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The Humphrey John Talbot collection in Cape Town
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Annals of the South African Cultural History Museum is a series of publications featuring primary research related to the Museum and its collections. Parts of the series are issued at irregular intervals, as the research becomes available. *The Humphrey John Talbot collection in Cape Town* (volume 5, number 2, in this series) by Dr Magda Olivier has just been published.

Humphrey John Talbot (1883-1943) was a wealthy member of the British aristocracy. He never married and spent a great deal of his time collecting art and antiques. Shortly before his death, he bequeathed a large part of his collection to the South African Museum in Cape Town. As he never visited South Africa and had no ties with the country, this decision is shrouded in mystery. After his death, approximately 534 items were shipped to Cape Town. The author divides the collection into nine categories, namely art, furniture, clocks, bird models, toys, textiles, wallpaper, dairies and miscellaneous (comprising a bronze fountain, silver and ceramics).

As an accomplished museologist, Olivier has made an extensive study of furniture, both locally and abroad. The research culminated in her doctoral thesis about Cape storage furniture. She is the ideal person to evaluate the importance of Talbot's bequest. Unlike previous researchers, who merely described certain items in the collection, she approaches it in its entirety. The publication must not be seen as an attempt to identify all the objects. That is left to future researchers. Olivier tries to establish the collection's intrinsic value within the museum-milieu.

Despite Talbot's stipulations about the future of his possessions, they became victims of the realities of the museum world. When the South African Museum received them, a cultural-historical museum did not exist in Cape Town. The South African Cultural History Museum (SACHM) was established in 1966 and only then could the collection be considered for exhibition. For years it also had to deal with a lack of storage and exhibition space. At present the artworks are on display in the South African National Gallery and St George's Cathedral in Cape Town. The greater part of the collection has been restored and is either in storage or has been used to furnish Bertram House, a satellite museum of the SACHM. Through the years the value of the pieces have been diminished by repeated restoration. Although containing material of variable quality, it cannot be disputed that the collection is of great importance to the SACHM. Most of the pieces would have been out of the financial reach of the Museum, and it still offers much material for future research, as the author points out.

Although being confronted with a vast amount of material, Olivier has succeeded in presenting the essential facts in a nutshell. At the same time *The Humphrey John Talbot Collection in Cape Town* is fascinating reading. The terminology used to identify some of the objects, such as "Hepplewhite style" (p. 16), "crewel work" (p. 24) and "maiolica jars" (p. 29), may not be familiar to all readers. A glossary would have been a welcome addition. Detailed reference notes are found at the end of the work. Eighteen black and white photographs of excellent quality compliment the text, which has obviously been edited with care.

This edition of the *Annals* can be recommended to readers with an interest in antiques of Asian or European origin, while the diaries kept by Talbot (1904-1938) might be of interest to historians. The greatest value of this publication, however, is that it gives insight into the problems of museum management and the disparities which arise between a donor's ideas and a museum's policy. In this regard it will be of great value to future students of museology. All issues of the *Annals of the South African Cultural History Museum* contain research of high standing quality. The series has already established itself as a valuable source for future researchers and is an affordable investment.

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