

# Presenting *The Great Masters by Mortimer Menpes*

25 July – 7 October 2002, National Library of Australia

**T**he *Great Masters by Mortimer Menpes*, a major exhibition at the National Library of Australia, brings to life the fascinating reproductions of Europe's 'Great Masters' painted by the flamboyant Australian-born painter, Mortimer Menpes.

Born in 1855, Mortimer Menpes moved to London with his family in 1875 and completed his art training in 1880 — the year he met James McNeill Whistler. He first gained substantial recognition as a student and follower of the man he called 'The Master' and later became one of the most popular and widely exhibited artists of his generation.

Menpes was a prodigious traveller and raconteur, an innovative and entrepreneurial print maker and print publisher, a biographer, crack-shot, wrestler, prize fowl-raiser and lover of all things Japanese.

In 1911 Menpes donated thirty-eight copies of the 'Great Masters' to Australia as a 'thank offering to his native land'. He understood that most Australians would never have the opportunity of travelling to Europe to see the original works. Like many of his contemporaries he believed that real culture only existed in Europe.

The Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Gallery in London, the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg are among the international galleries where the original 'Great Masters' are held.

Apart from a tour to four New South Wales country towns in 1945, this is the first time Menpes *Mona Lisa* and copies of works by Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Bellini, Van Dyck, Rubens, Reynolds and Velasquez will be seen in Australia. They will be on display at the National Library of Australia in Canberra until Monday 7 October 2002.

The exhibition features all thirty eight of his 'Great



Mortimer Luddington Menpes (1855–1938) *Chapeau de paille* (between 1900 and 1909). Shellac on oil on cardboard, after Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) Prussian *Le Chapeau de paille* 1622–1625 oil on oak. Original in the National Gallery London

Masters' copies, now housed at the National Library of Australia, along with many travel books, some of them written by his younger daughter, Dorothy, and delightfully illustrated by Menpes. ■

## Tasmania's eHeritage Project (TeH)

**A**DLiB Information Systems of Australia, are pleased to announce involvement in Tasmania's eHeritage project. The Brisbane-based ADLiB team, in conjunction with the State Library of Tasmania, are set to install software and provide training to twenty-nine Tasmanian historical and cultural institutions. The State Library will provide hardware.

This project is an initiative of the State Library of Tasmania with funding from 'Networking the Nation'. The project aims to secure the future of Tasmania's vulnerable cultural history and documentary heritage, by accelerating the use of technology and innovation within the local history and heritage community.

Twenty-nine institutions that best fitted the selection criteria were chosen from over fifty applicants. The successful societies and institutions are found in remote, rural and regional areas across the whole of the state and the major offshore islands. Between them they cover the whole gamut of historical and cultural life across Tasmanian communities.

The eHeritage project will provide networked support from the State Library and its partner cultural institutions to help organisations in managing collections, creating digital content, communicating online, and to gain economic benefits and efficiencies in their activities. This will develop a networked catalogue of significant documentary heritage materials held in local collections, as well as helping to maximise cultural tourism opportunities and expand market awareness of the cultural heritage of local communities through online promotion of their collections, services and activities. ■