Sickert Trust 1949

SICKERT ETCHINGS

20. *Noctes Ambrosianae*

Lent by the National Gallery of South Australia

21. *A Wicked Piece*

Queensland National Art Gallery
Purchased 1953

22. *Old Mr. Heffel of Rowton's*

Queensland National Art Gallery
Purchased 1953

23. *The Happy Valley*

Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

24. *The Barnacle Woman*

Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

25. *The Iron Bedstead*

Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

26. *Au Rocher de Concale*

Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

27. *Cicely Hay*

Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

27. *Wellington House*

Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

EPSTEIN BRONZES

1. *Meum*

Head of Meum Lindsell-Stewart
Bronze, 1917
Lent by the National Gallery of New South Wales

2. *Eve Deverich*

Head and shoulders
Bronze, 1924
Lent by Mrs. H. Elliott, Melbourne

3. *Esther*

Bust
Bronze, 1930
Exhibited Epstein Exhibition, Tate Gallery, London, 1952
Reproduced "The Sculptor Speaks", Haskell
Private Collection, Brisbane

4. *La Belle Juive*

Bust of Betty Joel; earring, necklace and medallion
Bronze, 1930
Reproduced "The Art of Jacob Epstein", Robert Black
Lent by the National Gallery of South Australia

5. *Lydia*

Head
Bronze, 1933
Lent by Mrs. F. Nesbitt, Sydney

6. *Nianda*

Head
Bronze, 1935
Lent by J. R. McGregor, Esq., Sydney

7. *Esther, the Sculptor's Daughter*

Bust
Bronze, 1949
Exhibited Epstein Exhibition, Tate Gallery, London, 1952
Queensland National Art Gallery
(Purchased, 1953)

ILLUSTRATED

Measurements are not given as the works are life size



EPSTEIN Born 1880

SIR JACOB EPSTEIN is one of the great figures in 20th century sculpture. Born of Polish-Jewish parents in New York's East Side he underwent an academic training in Paris and discovered for himself both the art of Rodin and of Egypt and early Greece in the Louvre. In 1905 he chose London as his place of permanent residence and here developed the two distinct styles to which he has adhered with singular consistency throughout his life. Large-scale architectural stone sculptures, stylized and monumental, alternate with realistic bronze portraits in his work. His bronzes always retain the character of his eminently skilful clay models; their textured surfaces emphasise the play of light and shade; they give vibrating sense of life to his heads and convey to the spectator the creative excitement of the artist at work.

In his autobiography Epstein frequently refers to his portrait busts in connection with paintings. He is proud to note that a particular bronze can hold its own with portraits by Rembrandt and Franz Hals. His characterisation of Rembrandt's portraits reads like a description of his own work ". . . people look out of his canvases, human beings whose trade and businesses you cannot tell; but they have deep human thoughts . . . he seems to penetrate into their inner selves, and reveal their very souls; in children their lively joy, and in grown-ups the burden of living, their sorrow and disappointments."

Epstein's genius received immediate recognition in certain English circles. Yet con-

troversy was to be his life-long companion. He received several notable commissions for architectural sculptures, but each of them drew bitter demonstrations of public hostility. His bronze busts may be said to form a Portrait Gallery of eminent 20th century personalities; Joseph Conrad, George Bernard Shaw, Rabindranath Tagore, Albert Einstein, Sir Winston Churchill, Vaughan Williams are but a few of those who sat for him. Yet hardly any sitter was pleased with the result. "The story of my portraits," Epstein has written "is for the most part a story of failure to please the sitters and their relatives." He never received a teaching appointment nor does he exercise a notable influence on English sculpture. Yet his work is well represented in the great galleries of the world and lately, in his 73rd year he has received a knighthood.

The reason for Epstein's curious isolation in the contemporary scene would seem to lie in the fact that he stands outside the mainstream of 20th century art trends. Despite his generous defence of Brancusi's Golden Bird in a New York Customs dispute he never had any sympathy with cubism and abstraction. His emphatic humanism, his passionate concern with men as individuals and with the expression of emotion set him apart in an age devoted to an ideal of austere impersonality. As time passes, however, we begin to reach a truer understanding of Epstein's avowed aim to carry on the great tradition of sculpture "as it exists since time immemorial."

URSULA HOFF

Two illustrated lectures will be given by the Director at the National Gallery on :

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19th, AT 8 P.M.

"JACOB EPSTEIN"

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26th, AT 8 P.M.

"WALTER RICHARD SICKERT"

The following books are recommended :

THE LIFE AND OPINIONS OF WALTER RICHARD SICKERT

by Robert Emmons

(Faber & Faber Ltd.) London, 1941

A FREE HOUSE! THE WRITINGS OF WALTER RICHARD SICKERT

Edited by Osbert Sitwell

(Macmillan & Co.) London, 1947

SICKERT

Edited by Lillian Browse

(Faber & Faber Ltd.) London, 1943

MODERN ENGLISH PAINTERS, SICKERT TO SMITH

by John Rothenstein, Director of the Tate Gallery

(Eyre & Spottiswoode) London, 1952

EPSTEIN

by Bernad Van Dieren

(John Lane) London, 1920

LET THERE BE SCULPTURE

by Jacob Epstein (autobiography)

(Michael Joseph) London, 1940

THE SCULPTOR SPEAKS

by Arnold Haskell

(Heinemann) London, 1931

JACOB EPSTEIN

by L. B. POWELL

(Chapman & Hall) London, 1932

THE ART OF JACOB EPSTEIN

by Robert Black

(The World Publishing Co.) New York, 1942

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