

## **Private Passions for Public Pleasure: Collectors and their Collections**

6 February - 6 June 2010

### **Orleans House Gallery**

The forthcoming Orleans House Gallery exhibition *Private Passions for Public Pleasure* presents the Richmond Borough Art Collection, cared for by the gallery, in a new light by examining the relationship between the individuals and their private collections, which were subsequently gifted or bequeathed to the public.

The Richmond Borough Art Collection, which now comprises over 2,700 works of art and objects spanning the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, was formed in 1963 with the Ionides Bequest of 467 local topographical views and portraits, bequeathed by the Rt. Hon. Mrs Nellie Ionides (1883-1962). Not only did Mrs Ionides leave the Orleans House Gallery buildings and site to the borough, alongside her important collection of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century local views by the likes of British artists William Marlow and Samuel Scott, she was a respected collector and connoisseur of oriental porcelain, enamel boxes and a variety of antiques and musical instruments. Mrs Ionides frequented numerous auction houses, and scoured art, antique and junk shops far and wide, including the Brighton Lanes (her country seat was Buxted Park in East Sussex) for the elusive bargain.

The exhibition brings together key works from the Ionides Collection, complemented by a number of loans from private collections, including fine examples of Meissen and oriental porcelain, furniture and charming 18<sup>th</sup> century Dutch and English conversation pieces. Loans include portrait miniatures from the Garrick Club and paintings of poodles Ionides bequeathed to the Kennel Club in London.

Other women collectors represented are Princess Blanche and Marguerite, daughter of the Duc de Nemour, the second eldest son of Louis Philippe, Duc D'Orleans (later King of the French), a former resident of what was later named Orleans House. The princesses left a number of items to Gumley House Convent and School, including personal effects, paintings and family photographs of the exiled French Royal family. These were donated by the Isleworth-based school to the Borough Art Collection in 2007.

Other collectors represented are the 19<sup>th</sup> century explorer Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890), who is buried in a mausoleum in Mortlake styled as an Arab tent. After his death, his wife Isabel, was the first (of many) to keep the memory of this remarkable man alive. The exhibition features

gifts from his many travels and diplomatic postings, personal effects, photographs and paintings including Borgo Cassatti's portrait of Burton in the guise of 'Haji Abdullah' (Burton was one of the first Europeans to visit Mecca).

To complement the Burton Collection, the exhibition displays the results of The *Explorers* project - with artwork and poetic responses to the collection by young people as part of the MLA London's Young Cultural Creators programme. As with many of the Orleans House Gallery exhibitions, representation by the numerous regular art groups is integral to the exhibition. Young people attending the After School Art Club and 10:15 groups present a *Young Collectors* display.

More recent Borough Art collectors include Leslie Paton (1919-1992) and the late Raymond Gill (1912-2008), both Barnes and Mortlake collectors and founders of the Barnes and Mortlake History Society. Close friends, they between them amassed hundred of prints, paintings, photographs and important ephemera including posters, which are invaluable additions to social history, as well as art and local history. The exhibition publically displays for the first time three large scale watercolours bequeathed by Raymond Gill in 2009.

Another first is the public unveiling of the Grogan Gift, a donation of significant 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century works to the collection, the highlight being the stunning intricately detailed masterpiece by Pre-Raphaelite painter Arthur Hughes' *Mother and Child in the Garden*.

The year 2010 also marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *In Focus* display. This regular changing display of works from the collection has proved popular with visitors and some 500 works have been displayed since it was launched. To complement Private *Passions for Public Pleasure*, the first display showcases *A Cabinet of Curiosities* from the collection.

Orleans House Gallery, Riverside, Twickenham, TW1 3DJ

Gallery open:

Tuesday - Saturday 1.00-4.30pm, Sunday 2.00-4.30pm

Gallery closes at 5.30 pm from 1 April 2010

Free admission

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