

NEW ACQUISITIONS



Saved for the nation

Following an eight-month campaign, the Ashmolean Museum has succeeded in raising £7.83 million to purchase Edouard Manet's *Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus*. This is the most significant acquisition in the Ashmolean's history and it ensures that this important impressionist work of art is able to stay within the United Kingdom.

The painting was purchased by a foreign buyer in 2011 for £28.35 million. However, following advice from the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, the picture was judged to be of outstanding cultural importance and was placed under a temporary export bar until 7 August 2012 by the Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey. Under the terms of a private treaty sale, the painting was made available to a British public institution for 27 per cent of its market value.

'The public's response to the campaign for the Manet has been overwhelming,' said Dr Christopher Brown, Director of the Ashmolean. 'The Museum is enormously grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, other foundations and the many individuals who contributed so generously and helped us save the Manet for the public. To have succeeded in acquiring the portrait this year, when the UK is in the international spotlight, is something of which the Museum and the entire country can be proud.'

The portrait of Mademoiselle Fanny Claus is a preparatory study for *Le Balcon*, which hangs in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Fanny Claus, a close friend of Manet's wife Suzanne Leenhoff, was a concert violinist and a member of the first all-woman string quartet. She was also one of Manet's favourite sitters and a member of a close-knit group of friends who

provided the artist with models. She married the artist Pierre Prins in 1869, but died of tuberculosis just eight years later at the age of 30. Manet's inspiration for the painting was the sight of people on a balcony, during a summer spent in Boulogne-sur-Mer with his family in 1868. It is an important example of his work from the late 1860s onwards, when he began to focus his attention on his family and close friends.

Bright old things

Housing more than 2,000 instruments belonging to the Western orchestral music tradition from the renaissance through the baroque, classical, and romantic periods and up to modern times, the Bate Collection is one of the most magnificent collections of musical instruments in the world. More than 1,000 instruments, by all the most important makers and from pre-eminent collectors, are on display to the visitor. During the year one of the most exciting acquisitions was the gift of the Double-B-flat bass Sousaphone by Conn. This instrument was donated by Mrs Mari Pritchard and had previously seen use by Humphrey Carpenter of the 1930's jazz group 'Vile Bodies'. The instrument came complete with case and accessories and has already been put on permanent display; it is representative of the popular American band instruments of the period and is still in use with US high-school bands and amateur rodeo bands.

Spender's archive

The Stephen Spender archive, which includes a lifetime's work of manuscripts and personal papers, has recently been given to the Bodleian Library. Spender (1909–95) is particularly associated with the 1930s. He gained early fame and continues to be known as a lyric poet and member of the group of Oxford poets and writers nicknamed 'McSpaunday' (Spender, Louis Macneice, W H Auden and Cecil Day-Lewis) and for his close friendship with Christopher Isherwood. However, he is more than a 1930s figure. He went on to edit the journals *Horizon* and *Encounter* and, in a writing and teaching career that spanned the twentieth century, founded the campaigning group *Index on Censorship* (1972) and wrote other important works such as his autobiography, *World Within World* (1951), his novel *The Temple* (1988) and numerous works of literary criticism.

The collection includes letters from a host of 20th-century literary figures, including John Betjeman, Christopher Isherwood, E M Forster, Patrick Leigh Fermor, Iris Murdoch, Vita and Harold Nicholson, Edith Sitwell, Stephen Tennant and Joseph Brodsky; approximately 236 literary notebooks of poetry, fiction, drama and prose; and detailed personal journals recounting his busy social and working life. The papers were received in the Bodleian from the Spender family under the Acceptance in Lieu scheme and are complemented by the Library's important collection of modern literary papers, including the papers of Cecil Day-Lewis and Louis Macneice.

Picture: *Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus, 1868, by Edouard Manet*



NEW ACQUISITIONS (*continued*)**Botanic Garden**

‘The acquisition of the year has to be *Castilleja integra* or Indian paintbrush,’ said Timothy Walker, Director of the Botanic Garden, ‘the reason being that this North American species is hemiparasitic, which means that although it has green leaves and can photosynthesise, thus making its own carbohydrates for energy, it parasitises the roots of plants living around it. In a normal garden border it is difficult to provide the correct community of plants into which this species fits, and so it has always been regarded as ungrowable.’

Following a transformational donation from the Finnis Scott Foundation, the Botanic Garden has been able to sow a double border containing complete plant communities from South Africa, the Mediterranean and North America. This technique for creating such displays has been developed by Professor James Hitchmough at Sheffield University and was showcased in the Olympic Park this summer. This plant is not only a taker from other plants. It too is exploited by another species – the marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*) – which sequesters iridoids from the plant. The iridoids are molecules that are then used to synthesise the toxins that dissuade predators from eating the butterfly. The marsh fritillary butterfly is declining in the UK and is the subject of a national conservation project. ‘So maybe our plants might help them, as well as looking beautiful and being very useful in teaching biology undergraduates – which is after all why we have a Botanic Garden,’ explained Timothy Walker.

