

**The Clark Collection/Creative NZ Scholarship for New Zealand
Decorative Arts/Built Heritage Sector Professionals
Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa
Wednesday, 1 March 2006**

1. Introduction

In 1952, a meeting took place in Washington DC between one of the heads of the V&A and Mrs Robert Bliss, a leading figure in America's arts and society. Mrs Bliss said:

"What a pity that Americans, working in museums, universities and architectural schools, did not have some sort of organised course and tour planned to introduce them to the great English houses of architectural importance and their gardens and great collections of pictures, furniture, porcelain and silver."

This encounter resulted in the birth of the Attingham Trust and its Summer School.

50 years later, a group of New Zealand art and heritage leaders, some of whom are here tonight, asked the question, "how can we enhance the skills of senior professionals working within decorative arts and heritage within New Zealand?" This discussion led to the establishment of The Clark Collection/Creative NZ Scholarship in 2002.

2. Why the Scholarship?

- * Decorative arts and built heritage are now receiving increased attention from many New Zealand art sector institutions.
- * They have often been treated as poor cousins of the sometimes more glamorous performing and fine arts.
- * While there is now strong public interest in furniture, ceramics, glass, metalwork and textiles, the development of professional skills to advance knowledge and sector best practice, and undertake research and scholarship has lagged behind.
- * This Scholarship is one initiative to address this.

The Scholarship enables a mid-career professional from the decorative arts/built heritage sectors to undertake a tailored study/workshop program in the United Kingdom. There are two components:

- i) participation in the three-week Attingham Trust Summer School;
the core part of the Scholarship;
- ii) 4 internships at English Heritage, National Trust, The V&A and The Royal Collection to provide exposure to their collections, work programs, operating management techniques and best practice;

3. The UK Study Program

The Attingham Trust

The Attingham Trust has become one of the world's most special art institutions. Its trustees/patrons are some of the most distinguished art sector leaders (eg Sir Hugh Roberts, Charles Saumarez Smith) and owners of the great houses such as Duke of Buccleuch and Duchess of Devonshire. They are passionately committed to its success.

The Trust offers 3 specialised, by invitation only, study courses, primarily for heritage/decorative arts professionals, on English country houses, their collections and settings, and on the history and contents of English royal palaces. It is regarded as the leading study opportunity of its type anywhere in the world.

English country houses were not merely large houses in the country in which rich people lived. Essentially they were Power Houses – the houses of a ruling class. They were the equivalent of today's corporate headquarters, family estate, community hall, and CIVIC centre all rolled into one. Nothing comparable anywhere in the world.

The Attingham Summer School

Based each year at three different centres in England, the programme lasts 3 weeks. It is intensive, with up to 14 visiting/teaching hours per day. Weekends don't exist. It offers the chance to study around thirty country houses, on specially arranged visits, accompanied by specialist tutors. Seminars and lectures set the country house in a broader artistic and social context.

One of the principles of the School is to study the country house as a totality. This means that every aspect is considered: (gardens, furniture and ceramics, textiles and paintings), including contemporary problems of display, conservation and interpretation.

By the end of 2006, NZ will have seven Attingham Trust alumni, most holding key positions in the arts and heritage sectors.

The Four Specialist Study Internships

Four leading heritage and arts organisations in the United Kingdom host the New Zealand Scholar for short periods before and after the Summer School. These internships provide exposure to specialist personnel and operating practices in key functional areas, with a particular focus on best practice. The program is tailored to the needs and interests of the Scholar and the recipient's employer.

English Heritage and National Trust

English Heritage is the UK Government agency (under DCMS) responsible for protecting and promoting the historic environment in England. 400 historic properties including Stonehenge. The Scholar undertakes an applied research project at one of its newly-redisplayed historic properties.

The National Trust is a national charitable organisation committed to preserving England's priceless and unique heritage and historical environment. (It owns over 500 miles of coastline, 550,000 acres of countryside and a larger number of important heritage buildings and country houses and their collections). The National Trust provides a one week internship focusing on conservation and curatorial issues.

Victoria and Albert Museum

The Victoria and Albert Museum (“V&A”) is the world’s largest and most influential museum of applied and decorative arts. [It houses superb collections of ceramics, metalwork, glass, jewellery, furniture, sculpture, textiles, paintings, drawings and prints. [The V&A offers the Scholar a period of internship to study specialist areas and functional skills such as exhibition planning and management, conservation and restoration of decorative arts and “best-practice” management disciplines.]

4. The Royal Collection

HM the Queen’s “collection of collections” of fine and decorative arts assembled by the Royal Family from the late middle ages to the present day.

[The Royal Collection is essentially a “collection of collections” and is the last great European dynastic collection still to survive in Royal ownership. It includes one of the world’s great picture collections and has infinitely more numerous splendours of decorative arts – Sevres porcelain, French furniture, Faberge plate, jewellery and armour, books, manuscripts and photographs.

Over time these collections have been assimilated, layer upon layer, by succeeding generations of the Royal family to coalesce with other Royal possessions. Masterpieces mingling with “rubbish”. In this respect, The Royal Collection is wholly unlike a museum collection.

The Royal Collection remains, above all else, a testament to the personal collecting quirks and inquisitive instincts, or lack of them, of the Royal family of England from the late Middle Ages to the present day.]

The Clark Collection Scholar works alongside the staff to examine and contribute to projects under action.

THANKS

I would like to thank Te Papa for hosting tonight's function and acknowledge the support of Creative New Zealand (Eliz. Caldwell), The NZ-UK Link Foundation, Museums Aotearoa, particularly its highly effective Chief Executive Phillipa Tocker, for providing the Secretariat, and my fellow Trustees, Seddon Bennington, Anthony Wright, Bill Tramosche, CEO, HPT and Jane Legget for their support.

WHO IS THE 2006 SCHOLAR?

It is with great pleasure I announce that the 2006 scholar is Robyn Notman from Dunedin Public Art Gallery. We are fortunate in having Robyn and DPAG Director, Priscilla Pitts with us.

Robyn has been with the DPAG for 15 years, currently in the role of Visitor Programmes Co-ordinator.

In addition, she has a strong track record of curating exhibitions and publishing articles. She will be an excellent ambassador for New Zealand.

Errol Clark – 1-3-06