

REDISCOVERING *BENEATH THE ARENA* – A MAJOR WORK BY KARL VON PILOTY AT THE BALLARAT FINE ART GALLERY

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When Karl von Piloty's large canvas painting *Beneath the Arena*, 1882, arrived in Melbourne in 1888 to be exhibited at the German Gallery of the Centennial International Exhibition, it was greeted with excitement and enthusiasm (fig. 1). Contemporary commentators praised both the technical mastery of the artist and the choice of subject matter.¹ No doubt, the depiction of a young Roman priest contemplating the martyrdom of an innocent Christian woman, with the subject's subtle undertones of unfulfilled love and personal drama, also appealed to the sentiments of the wider Victorian public. The official jury of the Centennial International Exhibition, consisting of fifteen dignitaries from France, Great Britain, Austria, New Zealand, Germany, Victoria and New South Wales, approved of Piloty's painting for another reason: it belonged to a larger body of exhibits considered to be morally uplifting and of high educational value for the young colony. Moreover, Karl Theodor von Piloty, who had died in 1886, had been the director of the Munich Academy for many years and was an internationally recognized exponent of history painting, the genre that for decades had governed artistic life at the academies of Europe.² Given Piloty's international standing at the time, and the nature of his subject matter, it does not come as a surprise that his painting was among those awarded a gold medal and a first order of merit at the 1888 exhibition.³ Despite this initial success of *Beneath the Arena*, however, the picture soon fell into oblivion both in Australia and overseas. In recent art historical literature on the Munich school of painting, the whereabouts of this important work are even listed as unknown.⁴ Thanks to the efforts of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, the painting was recently brought to light again and, after having undergone major conservation treatment, has now been made a focal point of the Ballarat Gallery's nineteenth-century Oddie Gallery.

This essay aims both at uncovering the picture's early history in Germany and at reconstructing its second life in Australia since its arrival in 1888.

In the case of *Beneath the Arena*, we are dealing with a major painting by Piloty, dating from the late phase of his creative life. The German title of the picture, *Unter der Arena*, can be secured by one of the artist's autograph letters on the question of copyright issues.⁵ This descriptive title refers to the locality of the scene, the dungeon of the Colosseum, in which the drama unfolds. In the early literature on Piloty, one occasionally finds reference to another title, 'The Martyress', which was used alternatively for the same picture. In 1887, a pencil drawing made by the artist in May 1880 (now lost) was exhibited under this second title at the Nationalgalerie, Berlin.⁶ In her biography of Piloty, dating from 1898, the artist's wife, Bertha Piloty, describes in the following manner what is obviously the painting exhibited in the Centennial International Exhibition of 1888:

In his picture 'The Martyress' we see the noble young figure of a female Christian, who has been lowered into the basement of the Colosseum after her death. Heathen priests return to the arena after having concluded their religious formalities. A young heathen priest, contemplating [the woman's] brave death, stays behind and will perhaps himself turn to Christianity.⁷

The picture is described in even more detail in the *Official Guide to the Picture Galleries*, a comprehensive catalogue which was compiled for visitors to the 1888 exhibition. John Lake, the editor of the catalogue, highlighted the significance of Piloty's picture by choosing to reprint a long passage from the *Argus Supplement* of 15 August 1888, which gave considerable attention to the exhibition's German Gallery. In this special edition of the



Fig. 1 Karl von Piloty (German, 1826–1886), *Beneath the Arena*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 250.0 x 295.0 cm. Ballarat Fine Art Gallery; gift of Major and Mrs Alan Currie and Mrs Blackwood, 1932.



Fig. 2 *Beneath the Arena*. Detail of Christian martyr.

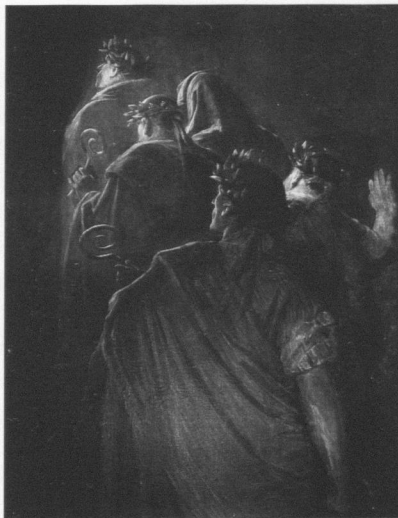


Fig. 3 *Beneath the Arena*. Detail of Roman priests ascending staircase.

