



Top: Unknown photographer, Albert Dubucand before his departure for Australia, albumen silver photograph, 1890. Pictures Collection, H2001.60/58

Above: Unknown photographer, Albert Dubucand's studio in Swanston Street, Melbourne, albumen silver photograph, c. 1890–91, H2001.60/2

# Albert Dubucand album

Pictures Collection H2001.60/1-72

Acquired 1999

This late 19th-century keepsake album documents the journey of Frenchman Albert Dubucand from Paris to Melbourne and on to America during 1890–92. The placement of photographs and press clippings conveys an image of him as a young, successful sculptor bringing French art to a new market in the colony. The album was purchased from a collector in London with funds provided by the State Library Foundation.

Born in Paris, Albert was the son and pupil of the *animalier* sculptor Alfred Dubucand (1828–94).<sup>1</sup> Albert carried on his father's work after his father's retirement, exhibiting animal sculptures at the Paris Salon from 1883 until 1890.<sup>2</sup> He left Paris for Australia on 1 October 1890, on the steamship *Yarra*,<sup>3</sup> after posing for photographs with friends at a farewell studio party,<sup>4</sup> and arrived in Melbourne on 2 November.

In February 1891, Albert advertised classes in modelling from wax and clay in his newly opened studio in the Buxton's Building, Swanston Street. On exhibition was a fine collection of art bronzes, 'cast from his own models'.<sup>5</sup> However, a photograph in the album showing his studio has at its centrepiece his father's *Homme au chameau* (Camel rider).<sup>6</sup>

During his time in Melbourne, Dubucand charmed the press and engaged in French cultural life, playing the hautboy at celebrations of the Fête Nationale for the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille. He attended a performance by the French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who herself was a talented sculptor in bronze.<sup>7</sup>

The press reported that Albert gained important commissions for his work.<sup>8</sup> The Trustees of the Library, National Gallery and Museum 'purchased one of M. Dubucand's finest pieces for £100'.<sup>9</sup> On 7 April 1891, in an opportunity considered 'unique of its kind in the Colony',<sup>10</sup> Dubucand advertised for auction (with no reserve) the whole of his grand collection of more than 100 bronzes.<sup>11</sup> He then departed Sydney for San Francisco on the *Mariposa* with Sarah Bernhardt and her theatre company on 11 August 1891. He appears among Sarah Bernhardt's entourage on the passenger list, his occupation recorded as 'Theatrical'.

What became of Albert Dubucand? There is no evidence of his exhibiting bronzes after 1891, or continuing to work as a sculptor. Ships' menus in the album place him on the trans-Atlantic liner *La Gascogne* on his way back to France in January 1892.