

ADFAS Mudgee Inc

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Newsletter

No. 11 February 2017

Dear ADFAS Mudgee Members and Friends

A very warm start to 2017 and I am sure you all have been moving hoses early in the mornings, cleaning up after the amazing 5 minute storm and relaxing in the afternoons under the fan reading a Christmas book.

We are very much looking forward to our 2017 programme, with lectures being given by world-class presenters. You will have received our 2017 brochure. We are excited about the variety of topics ranging from Palaces, Nomadic Tribes, Couture, Mayan Architecture, Renaissance Gardens, Art and Literature. The committee anticipate a very exciting and successful year.

As the new chairman one of my goals is to continue to increase the membership of ADFAS Mudgee and to promote the fellowship and social interaction at our lectures. I call on all current members, to encourage friends and acquaintances to become members, or to attend lectures that maybe of interest as a guest. Increased membership will enable us to further support Young Arts.

The result of a donation to Art for Youth Project at Dunedoo enabled art teachers to attend Dunedoo (where there is no art teacher) for a full day's workshop. ADFAS Mudgee has donated money to Art for Youth for two years now, and we are thrilled with the feedback we have received. We have in fact shown one of their works on the front page of our 2017 brochure.

ADFAS Mudgee committee look forward to seeing you and your friends at as many as possible of our exciting presentations in 2017.

Penny Mowat, Chairman

The Editor of this newsletter travelled through Europe from mid August until early November 2016 for pleasure and for research on a number of lecture topics. Following are two artistic experiences which I would like to share with my fellow ADFAS Mudgee members: a visit to the Picasso Museum in Paris, and the tragic story of a painting by Renoir, 'Little Irene'.

Picasso Museum, Paris

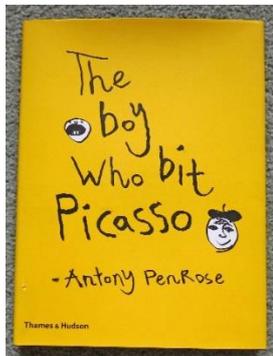
The Picasso Museum in Paris is located in the Hôtel Salé, a substantial C17th mansion in the Rue Thorigny in the Marais district. The museum holds some 5,000 pieces of the work of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), plus thousands of documents and some 150 pieces by other well-known artists from Picasso's personal collection.



When Picasso died in 1973 he left a very valuable estate worth billions, because he lived into his nineties and was such a prolific painter. He had kept a lot of his own paintings, and also acquired a lot of valuable paintings by other artists such as Matisse, Cezanne, Degas, Seurat etc. However, his family life was complex, with wives, mistresses, and children, both legitimate and illegitimate. Consequently, after his demise there was a huge conflict amongst his heirs. Because he lived and worked most of his life in

France, the French government also wanted its share of the spoils.

My personal interest in Picasso arose a few years ago, when the Hôtel Salé was closed for a major refit, allowing the contents to come to Australia for an exhibition at the Sydney Art Gallery. It was fantastic, and I wasn't a big Picasso fan until then. Soon after I hosted English NADFAS lecturer, Tony Penrose, who came to Mudgee to give a lecture on his mother, famous model and photographer, Lee Miller. Before WWII Lee Miller had been a mistress of Picasso, but she and her second husband, Sir Roland Penrose, remained good friends with Picasso and they frequently visited one another. Tony looked upon Picasso as an honorary uncle and Picasso even made toys for him which he still has; Tony owns a portrait by Picasso of his mother. He also wrote a book about his friendship with Picasso, and I was fortunate to get the author to sign my personal copy.



After Picasso's death Tony's father, who was a biographer of Picasso as well as a major patron of the Surrealists and a painter himself, helped sort out the Picasso collection (paintings and sculptures) to see who got what. The government's share eventually went towards the collection in the Hôtel Salé, which was later augmented by paintings from the estate of Picasso's widow, Jacqueline, by donations and by purchases.

Retaining a few of its original features, the Hôtel Salé was renovated and adapted by the early 1980s to receive the Picasso collection.



Unfortunately, on the day of my visit the ground and first floors were closed for the installation of an exhibition, and only the second and third (attic) floors were open.