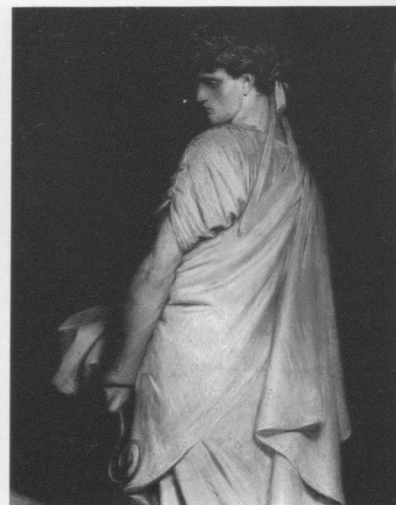


Fig. 4 *Beneath the Arena*. Detail of young Roman priest.

Argus, published only two weeks after the official opening of the exhibition, the painting's iconography was described in the following terms:

His [Piloty's] impressive picture, 'Beneath the Arena,' shows us the lifeless form of a beautiful girl, the pallor of whose face is heightened by the crimson drapery upon which the martyr's corpse has been laid. A broken cross had fallen from her nerveless hands, the wrists of which are still bound by cords. There is a look of anguish in the face, which has not yet been replaced by the serenity of death [fig. 2]; and a young priest who has lingered behind his companions, all of whom are ascending the cavernous passage to the upper air [fig. 3], looks down upon the corpse with a sentiment which may be compassion, or may be the pathetic revival of an early affection [fig. 4]. The folds of his robe are sculpturesque in their lines, and the draperies of the martyr are not less skilfully painted than her face and arms; the principal light of the composition falls on these and reveals the hand of a master.⁸

This passage by an anonymous art critic is not only of interest in relation to the provenance and identification of the present picture, but furthermore tells us something about the ways in which its subject was perceived at the time. While Bertha Piloty had interpreted the Roman priest's lingering behind as a sign of respect for the heroism of the young woman, this author stresses the ambiguity of the priest's gaze, which leaves room for different nuances in interpretations of the scene. In the writer's eyes the uneasy tension in this picture results from the sudden confrontation of these two young people who represent diametrically opposed values and lifestyles. Piloty had been labouring over his subject for more than ten years before he finally settled on this formulation of the theme, which gives centre stage to the human drama developing as the Roman priest looks upon the body of the young martyr.

Piloty arrived at this composition only after several attempts to find the ideal posture and the best setting for the main figure, the young woman in white. He made at least four preparatory drawings between 1871 and 1882. In 1871, he produced a pencil drawing in which the



Fig. 5 Karl von Piloty, *Beneath the Arena*, 1871. Pencil on paper, 16.8 x 25.0 cm. Private collection.

martyr is lying motionless on the floor of the Colosseum dungeon, guarded by two Roman soldiers and mourned by a distressed woman with her three young children (fig. 5). The scroll above the dead woman's head carries the fragmented Latin inscription *EDICT/ CRISTI/ ANOS* (Edict against the Christians), suggesting that she was killed because of her unyielding convictions.

Several years later, Piloty returned to the unfinished project and prepared two further pencil drawings on the same subject. The first of these, the drawing dating from May 1880, is known only from von Boetticher's detailed catalogue of works by nineteenth-century painters, a publication compiled in the last decade of the nineteenth century.⁹ The second example, dating from November 1880 and now in a private collection, depicts the same protagonists as in the 1871 drawing, but the composition itself has changed dramatically.¹⁰ The young woman is now placed on the left side of the scene, taking up the same pose as in the final painted version; she is still lying on the bare ground, however, and not yet on a wooden bed. This time she is characterized as a Christian by the martyr's palm covering her right leg and by the wooden cross that has been placed in the very foreground of the

scene. The two soldiers have now been positioned behind the corpse, the one on the left leaning on a pedestal, his head resting on his right hand, the one on the right standing upright and holding his lance with both hands. The latter figure has turned to the right because the woman and her children have taken up a new position. The woman is now moving up a staircase, which presumably leads to the ground floor; this motif will form an integral part of the picture in Ballarat.

The missing link between this drawing produced in November 1880 and the final image – presumably completed, as we shall see, in 1882 – is another lost drawing, which von Boetticher described thus: 'A young Roman, lost in thought, regards the corpse of a young Christian martyress; his companions in the background move up the stairs'.¹¹

Obviously, Piloty did not consider the inclusion of the Roman priests when he first developed the theme, and he removed the grieving woman and her children only after having experimented with this motif for quite a while. In her major study on Piloty, Härtl-Kasulke makes the interesting observation that this particular subject matter is an exception in his oeuvre, as it was not based on a specific historical event or literary source.¹² As far as we know, this scene does not represent an actual historical figure, as is often the case in Piloty's paintings. Bertha Piloty mentions that Piloty was particularly interested in the tragic destinies of certain individuals in history, an attitude she relates to general philosophical currents of her time.¹³ The sad fate of the nameless martyr in the Ballarat picture seemed to have captured Piloty's imagination in a similar way. In her recollections, Bertha Piloty also confirms that her husband loved theatricality. She writes: 'There is drama everywhere; this is fundamental to his nature'.¹⁴ Piloty's interest in theatricality is reflected in the way he arranges the principal characters in the picture and embellishes the scene with stage props in order to heighten the drama. The heavy rope covered with a piece of bright red fabric, the oil lamp, the wooden bench and the irons on the back wall are all last-minute additions, which do not appear in the preparatory drawings.

