

Building bridges

Kerriane Stone

When I embarked on the Harold Wright and Sarah and William Holmes scholarships in 2015, I felt eagerness and trepidation in equal measure. I had spent the years leading up to the scholarships working with the Baillieu Library Print Collection, where I was guided by the gold-standard catalogues raisonnés, reference books and exhibitions produced by the British Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings throughout its distinguished history. Now I was about to enter this rarefied realm of museological tradition and excellence on the opposite side of the globe!

An initial hurdle for the scholarship recipient is securing accommodation in bustling, populous and expensive London. I found a place in the converted kitchen of a family home. So the months of the scholarship were a very special and rather surreal time in my life: living in a kitchen, catching a double-decker bus to the museum every day to study the extraordinary collection held on the fourth floor of the great institution.

The scholarship holder sits at a ledge on the balcony overlooking the study room. This arrangement provides a bird's eye view of the daily activities, such as members of the public viewing works of art, tertiary classes, and of course curators and cataloguers working diligently on various projects. Another benefit is the opportunity for learning and discovery that go beyond the printed page. I felt part of the British Museum community, attending lectures, floor talks, and events such as exhibition previews. During my time there the major exhibition *Drawing in silver and gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns* was staged near the study room. I saw these moving drawings first-hand and learned about the unfamiliar technique of metalpoint. Indeed, I encountered many new artists, techniques and collectors, some—like Harold Wright—with connections to Australia.

I was familiar with Wright, as I had been working with prints that his widow donated to the Baillieu Library.

Research on Wright had also been published by earlier scholarship recipients, including David Maskill and Kim Clayton-Greene. Not long before I completed my time in London, Hugo Chapman, the Simon Sainsbury Keeper of prints and drawings, mentioned that 2019 would mark the 50th anniversary of the scholarships. It immediately occurred to me that this was an opportunity to recognise and strengthen the friendship between the British Museum and the University of Melbourne, and to bring together scholarship recipients through their research achievements. When I returned to Melbourne, I was determined to follow up on this idea. Anniversary activities in Melbourne will include an exhibition in the Noel Shaw Gallery, publication of a book of essays by selected scholarship recipients, and a symposium.

While at the British Museum I had witnessed another important event: the announcement of the new director, Dr Hartwig Fischer. While our anniversary planning discussions were in train, in 2018 Dr Fischer visited Australia to open a British Museum travelling exhibition; on his way to the airport he visited the university, and viewed the prints proposed for the forthcoming anniversary exhibition. This encounter exemplified to me another power of the scholarships: to build bridges between individuals and institutions.

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Dr Hartwig Fischer, director of the British Museum, viewing prints in the Baillieu Library Print Collection, University of Melbourne, in 2018. Photograph by Kerriane Stone.