

MEDIA RELEASE



Frederic Leighton (British, 1830-1896), *The Cymbalist* (from *The Dance of the Cymbalists* panels), c.1869, oil on canvas, 239.0 x 145.0 x 7.0 cm

SIGNIFICANT PAINTING FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION FORMS CENTREPIECE OF 'GODS' EXHIBITION

Adelaide: The David Roche Foundation House Museum has borrowed a significant Victorian classical painting from a private collection as part of its new exhibition, *The Madness of the Gods: Love, War & Transgression*.

Robert Reason, Curator of the David Roche Collection, said *the Frederic Leighton 'The Cymbalist', c.1869, has been secured for display in Adelaide for the very first time. Life-size, the painting was commissioned by art collector, Percy Wyndham, for his London home. It illustrates Leighton's superb draughtsmanship and formed one of four panels on the theme of bacchantes, who accompanied Bacchus the Roman god of wine, music and dance. The painting complements other Bacchic images and 80 other works referencing gods and goddesses, which David Roche adored. Leighton had a highly-distinguished career in which he was associated with the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetic Movement; he was also central to the New Sculpture Movement and the Royal Academy.*

What do images of ancient gods and goddesses mean to us in the 21st century? Any number of architectural sites and museums with sculptures of gods and goddesses (like the Vatican collections) remain just as popular today, due to their timeless quality of perfection. In an age obsessed with self-image and celebrity image, to look on the perfect human figure is as captivating and powerful as at any time in history. To encounter a love struck figure is not too far from our reality. It offers an engaging entry point and as immortal as the gods were, they were human in all their glorious foibles.

The Roche collection contains a fine selection of 'Grand Tour' objects from the 18th and 19th centuries in marble and bronze of Greek and Roman gods: Zeus, Cupid, Mars, Mercury, Apollo, Bacchus and goddesses: Athena, Diana, Venus and Ceres. Also the semi-divines, whose lives (for better or worse) were inextricably linked to the gods: Hercules, Achilles, Perseus, Ariadne as well as Bacchant and Nymphs. They originally formed a significant part of decorating one's English home and reflected the owner's worldliness, standing, knowledge and appreciation of art and culture.

These works were chosen by David Roche for their visual appeal, provenance and myth. David did not collect antiquities. Martyn Cook, Museum Director of the David Roche Collection, said *David did not profess to be a Classics scholar, however he knew a god when he saw one! As Caesar in his school play at Geelong Grammar, he continued to live the role as emperor in his own domain. His house a time capsule of his favourites arranged only as it could be, by a man of the 20th and early 21st centuries.*

The title of the exhibition is derived from the writings of Plato, one of the pivotal philosophers of Classical Greece. In *Phaedrus* he wrote: 'the greatest blessings come by way of madness, indeed of madness that is heaven sent.' Plato noted four types of divine madness: from Apollo the gift of prophecy; from Dionysus, the mystic rites and relief from present hardship; from Aphrodite love, fraught with the highest bliss; and the poetic, of which the Muses are the source. The gifts of Madness allowed humans to experience the best and worst that life could offer. Such fundamental elements of human existence have changed little.

The museum houses the exceptional personal collection of David Roche, who spent his life acquiring more than 3,000 fine European paintings and decorative arts, as well as an eclectic range of other objects. It comprises David's home of 60 years and a new, state-of-the-art gallery. Since the official opening in June 2016, more than 7,000 people have visited the museum. A monthly lecture series with Australian and international speakers will run alongside this new exhibition.

DETAILS:

The Madness of the Gods: Love, War & Transgression

Open until February 2018

David Roche Foundation House Museum

241 Melbourne Street

North Adelaide

MEDIA CONTACT: For further information and to request interviews and images please contact: Susanne Briggs susanneb1@ozemail.com.au or 0412 268 320

About the David Roche Foundation, The David Roche Foundation was established in 1999 by the late Mr. David J Roche AM (1930-2013) to be the recipient and custodian of the exceptional collection of antiques, paintings and objects d'art accumulated by him over his lifetime and to be preserved for future generations to enjoy, study and learn from. The people of Australia and especially South Australia are the major beneficiary of his Estate. His wish was to convert his home *Fermoy House* on Melbourne Street, North Adelaide and build a specific-purpose Gallery on site to create an exceptional museum to house his entire collection. It was also David Roche's wish that the works, particularly those from past centuries, be presented in a manner reminiscent of how he lived and to be accessible to all, especially the people of Adelaide, his much-loved home town. *Fermoy House* remains in much the same state as when David Roche was in residence, displaying elements of his collection in the context of his lifestyle and everyday interaction with his collection. In contrast the new Gallery is the antithesis of this with pieces of the collection displayed in a stylized context, enhanced by light and space. The new gallery has been designed by Williams Burton Leopardi Architects & Interior Design, Adelaide.

About David Roche

David Roche, a collector for almost sixty years, spent his lifetime developing what has become the David Roche Collection. The collection spans the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and includes European furniture, ceramics, metal ware, clocks and paintings. The opportunity for David Roche to form such a collection came from the business acumen and success of his father, J.D.K. (Jack) Roche (1901-58). J.D.K. Roche founded the Adelaide Development Company, a property development business in 1922. He then moved to Perth where David Roche was born in 1930. David Roche's first schooling was in Perth, and later in Adelaide. He then attended Geelong Grammar School in Victoria for his secondary schooling. After school, he was sent to work on the family property in WA but the isolation convinced him he was not suited to a farming life. After a year, he went to work briefly in the family firm's Perth office before returning to work in the Adelaide office. At this time, the Adelaide Development Company was situated in Grenfell Street. Opposite was the auction firm Theodore Bruce & Co. David began to attend sales gaining experience in bidding. During the late 1940s and into the 50s, the proximity of his workplace to the auction rooms meant that he could step out of the office to make a bid. This was the beginning of a long self-education in art, particularly in the decorative arts and, above all, in furniture and ceramics. His parents Jack and Dorinda Roche also had a fine appreciation of beauty and art. David Roche continued to upgrade his collection until his death in 2013.