Repeating the same pictorial invention over and over again, once a composition had matured to the point

where the artist was satisfied, was a common practice in the studio of Karl von Piloty, and this may explain why there were at least two, perhaps even three, versions of *Beneath the Arena*.¹⁵ Von Boetticher lists two oil paintings by Piloty with this title. Catalogue number 44 is recorded as the smaller of the two versions, measuring 95 by 111 centimetres; number 43 is listed in more general terms, as a larger version of the same picture (its exact measurements, however, are not provided).¹⁶ Von Boetticher's description of the subject matter of the larger picture reads as follows: 'In a space located under the circus lies a young Christian woman who has been killed by wild animals. Augurs stride through the room, while one of them stays behind in contemplation'.¹⁷ We are further informed that the larger picture was exhibited at the Munich International Art Exhibition of 1883, being then in the possession of the Munich commercial gallery Aumüller. It is difficult to say whether number 43 was the picture sent out to the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne in 1888, or whether we are perhaps looking at a third version of the same theme. Von Boetticher dates the larger painting precisely to the year 1882, a date already put forward by Rosenberg in his earlier account of the history of the Munich Academy, written in 1887.¹⁸

Apart from the large oil painting in Ballarat, only one smaller oil painting of the same subject is known today (fig. 6). This work, currently on loan from a private collection to the Pinacotheca in Athens, measures only 44.5 by 55 centimetres and therefore cannot be identified with either of the pictures listed in von Boetticher's catalogue. While the picture is very close to that in Ballarat in terms of its composition and iconography, the style and the application of paint differ considerably in the two works, as does the quality of the figure drawing. The signature in the lower right-hand corner is also quite different in style to Piloty's signature on the Ballarat painting.¹⁹ This seems to suggest that the small canvas in Athens is more likely to be a copy, made after one of the versions mentioned earlier or even after an early reproduction.²⁰

As far as the Ballarat painting is concerned, the creative process leading to Piloty's final formulation of the composition in 1882 can be reconstructed in some detail

and provides valuable insights into the way he developed his theme. As early as 1860, he had started to explore the general subject: the persecution of Christian women and children by the decadent Romans. In that year he completed a painting titled *Nero Standing on Top of the Ruins of Rome* (Szépművészeti Museum, Budapest), which Pecht described in the following words: 'Having celebrated all night, Nero walks indifferently past the corpses of slain Christians, watching the burning of Rome'.²¹ As the story goes, Nero had blamed the Christians for lighting the fire in the first place, using this accusation as a pretext for killing off his adversaries. The theme of the innocent child and the beautiful young woman being victimized by a society that for Piloty and his contemporaries represented paganism and decadence became very topical in the second half of the nineteenth century. Piloty himself developed a second motif belonging to the same context. An undated pencil drawing by the artist, a work known

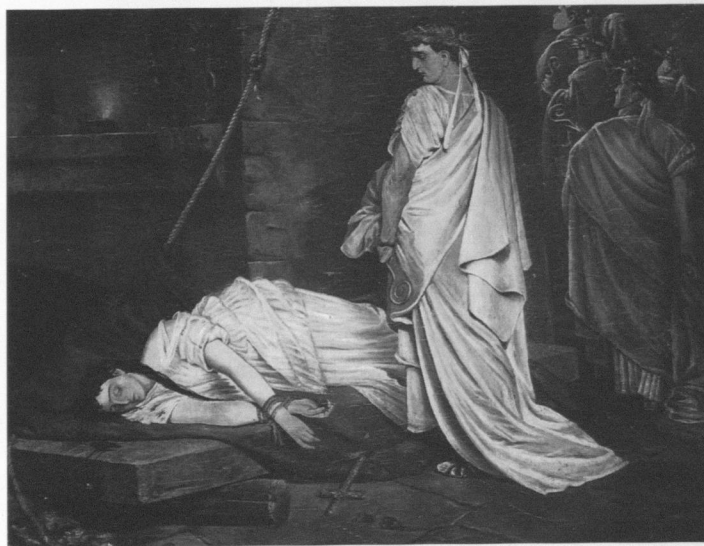


Fig. 6 After Karl von Piloty, *Beneath the Arena*. Oil on canvas, 44.5 x 55.0 cm. Private collection.



