



The Morgan Thomas Bequest Centenary Exhibition

27 May – 27 July, 2003

In 1903, wealthy Adelaide surgeon, Dr Morgan Thomas bequeathed £65,000 to be divided between South Australia's Art Gallery, Library and Museum. His generous gift a century ago has enabled the Art Gallery of South Australia to purchase more than a thousand decorative art objects and paintings, and has helped create one of Australia's great public art collections.

The Morgan Thomas Bequest Centenary Exhibition, curated by **Robert Reason**, Associate Curator of Australian and European Decorative Arts will, for the first time, bring together more than 90 important decorative art objects and paintings from Australia, Europe and Asia acquired through the fund since the first purchases in 1904.

One of the fund's most significant contributions was to provide the means to establish and develop a substantial decorative arts collection including Asian art and other objects. The Gallery's first purchases of European and Asian ceramics were made with this Bequest. Today, the Art Gallery of South Australia's collection of European and Australian decorative arts is one of the finest in the country.

Highlights from the Decorative Arts and Asian collection that will appear in the exhibition include:

A rare collection of Islamic gouache miniatures
Wedgwood, *Swan Vase*, 1875-76
Le dynasty, *Fish plate* c. 1500 Vietnam
Morris & Co., *The Adoration of the Magi*, 1900-02

Some of the Gallery's most popular paintings have been purchased through the Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund:

John Glover, *The Artist's House and Garden*, 1835
Arthur Streeton, *Australia Felix*, 1907
E. Phillips Fox, *Al fresco*, c.1904
Bonifazio Veronese, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, late 1520s

To further mark the centenary of the bequest, the Art Gallery of South Australia will put the remaining balance of the fund towards the purchase of one last major

work of art: a rare watercolour drawing by William Morris. The drawing is the design for the wallpaper *Wreath* c.1876 and will be a key work in the Gallery's William Morris collection which is now the largest outside Britain. It will be the only original William Morris watercolour drawing in Australia. It is fitting that the supplementary amount of money required to purchase the Morris drawing will be raised through an Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation launch dinner, to be held in the exhibition.

For more than a hundred years, the Art Gallery of South Australia has enjoyed generous private patronage. Nearly ninety percent of the Gallery's collection comprises gifts of art, or purchases made with private money, making it the highest proportion of private benefaction of any state or federal art museum in Australia.

***The Morgan Thomas Bequest Centenary Exhibition* will honour the man behind one of the Art Gallery of South Australia's most important legacies and highlight the invaluable contribution of private benefactors to South Australia's public art collection.**

A number of special events has been scheduled to complement the exhibition, including lunchtime talks by the Gallery's Curators and free guided tours by the Gallery's most generous living benefactor (and Gallery Guide) Mr Max Carter. Entry to the exhibition is by gold coin donation.

CHAMPAGNE BREAKFAST MEDIA LAUNCH & PREVIEW
Tuesday 27 May 9.30 – 11am

The Morgan Thomas Bequest Centenary Exhibition

May 27 – July 27, 2003

Art Gallery of South Australia.

North Terrace Adelaide South Australia. Open daily 10am-5pm.

www.artgallery.sa.gov.au

For more information contact:

Miranda Starke - Public Relations Manager - 08 8207 7032 or 0409 919 510

starke.miranda@saugov.sa.gov.au