



The History of BCG

“The Jubilee Art Train of 1951”

BCG history and Australian history crossed paths in 1951. The Brisbane Camera Group was just over one year old. The Commonwealth of Australia, proclaimed on January 1st 1901, was about to celebrate its fiftieth year. The Commonwealth Jubilee Celebrations of Federation had been initiated by the Commonwealth Government in cooperation with the various State Governments. BCG would play a part in this important celebration.

The Queensland Government’s contribution to this celebration was the Jubilee Art Train. This special train left Brisbane on March 27th 1951 for a nine months tour to bring art to regional Queensland. The prime aim was to give country people an opportunity to view samples of art which in ordinary circumstances would require a trip to Brisbane.

One of the four carriages of the train housed a children’s library and a photographic exhibition. This photographic exhibition consisted of 80 photographs, mostly portraits, by professional and amateur photographers. Earlier in 1951 BCG Secretary, Ron Close, had received a letter from the President of the Professional Photographers Association of Queensland (PPAQ), Mr. W Poulsen, inviting BCG members to submit work for the Jubilee Art Train. This offer was accepted by several members.

The Jubilee Art Train’s timetable was widely publicised. Its arrival in a town was invariably frontpage news in the local press. It was a major event for the local school children. In November, at the end of the tour taking in over 100 Queensland towns, it was reported that 111,000 people had visited the train. This is arguably the largest audience to have ever viewed a Queensland photographic exhibition that included works from BCG members. It was also reported that 24 of the 2000 books in the children’s library had been stolen but that none of the valuable paintings had been damaged. This was understandable given that the paintings were under constant police supervision. No mention was made of any damage to the photographic exhibition.



“The Fisherman”

Print by BCG member Garth Grant-Thomson

Exhibited in the Jubilee Art Train Exhibition - 1951



This shows part of the carriage that housed the children's library and the print exhibition. Some prints can be seen either side at top of frame.



From the front page of the Courier Mail on the 11th March 1951. There were 51 paintings from the Queensland Art Gallery housed in two carriages of the Jubilee Art Train. William Dobell's "The Cypriot" valued at 600 guineas was the most publicised.