Fig. 7 Karl von Piloty, *Beneath the Arena*. ?Lithograph. Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

only through early reproductions (fig. 7), shows a man with a cross in his right hand, obviously a persecuted Christian, who is sheltering a sleeping young boy. The scene is again located in the dungeon of the Colosseum, as is indicated by the light filtering through the iron grid above and by the lion's cage next to the figures. This drawing, which was also given the title *Unter der Arena* by von Boetticher,²² showed the before rather than the after of the fate suffered by the persecuted Christians.

Piloty was by no means the inventor of this genre, but followed a trend that could equally be observed among other European artists. In the 1888 exhibition, there was, for example, a painting by the English artist Briton Rivière called *A Roman Holiday*, 1881, which depicted a similarly melodramatic scene, the death of a Christian gladiator in

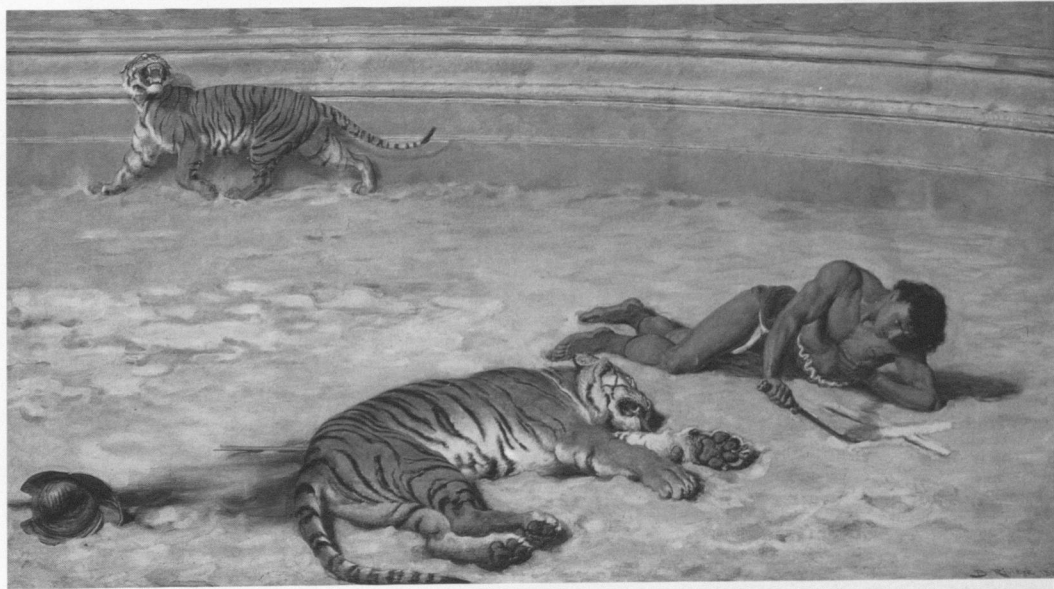
a Roman arena (fig. 8). According to the *Argus Supplement*, this picture was much discussed by the Melbourne public when the exhibition first opened,²³ it was later purchased by the National Gallery of Victoria.²⁴

In 1868, the well-known French artist Alexandre Falguière had created a delicate sculpture of a young Christian boy martyr called Tarcisus (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), a work that was based on a figure in a religious novel by Cardinal Wiseman.²⁵ This sculpture made from fine white marble represented the death of an innocent victim of Roman tyranny in a very elegant and inoffensive way, not unlike the way in which Piloty depicts the death of the young woman in *Beneath the Arena*. A few years later, Jean-Léon Gérôme and Alexandre Cabanel each produced a number of canvases dealing with the miserable fate of the persecuted Christians. Gérôme's *The Christian Martyrs' Last Prayer*, 1883 (Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore), and *The Gladiators*, 1874 (Phoenix Art Museum), as well as Cabanel's *Cleopatra Testing Poisons on Condemned Prisoners*, 1887 (University of Virginia Art Museum, Charlottesville), document the longstanding interest in this theme on the part of the international community. While this kind of subject matter had been introduced to the European art scene in the late 1860s, it was still considered to be topical when Piloty's painting was submitted to the Centennial International Exhibition. It was in part as a result of this trend that *Beneath the Arena* was singled out by the exhibition jury and was awarded a gold medal as well as a first order of merit.

The popularity of the German contribution with the general public can also partly be explained by the fact that Victoria had a rather large German community at the time. The final report of the jury sheds some light on the question of why the display of German art, and in particular Piloty's painting, were so successful:

Among the art exhibits upon which it was the duty of the jury to pass judgment, the German Collection takes first place. This fine gallery contains several works which indicate the possession by the artists who executed them of high imaginative powers – as, for example, the picture by C. von Piloty, entitled 'Beneath the Arena,' and 'The Moritur in Deo' of Bruno Piglheim.²⁶

Fig. 8 Briton Rivière (British, 1840–1920), *A Roman Holiday*, 1881. Oil on canvas, 99.5 x 178.2 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, purchased 1888.



