

Janet Laurence— The Palm at the End of the Mind

As an exhibition *The Palm at the End of the Mind* is an experience *par excellence*.

The multifaceted installations created by Janet Laurence within Fairhall, presents The Johnston Collection (TJC) through the perspective of the artist and brings a new dimension to the interior of this grand home.

Janet Laurence is well-known for her artistic prowess and adventurous spirit. Her exploration and use of mixed media and seminal installation works afford her a place as one of Australia's finest talents and in *The Palm at the End of the Mind* Laurence brings an original and contemporary focus to the outstanding period furniture and *objets* that define TJC.

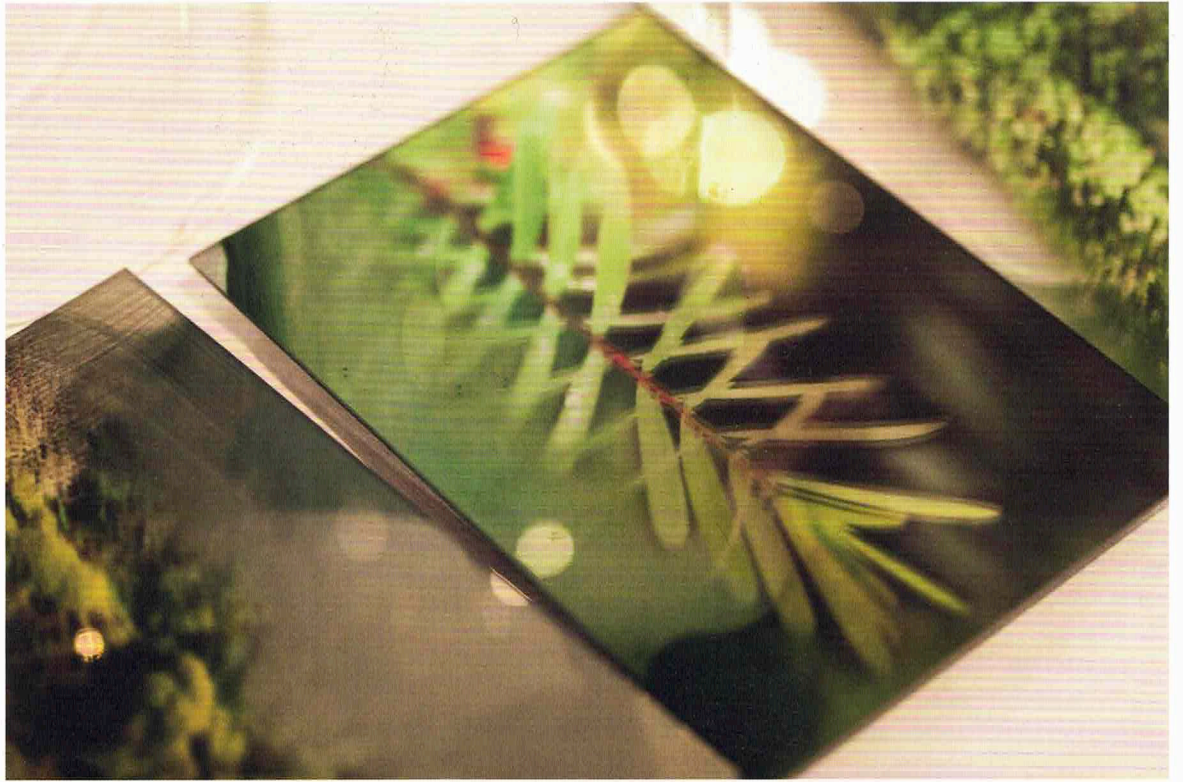
The collection was established by William Robert Johnston, a prominent 20th century Melbourne antiques dealer, collector and property investor. His passion for beautiful objects began at the age of eight when he received a Minton teacup (circa 1815) from his grandmother. From small beginnings Johnston's collection grew to an astounding 1400 pieces, including English Georgian and Regency and Louis XV furniture, paintings, ceramics and *objets d'art*, and today the collection is regarded as one of the best of its kind in Australasia.

Upon Johnston's death, provision was left for Fairhall, his Melbourne home and the collections to become a showcase for all to see and, after suitable renovation, the house was opened to the public in November 1990 as a gallery. One of the interesting aspects of this curated home/gallery is the instruction left by Johnston that the atmosphere of Fairhall was to remain as a home, not as a typical gallery and, to this end, there are no museum labels or item texts to be found.

TJC is a hidden treasure tucked away in leafy East Melbourne, although exhibitions such as *The Palm at the End of the Mind* bring a wider audience to Fairhall. Director and passionate curator of TJC, Louis Le Vaillant has instigated a revitalisation of the gallery through a program of events that includes lectures, tours and collaborations with artists.

