



A New Exhibition Of Western Floral Art Examines Life Through Religion, Marriage, Death, Love And Eroticism

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A new exhibition of more than 80 works at the David Roche Foundation House Museum, *Flowers: Passion. Pain. Nation.* offers a glimpse into the vast depth of Western floral art in the last 400 years and explores the major narratives of life - religion, marriage, death, belonging, love and eroticism.

The exhibition surveys flowers through the work of Dutch still life artists, Henri Fantin-Lantour, Hans and Nora Heysen, Arthur Boyd, Australian Modernists Margaret Preston, Grace Cossington Smith, Horace Trener and Kathleen Sauerbier and contemporary artists including Michael Zavros, **Christian Thompson**, **Del Kathryn Barton**, Robyn Stacey and Ah Xian.

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Growing flowers and displaying them was a source of endless joy for David Roche, who enjoyed visiting famous gardens of the world said Robert Reason, Museum Director of The David Roche Foundation House Museum.

Flowers featured prominently on the European porcelain, furniture and paintings that David Roche acquired during his lifetime to furnish his home and in addition to these works, there are significant works lent by the Art Gallery of South Australia, Carrick Hill, The Cedars and private collections for this exhibition.

The earliest painting in this exhibition is by Italian Mannerist master, Bartolomeo Passerotti, Coronation of the Virgin, c.1580, with its profusion of roses an attribute of the Virgin Mary and her purity. Soon after the Dutch still life tradition was established, and through the work of Balthasar van der Ast and Jan van Os the exhibition explores exotic shells, tulip mania and a range of symbolic content - from warnings about temperance and vanity through to the transience of life and religious piety.

Considered the epitome of good taste and beauty at the end of the 19th century, the work of Henri Fantin-Latour found a ready market in Australia. He influenced iconic Australian painters **Tom Roberts** and Hans Heysen whose still lives are powerfully emotive of the nostalgia held for the northern hemisphere and the bias for exotic flowers in Australia.

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Robert Reason said It took Australian modernism and women artists to challenge this status quo, finding in floral still lives the opportunity to paint in a new style and voice an iconography more relevant to the nation in which they lived. Margaret Preston led the way in popularising Australian native flowers and heralded them as a way forward to a modern Australian identity. In South Australia, modernism found a foothold in the work of Ivor Hele, Horace Trenerry and Kathleen Sauerbier, whose floral still lives are included in Flowers.



The exhibition is also devoted to 'love and eroticism' and surveys work that affirms or negates the traditional associations between flowers and femininity, physical beauty and moral purity. Robert Reason said David's own collection upholds tradition with Chelsea Porcelain's 'The Music lesson', c.1760, and (attributed to) Josse-Francois-Joseph Leriche's

terracotta 'The Toilette', c.1785, whereas C. Douglas Richardson's 'Acrasia or the Enchanted Bower', 1889, from the AGSA casts Acrasia as a femme fatale whose body and perfumed bower of fleshy-coloured roses as are place of moral and physical corruption.

Contemporary Australian artists Del Kathryn Barton and Christian Thompson continue the liberation of the flower, disrupting the feminine prejudice and emphasising the diverse narrative that native flowers offer art today.

Exhibition ticket \$10 Adults, \$8 Concession, Children 12 and under free. No booking required. For talks and events see rochefoundation.com.au

House and Exhibition \$20 Adult, \$17 Concession. Bookings essential: rochefoundation.com.au

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