It is remarkable that two pictures representing religious subjects were singled out by the jury in its concluding comments, despite the fact that landscape paintings and genre scenes made up the majority of the works of art in the German Gallery.²⁷ This bias towards paintings carrying some sort of moral message might reflect the nineteenth-century belief that art had an important role to play in the education of the wider public. The following remarks made by the jury with regard to the British exhibits might therefore equally apply to the paintings by Piloty and Piglheim:

Dealing first with the British collection, the jury desire to place on record their sense of the high educational value of this noble collection of pictures, and the important effect its exhibition must have had in elevating and purifying the public taste, besides enlarging the experience of those students of art who are unavoidably denied access to the great collections of the works of ancient and modern masters which European travel can alone secure.²⁸

In this process of moulding the taste of young artists and the art-loving public of the colonies, private

collectors played as important a role as the National Gallery of Victoria and the newly emerging regional galleries, especially as the purchasing power of private individuals was often much stronger than that of these fledgling galleries. In response to the display of works borrowed from private collections, which were seen side by side with the various international contributions at the Centennial International Exhibition, the jury took a much more critical stand but nevertheless finished on a positive note:

In one respect there is special cause for congratulation in connection with a display of art treasures, the ownership of which is confined exclusively to Victorian colonists. It must ever be a cause of satisfaction that so many of our wealthy citizens give evidence of a desire to surround themselves with objects of art which not only indicates the possession of a refined taste, but the judgment to gratify it by the selection of works of so high a degree of merit.²⁹

International exhibitions of the kind held in Melbourne and Sydney towards the end of the nineteenth century became significant events in shaping the cultural



Fig. 9 Hans Gude (Norwegian, 1825–1903), *After the Storm, Norwegian Coast*, 1888. Oil on canvas, 147.0 x 247.5 cm. National Gallery of Victoria; presented by Molesworth F. Greene 1889.

profile of the colonies. Both public galleries and private collectors participated in this process by purchasing works directly from these exhibitions. Warrnambool Art Gallery acquired five German paintings from the 1888 exhibition, namely Hermann Plathner's *Grandmama's Pets*, 1886,³⁰ Josef Schmitzberger's *Pussy*,³¹ Félix Possart's *The Abbey Porch, Engelberg, Switzerland*,³² Eduard Weichberger's *A Spring Evening*³³ and Reinhard Zimmermann's *In the Kitchen*.³⁴ Bendigo Art Gallery, then called the Sandhurst Fine Art Gallery, purchased three German works:³⁵ Friedrich Ortlieb's *The Postilion*,³⁶ Paul Borgmann's *The Bawler*³⁷ and Franz Hochmann's *A Horse Market in a German Village*, 1884.³⁸ The National Gallery of Victoria bought two landscape paintings, through the German agent or art dealer C. Wagemann: Carl Ludwig's *Chestnut Grove*³⁹ and Hermann Baisch's *Dutch Pastures, Morning*, 1885.⁴⁰ In general, the National Gallery seemed to have had a preference at this time for purchasing landscape paintings and genre scenes, and apart from the picture by Briton Rivière

seemed to have stayed clear of paintings with explicitly religious subject matter.⁴¹

By 1888 there was already a considerable group of collectors interested in continental, and especially German, art, an interest that was further spurred on by the overwhelming success of such exhibits in the Centennial International Exhibition. T. W. Stanford, for instance, acquired Friedrich Kallmorgen's painting *Digging the North Sea Canal* (present whereabouts unknown), one of the twelve silver medal winners and a recipient of the first order of merit.⁴² The Victorian collector Molesworth F. Greene purchased a painting that had won a gold medal and received a first order of merit: Hans Gude's *After the Storm, Norwegian Coast*, 1888 (fig. 9).⁴³ A year later, Greene generously donated this painting to the National Gallery of Victoria.⁴⁴

In the case of Piloty's painting, all existing clues point to its acquisition from the 1888 exhibition by a private collector from country Victoria with strong links to