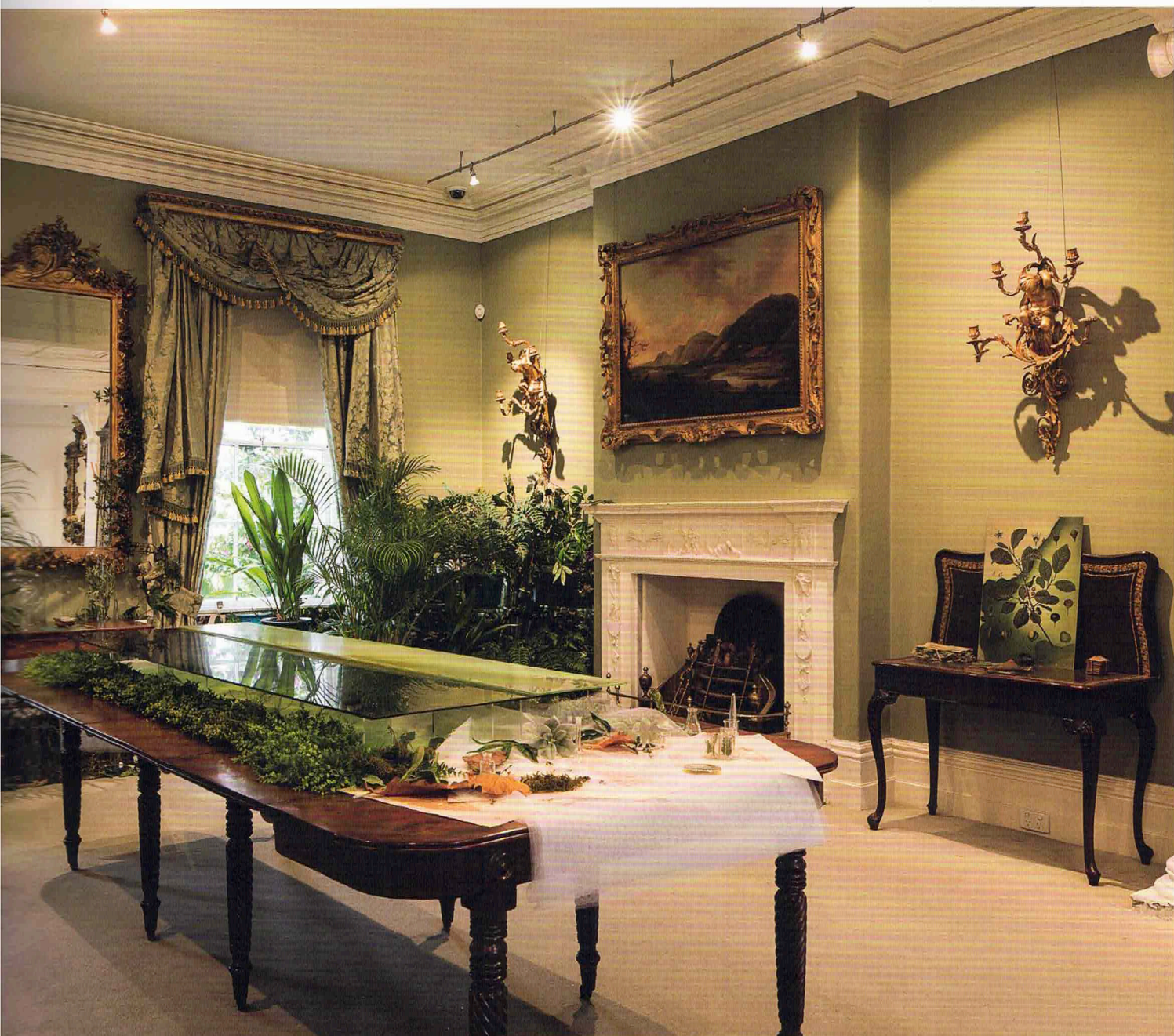


text—Jan Henderson
photography—Luts Photography





above—The quilt in the Yellow Bedroom sprang from a collection of dried ginkgo leaves.
left—beautiful images of flowers and leaves have been placed in unexpected places adding richness to the visual experience.



an eclectic mix of speakers and interesting occasions
 program, Le Vaillant is providing the opportunity to
 and complement the idea and history of Fairhall.
 Laurence to contribute her vision was a
 stroke, as each room has been infused with the
 imagination and the interior has been brought to
 a fresh and sometimes unexpected way. New sits
 and within the old and there is texture and layering
 the inimitable style of Laurence. The artist's hand is
 subtle and overt, depending on the situation and
 findings; however, every vignette is a pure delight.
 she brought many of her personal *objets* to TJC
 these are interspersed throughout the exhibition.
 bringing additional meaning and depth to the in-house
 collection, but also convey an intimate message
 the artist.
 nature and landscape are integral to Laurence's work
 ere also important to Johnston and so these themes
 een woven into the fabric of the installations, but
 st dominant in the room that adjoins the charming
 garden on ground level. Laurence has populated the
 with lush greenery; plants and foliage are placed

beside heavily ornate consoles, aged paintings and period
 chairs, and an immense table in the middle of the room
 features a plethora of various leaves seemingly randomly
 arranged but, of course, intricately placed for visual effect.
 Upstairs in the Yellow Bedroom, through the simple
 addition of dried ginkgo leaves scattered on the bed cover,
 Laurence has created a scene of great beauty that stirs the
 imagination. The scene is captured in a small cheval mirror
 that then reflects the vision back into the room. The display
 is perfect, so simple but oh so beautiful.
 The title of the exhibition is from a poem by the US poet
 Wallace Stevens. Laurence admits that writers of art and
 landscape have had a profound impact on her over time and
 so with *The Palm at the End of the Mind* the idea was to
 provoke and evoke thinking about 'disappearing' especially
 in relation to nature and the current Anthropocene epoch.
The Palm at the End of the Mind is an exquisite
 exhibition and food for the soul for anyone who appreciates
 beautiful *objets* and perfect curation underpinned with
 history and thought.
 Janet Laurence is represented by ARC ONE Gallery,
 Melbourne. johnstoncollection.org

above—Overview of the
 Garden Room at Fairhall
 that Laurence has curated
 as a celebration of
 landscape and *objet*