Over several decades Picasso's work underwent enormous changes in style and content. I was interested to see one of his early works, a nude, done when he was only twenty in 1901, and very much an Impressionist piece, and also a self portrait done in the same year.



I also liked his later colourful works, such as 'Portrait de Marie Therese' (1937) and a much later abstract landscape, 'La Baie de Cannes'.





Picasso also worked in other media: metal and clay sculptures, and also did some painted pottery, such as this still life platter:



Despite the limited display on this occasion, the collection was still worthwhile seeing, especially housed in such a stunning building, even though it has been for the most part gutted to provide large spaces, accommodate lifts and disabled access.

'Little Irene'



This famous painting by Auguste Renoir, commonly called 'Little Irene', was commissioned in 1880 by the sitter's parents, Count Louis and Countess Louise Cahen d'Anvers, wealthy Jewish bankers. Louise was the mistress of Charles Ephrussi, the man who gave the famous netsuke collection to a cousin which was the subject of Edmund de Waal's book *Hare with Amber Eyes*. Aged eight when painted, Irene never liked the portrait, nor did her parents. They begrudgingly paid a very late and low fee to Renoir, who subsequently fell out with the Cahen d'Anvers

and became decidedly anti-Jewish. Renoir was also unhappy to discover that the portrait and an equally charming one which he painted of Irene's two younger sisters were eventually hung in the servants' wing of the family's Paris mansion; the latter portrait is now in a museum in Sao Paolo in Brazil.



The painting of Irene subsequently had a chequered history, while the gilded life of the subject of the portrait was shrouded in tragedy. At the age of 20 Irene underwent an arranged marriage with an older man, wealthy Jewish banker Count Moïse (Moses) de Camondo, which was doomed to failure.



Despite the birth of a son, Nissim and a daughter, Beatrice, Irene left her husband for another man, Count Sampieri, who eventually became her second husband, and by whom she had a daughter. The separation and divorce were scandalous for the times.

Towards the end of her marriage to Moïse, her parents bought the magnificent 18th century chateau of Champs-sur-Marne, south-east of Paris, which they restored. In the 1930s it was gifted to the French state

which purchased the contents. It is now open to the public and is well worth a visit.



Moïse never remarried and in 1913 he completed a magnificent townhouse in the exclusive Rue de Monceau in Paris to house his collection of C18th furniture and art.



He and Irene were devastated when their son, Nissim, was killed in aerial combat in 1917. Subsequently, Moïse determined to leave his house and contents to the French nation as a memorial to Nissim. After his death in 1935, the Nissim de Camondo Museum was opened the next year. Well worth a visit!



The Renoir painting was given to Irene by her parents when she married Moïse, but after the divorce it went back to her parents. After the death of Irene's mother in 1925 the painting was given to Beatrice, the daughter of Irene and Moïse, who had married Leon Reinach, a member of a prominent French Jewish family and, coincidentally, a great-nephew of Charles Ephrussi. The painting remained in her Paris apartment until the German invasion of France in 1940, when it was seized and ended up in the collection of Hitler's deputy, Herman Goering, a great connoisseur of French art.

Sadly, Beatrice, Leon and their two children, Fanny and Bertrand were interned in 1942 and ultimately dispatched to Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. None of them survived; Irene's sister Elisabeth also died in Auschwitz. Irene, who had converted to Catholicism, survived, living discretely in Paris under the name Sampieri.

The painting was located in Germany at the end of the war and brought back for an exhibition of looted Nazi art in Paris in 1946, when Irene reclaimed the painting as the heir of her daughter Beatrice. Still not enamoured with the portrait, Irene sold it to Emil Bührle, a Swiss arms dealer and art collector in 1949. It remains with his family in the Bührle Foundation collection in Zurich in Switzerland, created after his death.

Irene died in 1963, aged 91. She has numerous descendants by her younger daughter, glamorous socialite Claude Sampieri, who married André Dubonnet, a dashing and legendary racing car driver and heir to the Dubonnet liquor family. A great-nephew of Irene is banker Sir Evelyn de Rothschild.

This topic is the subject of a lecture which I have compiled, and the story relates strongly to the recent film, 'The Monuments Men', starring George Clooney and Cate Blanchett.

Suggestions for newsletter items are welcome

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