Melbourne. In 1932, a decision was taken by Lady Currie, by her husband, Major Sir Alan Currie, and by her sister, Mrs Mary Irene Blackwood, to hand over the picture to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, after it had been in the possession of the family for many years.⁴⁵ Lady Currie and Mrs Blackwood were the daughters of Albert Miller (1845–1915), a well-established Victorian pastoralist in charge of managing a number of stations owned by the influential Miller family.⁴⁶ Albert Miller was one of the four sons of Henry Miller (1809–1888), the well-known Melbourne financier and politician,⁴⁷ and the brother of Sir Edward Miller (1848–1932).⁴⁸ The considerable wealth accumulated by Henry ‘Money’ Miller, as he was sometimes called, was divided in equal shares among his eight children after he died on 7 February 1888. Henry Miller himself had bought a number of paintings from the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880–81,⁴⁹ and it seems possible that Albert followed his father’s example at a time when he could afford to indulge in art patronage.⁵⁰ *Beneath the Arena* might thus have entered the collection of Alan and Muriel Currie sometime after the death of Albert Miller in 1915. According to the eyewitness reports of two members of the Miller family, Piloty’s painting hung in the living-room of the Currie homestead, ‘Ercildoune’,⁵¹ before being handed over to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery in 1932.⁵²

In March 1933, on the occasion of the announcement of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery’s Crouch Memorial Prize, Major Currie was invited to unveil the painting that he and his wife’s family had donated the year before.⁵³ *Beneath the Arena* was to be exhibited in the Gallery’s late-nineteenth-century Oddie Gallery for the next eleven years. In 1944, however, the Gallery decided that it no longer wished to exhibit the picture in its public display area and offered it to the city council, which politely declined.⁵⁴ In the end, *Beneath the Arena* was taken on long-term loan by Loreto Convent, Mary’s Mount, and was hung in the so-called Abbey Hall, the communal hall of the Catholic girls’ school.⁵⁵ After more than thirty years the painting was finally handed back to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery in 1975 and was then taken out of its original frame and kept in storage for almost twenty years.⁵⁶ When in 1993 the Gallery decided to exhibit the painting

as a highlight of a temporary exhibition on the Currie Collection,⁵⁷ it was retrieved from storage. After having undergone substantial conservation treatment *Beneath the Arena* was finally returned to the main exhibition area of the Gallery, where it has since come to be regarded as an excellent example for the study of the widespread interest in continental European art in late-nineteenth-century Victoria.

Among the German paintings acquired by public galleries in Victoria at the time of the Centennial International Exhibition, *Beneath the Arena* stands out in terms of its monumentality and subject matter. While most of the other pictures from that group can be classified as either landscapes or genre scenes, the works in the latter category frequently reflecting the late-nineteenth-century penchant for quaint scenes of everyday life, *Beneath the Arena* represents a different style of painting. Piloty, being a major representative of the European school of history painting, used a more classical style to illustrate his chosen subject, the tragic confrontation between two different sets of religious beliefs.

By having returned Piloty’s painting to its main exhibition galleries, the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery can now pride itself on owning an excellent work by the internationally acclaimed Munich school of painting, a work that perfectly exemplifies the kind of German picture that attracted widespread interest in nineteenth-century Victoria. While pictures such as *Beneath the Arena* may represent the taste of previous generations, paintings of this kind acquired late last century by state and regional galleries as well as by private collectors give us valuable insights into the cultural history of the young colony and provide ample proof of the lively exchange taking place in the nineteenth century between the cultural centres of the old and the new world.⁵⁸

Acknowledgements

I wish to dedicate this article to Dr Ursula Hoff. This paper could not have been written without the support given and the information provided by the following individuals: Ms Sonia Dean, Ms Anne Duke, Dr Ann Galbally, Mr Martin Hogan, Ms Alison Inglis, Professor Margaret Manion and Ms Margaret Rich. I am also indebted to Dr Claudia Härtl-Kasulke for her invaluable advice on matters related to this painting and for kindly giving me access to her archive on Karl von Piloty.

