

Lina Bryans, *Portrait of Tristan Buesst*

Pictures Collection H89.207

Acquired 1983

Tristan Noël Marchand Buesst (1894–1982) was one of a dedicated group of collectors and historians who joined forces, in 1966, to form the Friends of the La Trobe Library, a support group for the new wing of the then State Library of Victoria. The La Trobe Library, opened in 1965, was built to commemorate the courage and enterprise of the state's pioneers¹ and to act as the state's principal repository for Australiana.

Tristan Buesst acted as provisional president of the Friends, its first meeting held on 29 November 1966 at his apartment in South Yarra.² He was duly elected president and held the position until April 1972.

Born into a cultured and affluent Melbourne family, Tristan Buesst was educated at the University of Melbourne before enlisting in the British Army in 1916 and serving on the Western Front.³ After the war, he continued his studies in law at New College, Oxford. On his return to Melbourne, he completed his LLB and was admitted to the Supreme Court of Victoria in 1925 as a barrister and solicitor. In 1933, he married Marie Mackinnon, niece of artist Rupert Bunny.

In addition to Buesst's donation of many paintings to the Library's Pictures Collection over the years,⁴ the Tristan Buesst Fund, established in 1971 for the acquisition of historical pictures, has made possible numerous important purchases for years to come.⁵

A serious book collector, Buesst presented his collection of about 300 foreign-language Australiana volumes, mainly works published in the late 18th and 19th centuries, to the State Library in 1974. Its value lies principally in its being a 'highly select collection providing a valuable insight into the publishing history of Australiana outside the English-speaking world', and it is equally significant 'for the many translations of English works into foreign languages'.⁶ Distinguished historian Wallace Kirsop has noted it 'as one of the most important gifts to the Library in the twentieth century'.⁷

Tristan Buesst's portrait, commissioned by him in 1960 from artist Lina Bryans,⁸ is a fine work in her distinctively bold style of this generous patron of the arts, her good friend of many years. Given Buesst's role in the founding of the Friends of the La Trobe Library, it was most appropriate that his portrait was acquired for the Library by its successor, the Friends of State Library Victoria.



Lina Bryans, *Portrait of Tristan Buesst, Esquire*, 1960, oil painting on board.
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