

### CHAPTER 3.

In 1900 the Society of Artists started a students' Travelling Scholarship. G.W. Lambert was the first winner. He was then twenty-six and did not return to Australia again for twenty-one years. For some reason the scholarship lapsed for some time and was re-started in 1923. Roy de Mestre won that year. He was one of the few rare people who was aware of modern developments in Europe.

The next opportunity to enter for the scholarship was in 1925. Tom Hubble and I both tried for it, but Arthur Murch won, and most deservedly so. He showed his versatility by entering with sculpture and painting. From now on he was fated to be regarded by some painters as a sculptor and by sculptors as a painter. He is of course an artist working in two mediums.

Murch took pride in informing anyone interested that he had served an apprenticeship in Engineering, and was a fully-fledged fitter. He attended art classes in the evening. When Arthur decided to work for the travelling scholarship his firm gave him leave of absence for three days a week.

Nevertheless my parents decided to send me to Paris to continue my studies. I was eighteen, and I am still amazed at their decision. At the time it all seemed natural enough. Julian arranged a meeting between Murch and me in his office. He discovered that we had both booked on the Hobsons Bay, of the now defunct Commonwealth Line, and then found ourselves in the same cabin.

I had lived in the illusory world of romantic Bohemia ; Norman Lindsay's little book, "A Curate in Bohemia" had been an article of faith. Arthur Murch was like a horribly cold

shower, he introduced me to the world of current realities.

I had always felt akin to the aristocracy — were they not the professional clients and protectors of the artist? Now along comes Arthur from Ashfield and sweeps aside all my little shrines. He was the born iconoclast and wonder of wonders he owned and rode a motor bike. I didn't even know where Ashfield was.

His family background was strictly Methodist ; mine was Anglican, a little high of centre. Arthur's father was a builder and both he and Mrs. Murch were part of the earth's salt, solid wonderful people as I came to realise.

As their fledgling grew up they discovered that Arthur's wings had strange looking feathers, that he was bound for a stranger world than they were accustomed to. Arthur was, and still is, too much of an individualist to give way to anything unless it coincides with his own carefully considered opinions. He did agree with the Methodist Church that smoking and drinking were bad, and resolutely refused to indulge.

Our first port of call was Hobart. The seas were abominable, the Hobson Bay did everything but stand on its head. I was appallingly sick. So ended in vomit my introduction to Art and Bohemia in Sydney in the twenties.

I was venturing into the unknown, fortunately with a very pragmatic friend. This journey was to be the start of a lifetime friendship for Arthur and me. We went ashore in Melbourne and Adelaide, Freemantle and Perth. When the Australian coast slipped below the horizon I felt sad and ill at ease. Would I see Sydney again? The old town would never be the same. Despite the presence of George V on the throne, the Edwardian era had lingered on at home. By the mid-twenties, its life was flickering out.