



DIURNA

NEWSPAPER OF THE 25TH LATIN SUMMER SCHOOL: DIES MARTIS, JANUARIUS XV

From today until Thursday afternoon, Abbey's Bookshop will operate a bookstall near the inside fountain in the New Law Building

The first of the Nicholson Museum tours takes place today at 12.40 pm.

The lectures at 1.30 pm today are:

Robert Forgács

“Ballets on Classical Themes and Delibes's *Sylvia*”
New Law School Annexe SR 442

John Coombs

“Adomnan, St Columba and Loch Ness Monster”
New Law School Annexe SR 444

Scansion class at 1.30 pm with Barbara Twomey for beginners: New Law School Annexe SR 440

Afternoon papers at the Marcus Antonius Workshop, CCANESA. Madsen Building

1.45: Dr Henrikus Van Wijlick (Peking University): *Between Adaptation and Integration: Mark Antony's Interstate Relations in the Triumviral Period*

2.45: Dr Eleanor Cowan (University of Sydney): *Alternative Principates: Velleius and Antony*

3.45: coffee break

4.00 Dr Bob Cowan (University of Sydney): *Dinner for Two: Reconsidering the Appetites of Antony in Varius' Thyestes*

The Special activities for school students will take place from 1.30 to 2.30 pm in the Eastern Avenue Seminar Room 115



Tabula Urbis Sancti Petri in Ruthenia, 1700-25

FROM THE EDITOR

Review of Masters of Modern Art from the Hermitage at the Art Gallery of NSW: Classical and Neoclassical Content

This outstanding exhibition of modern paintings, from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, from Claude Monet to Wassily Kandinsky, has been very generously lent to the Art Gallery of NSW by the magnificent Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. Its basis was formed by two far-sighted Russian art-collecting families at the turn of the 20th century, the Shchukins and the Morozovs. Artists of this period were not primarily inspired by classical antiquity, however, its presence is still to be detected in some of the paintings, explicitly in some, subliminally in others. The very first painting in the exhibition, by Bernard Buffet, stands outside the exhibition and its time-frame, as it was painted as recently as 1992. It is of the façade of the Winter Palace in St Petersburg, where the Hermitage collection is housed. This façade is strictly neo-classical, being characterized by symmetrical rows of classical columns and impressive porticoes. The striking green colouring of the original façade, the work of the Italian Baroque architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli, is faithfully reproduced by Buffet, but without any attempt at photographic realism. When viewing the beautiful still-life 'Fruit' by Paul Cézanne of 1879-80, it is worth remembering that some of the oldest still-life paintings in Western Art are to be found in the frescoes surviving from the Ancient Roman period, in Pompeii and elsewhere. Explicitly classical in inspiration is Pierre Bonnard's 'Early Spring, little fauns' of 1909, in which two playful fauns, one playing an aulos, the other watching him, are depicted in the foreground on the left-hand side of the work. They add a mysterious quality to an otherwise straight-forward, but lovely depiction of the countryside in early spring. Landscape backgrounds are to be found in Roman frescoes, though they are usually symbolic rather than realistic. The landscape by the little-known French artist Auguste Herbin, entitled 'Green Landscape' of c1901, has a classical serenity about it. It depicts a scene in northern France, not far from the Belgian border, and is striking for its different shades of green, yellow and mauve, as well as for its concentration on the natural environment without human figures – like a scene from the fabled Golden Age. A wonderful and colourful painting by Albert Marquet 'The Bay of Naples' of 1909 shows Mount Vesuvius in the background, and is a superb study of light, clouds and the blue sky, reflected in the rippled waters of the bay, with small sailing boats depicted in

the foreground and middle ground. The scene has a classical poise and calm. More animated are two paintings by Matisse; the first, 'A game of bowls' of 1908, although no doubt inspired by the popular modern French ball game of pétanque, shows three young boys playing the game in the nude. Only the figure on the left side has a large red cloak covering part of his lower body. The inspiration for depicting the boys in the nude is clearly classical, reminiscent of ancient sporting activities in the palaestra, and of the ancient aesthetic which regarded the male nude as the highest form of art. This work forms part of Matisse's Golden Age series. The second relevant Matisse painting is 'Nymph and Satyr' of 1908-9, which the artist originally entitled 'Faun surprising a nymph'. It is somewhat similar in colouring to the painting of the boys playing pétanque and has an admirable curvaceous quality, as the satyr lustfully bends over the sleeping nymph. Again, both figures are depicted in the nude. The painting is to some extent based on designs by the Italian Renaissance artist Correggio and the French Rococo artist Watteau. The red-hair of the nymph, though, is probably based on Matisse's pupil and sitter, Olga Merson, with whom the artist was involved at this time, so there may even be certain Freudian overtones in the subject matter chosen. Finally, Picasso's painting 'Nude Boy' of 1906, is part of a series that Picasso conceived of nude boys and horses. The boy in this painting seems to be resting his arm on a circus box. But as Albert Kostenevich, the author of the exhibition catalogue comments, this painting 'also reflects certain neoclassical tendencies that were being manifested in Picasso's art in this period. There can be no doubt that he had studied Greek Archaic sculpture in the Louvre and the boy's appearance recalls figures such as the Parian Kouros of the mid-sixth century BC. This led John Richardson to describe the boy as 'Epebos' (*Masters of Modern Art from the Hermitage*, Art Gallery of NSW, 2018, p. 150.)

Robert Forgács

Palatium Hibernum - Hermitagium