Notes

- 1 Piloty was also highly regarded in Germany at the time: on the basis of his technical skill he had been given the honorary title of *praeceptor Germaniae* (educator of Germany) (see U. Thieme & F. Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. XXVII, Leipzig, 1933, p. 47).
- 2 Piloty and his pupils participated regularly in world exhibitions; for instance, he enjoyed success at the Paris International Exhibition of 1867 and at the Vienna International Exhibition of 1873 (see B. Piloty, 'Biographie Karl Th. v. Piloty', 1898 [typed transcript of handwritten manuscript], private collection, Maderno, pp. 11, 15).
- 3 See *Official Record of the Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888–1889*, Melbourne, 1890, pp. 673, 679, 940.
- 4 H. Ludwig et al., *Münchener Maler im 19. Jahrhundert (Bruckmanns Lexikon der Münchner Kunst)*, vol. 3, Munich, 1982, pp. 283–7.
- 5 Karl von Piloty, letter, Hamburger Staatsarchiv, Altona 94, Mappe 74: 'Sehr geehrter Herr! Zu meinem Bedauern muß ich Ihnen mittheilen, daß ich bei Ankunft Ihrer werthen Zuschrift, das Vervielfältigungsrecht durch Holzschnitt, von meinem Bilde: "Unter der Arena" schon der Leipziger Illustrierten überlassen hatte. Hochachtungsvoll ... Euer Hochwohlgeborener ergebenster, Carl von Piloty'. Unfortunately, the exact date of this letter has not been established.
- 6 F. von Boetticher, *Malerwerke des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts: Beitrag zur Kunstgeschichte* (1891–1901), vol. II, Leipzig, 1944, p. 275, no. 18.
- 7 Piloty, p. 17 (my translation).
- 8 'The German Picture Gallery: Religious Subjects', *Argus Supplement*, Melbourne, 15 August 1888, p. 1; see also J. Lake, *Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne: Official Guide to the Picture Galleries and Catalogue of Fine Arts*, Melbourne, 1888, p. 77, cat. no. 91. A. Rosenberg, *Die Münchner Malerschule in ihrer Entwicklung seit 1871*, Leipzig, 1887, p. 3, interprets the picture in a similar way, when stating: '[N]och in dem jungen römischen Augur, welcher einen Liebe und Wehmut zurückstrahlenden Abschiedsblick auf die Leiche einer im Circus getöteten, christlichen Märtyrerin wirft ("Unter der Arena", 1882, s. die Abbildung auf S. 4)' (nor in the young Roman augur, whose last glance at the corpse of a young Christian martyress, who had been killed in the Circus, expresses love and melancholy ("Beneath the Arena", 1882, see the reproduction on page 4)).
- 9 Von Boetticher, vol. II, p. 275, no. 18.
- 10 While the author was able to study a reproduction of this drawing for the purpose of writing this article, it was not possible to reproduce the work here.
- 11 Von Boetticher, vol. II, p. 275, no. 19 (my translation). It seems as if von Boetticher had had the opportunity to study this drawing himself, as his description is very detailed and also includes the work's measurements (26.0 x 32.0 cm).
- 12 C. Härtl-Kasulke, *Karl Theodor Piloty (1826–1886)*, *Miscellanea Bavarica Monacensia*, vol. 152, Munich, 1991, p. 158.
- 13 This aspect of Piloty's work was not necessarily seen by contemporary critics as a positive feature. The German artist Moritz von Schwind, for instance, made fun of Piloty's penchant for the dramatic by characterizing his pictures as 'historic tragedies' (*geschichtlicher Unglücksfalles*) (see Thieme–Becker, vol. XXVII, p. 47).
- 14 Piloty, p. 4.
- 15 Härtl-Kasulke, pp. 165–78, no. II.4, demonstrates in the case of another subject, *Thusnelda in the Triumphal Procession of Germanicus*, that Piloty often reused the same image, painting several versions of the same theme in different formats.
- 16 Von Boetticher, vol. II, p. 274, nos 43, 44. In November 1886 the smaller picture was included in a temporary exhibition held at the Nationalgalerie, Berlin. By the 1890s it formed part of an unidentified private collection.
- 17 Von Boetticher, vol. II, p. 274, no. 43 (my translation).
- 18 Rosenberg, p. 3.
- 19 Instead of C. Piloty, the signature has been reduced to the last name, *Piloty*, and while Piloty's original signature leans to the right the signature on the Athens version leans to the left.
- 20 It may well be that the Athens copy was made after one of the early reproductions (for instance, Rosenberg, fig. 4).
- 21 F. Pecht, 'Karl von Piloty: Zur zehnten Wiederkehr seines Todestages, 21. Juli 1886', *Kunst für alle*, no. 21, 1895–96, p. 322 (my translation); see also Härtl-Kasulke, pp. 178–88.
- 22 Von Boetticher, vol. II, p. 275, no. 28.
- 23 'Gossip of the Courts', *Argus Supplement*, Melbourne, 15 August 1888, p. 1, informs us about the discussions taking place in front of the picture as people debated whether the artist had captured the fight between man and beast in an accurate manner or not.
- 24 See A. Galbally, *The Collections of the National Gallery of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1987, p. 28, fig. 1.27; Thieme–Becker, vol. XXVIII, 1934, p. 398.
- 25 See H. W. Janson, *Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, London, 1985, p. 153.
- 26 *Official Record*, p. 674. The jury consisted of fifteen distinguished gentlemen, both from new colonies and from Europe. Its members were F. R. Godfrey, W. Collis, Ludwig Lang, Professor McCoy and James Ripper from Victoria, Dr Carl Fisher from New South Wales, N. Leaves from New Zealand, F. W. Haddon, Revd J. Kennedy and Rivers Langton from Great Britain, O. Comettant and C. Phalempin from France, A. Robertson from Austria, and Carl Kahler and H. Schnars-Alquist from Germany