Elizabethan sundial comes to light

In April, the presentation of an Elizabethan sundial by a generous donor marked the most significant permanent addition to the collection of the Museum of the History of Science for many years. The elaborately decorated pocket sundial was crafted in 1585 by England’s first commercial scientific instrument maker and engraver, Augustine Ryther (c.1550–93). The sundial was owned by Sir George St Paul, a magistrate and also a generous benefactor of the Bodleian Library. The dial is inscribed with St Paul’s name and coat of arms, and was found by a farm labourer in the grounds of his father’s house in Glentworth, Lincolnshire where it had been mislaid hundreds of years earlier. This is only the third instrument by Ryther to come to light and it is the earliest. ‘The Elizabethans introduced commercial instrument-making for science into England, so these early instruments are very important but exceedingly rare,’ explained Professor Jim Bennett, Director of the Museum. ‘It is wonderful to be able to add one – as a gift – to the display at the museum. We already have the world’s best collection of early instruments and making a prominent addition is exceptional – a bit like an Olympic gold medal.’



Oxford University Museum of the History of Science

Pictures: (top left) *Castilleja integra* (or Indian paintbrush) at the Botanic Garden; (above) 16th-century pocket sundial by Augustine Ryther which was recently given to the Museum of the History of Science

NEW ACQUISITIONS (*continued*)

Oxford University - Natural History Museum

The Sid and Pearl Freeman mineral collection

More than 30 years ago, amateur collectors Sid and Pearl Freeman invited staff from the Museum of Natural History to view their growing collection of minerals, and expressed their wish that one day the collection should come to the Museum. In October 2011, when Pearl was no longer able to care for her collection, her family invited curatorial staff to come and make a selection of the specimens.

Minerals are nature's chemicals and make up the rocks of the Earth. They are important as raw materials for industry, but they can also form exquisite crystals, becoming natural works of art. Pearl and Sid Freeman were connoisseurs, seeking out the most beautiful and interesting examples by purchase and exchange. Their specimens were obtained from all around the world, many from mines and quarries that are now closed for political or economic reasons.

The Museum selected more than 1,000 specimens which will form a superb resource both for scientific research and for public display. 'We are very grateful to Pearl and her family for their generous gift to the Museum,' explained Monica Price, Assistant Curator, Mineral Collections. 'It forms one of the largest and most important acquisitions of minerals by the Museum for many years and complements the University's fine historic collections.'

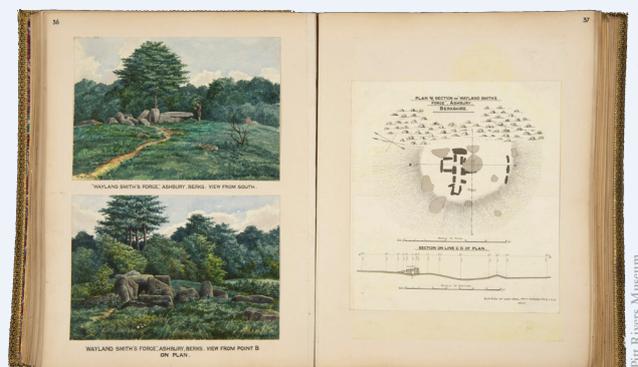
Rethinking Pitt Rivers

Of the many interesting acquisitions received by the Museum during the year, probably the donation of greatest note was a collection of albums, correspondence, notebooks, papers, and photographs given by Anthony Pitt-Rivers, the great grandson of General Pitt-Rivers whose gift of 20,000 objects to the University in 1884 constitutes the founding collection of the museum that bears his name.

The collection comprises a number of highly important documents relating to General Pitt-Rivers's life and work as a collector and archaeologist, and also as the first Inspector of

Ancient Monuments. Included in the gift are 16 notebooks, dating back to the 1840s, containing extracts from the young Pitt-Rivers's reading as well as what appears to be the first catalogue of his collection of weapons, dating to 1862 – 12 years earlier than any other known list. The collection also contains correspondence and papers relating to his work as the first Inspector of Ancient Monuments, including an important album entitled 'Our Ancient Monuments', comprising site plans and original watercolour paintings of many of the sites the General visited during his Inspectorate. Anthony Pitt-Rivers's generous gift was inspired by the Museum's 'Rethinking Pitt-Rivers' research project which was funded by a grant from the Leverhulme Trust (2009–12), and has in turn inspired 'Excavating Pitt-Rivers', a new collections-based project at the Museum, funded by a grant from Arts Council England's Designation Development Fund.

The materials are not yet fully catalogued, but it is already clear that they comprise an immensely rich resource for students of nineteenth-century anthropology, archaeology and collecting.



Pitt Rivers Museum

Pictures: (top) Minerals from the Sid and Pearl Freeman collection; (above) Watercolour by W S Tomkin from an album donated to the Pitt Rivers Museum