- (see *Official Record*, p. 673).
- 27 The third picture singled out from the large group of exhibits was a work by Anton von Werner, then the director of the Berlin Academy, who had been commissioned to paint *Prince Bismarck Speaking in the German Reichstag*. In contrast to all the other pictures in the exhibition, Anton von Werner's painting clearly reflects the political dimension of the international exhibitions. Lake, p. 73, cat. no. 27, published the following entry for this painting: 'This fine work, painted expressly for the Centennial Exhibition, shows us the Reichskanzler, Prince Bismarck, in the German Reichstag, making his famous speech on the Bulgarian question in 1887. This, it will be remembered, involved a question of war between England and Russia'.
 - 28 *Official Record*, p. 674.
 - 29 *ibid.*
 - 30 Lake, p. 81, cat. no. 178; D. Hall, *Victorian Victoria* (exh. cat.), Bendigo Art Gallery, 1984, cat. no. 24.
 - 31 Lake, p. 83, cat. no. 203; Hall, cat. no. 27.
 - 32 Lake, p. 73, cat. no. 23; Hall, cat. no. 25.
 - 33 Lake, p. 74, cat. no. 39; Hall, cat. no. 34.
 - 34 Lake, p. 81, cat. no. 170; Hall, cat. no. 35.
 - 35 The purchase of eight European paintings from the Centennial International Exhibition was proudly announced to supporters of the Sandhurst Fine Art Gallery in a flier. I would like to thank Ms Elizabeth Hastings and Mr David Thomas for their support in providing the relevant information on works at Bendigo Art Gallery.
 - 36 Lake, p. 80, cat. no. 152; *Bendigo Art Gallery Catalogue*, 2nd edn, Bendigo, c.1893, p. 16.
 - 37 Lake, p. 78, cat. no. 104; *Bendigo Art Gallery Catalogue*, p. 16.
 - 38 Lake, p. 79, cat. no. 129; *Bendigo Art Gallery Catalogue*, p. 22.
 - 39 Lake, p. 77, cat. no. 75. For the early history of the National Gallery of Victoria, see A. Galbally & A. Inglis, *The First Collections: The Public Library and the National Gallery of Victoria in the 1850s and 1860s* (exh. cat.), University Gallery, University of Melbourne Museum of Art, 1992, pp. 23–4; Dean, p. 70. I would like to thank Ms Sonia Dean and Mr Gordon Morrison for providing information on the German works in the National Gallery of Victoria collection.
 - 40 Lake, p. 85, cat. no. 249; Dean, p. 19. Baisch received a gold medal and a first order of merit.
 - 41 The *Argus* discussed Rivière's *A Roman Holiday* with regard to its realistic portrayal of a fight between a human being and a tiger; it was perhaps not perceived as a straightforward religious painting ('Gossip of the Courts', p. 1).
 - 42 See G. Vaughan, *Art Collectors in Colonial Victoria 1854–1892*, BA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1976, vol. II, p. 18, no. 109; see also Lake, p. 82, cat. no. 188.
 - 43 The few examples given here of works by German artists acquired by private collectors and public galleries at the time do not represent a complete list, but only provide a first impression as to how strong the interest in continental art must have been. The assessment of German art by the art critics and collecting institutions of late-nineteenth-century Victoria deserves to be studied in more depth than is possible in the context of the present essay.
 - 44 See S. Dean, *European Paintings of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries in the National Gallery of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1995, p. 58.
 - 45 The Minutes of the Council of Ballarat Fine Art Public Gallery Association, 14 July 1932, p. 62, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery archives, contain the following information: 'Mr. Cotton reported that Major Currie M.L.C., Mrs. Currie and Mrs. Blackwood had offered to the Gallery an oil painting "Under the Arena" by Professor Politi [sic] and desired it to be submitted to the Hanging and Selection Committee for approval and that he would send the picture to Ballarat before the end of the month'.
 - 46 Muriel Miller (d. 1962) married the wealthy landowner Alan Currie in 1902. Her father, Albert Miller, was in charge of Yallock station, Ballan, Broadlands station, Bacchus Marsh, and Mill Park station, also in country Victoria (see H. J. Gibbney & A. G. Smith (eds), *A Biographical Register 1788–1939*, vol. II, Canberra, 1987, p. 104).
 - 47 See B. Nairn, G. Serle & R. Ward (eds), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 5, Melbourne, 1974, pp. 252–3. According to the inventory of Miller's estate, drawn up after his death, his main residence, with his wife Mary, was 'Whernside', a double-storey brick home in Albany Road, Toorak. For Albert Miller's nephew Everard Studley Miller, a major donor to the National Gallery of Victoria, see P. Paffen, 'Everard Studley Miller and His Bequest to the National Gallery of Victoria', *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, no. 35, 1994, pp. 35–44.
 - 48 See *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10, 1986, p. 509.
 - 49 See U. Hoff, 'The Everard Studley Miller Bequest', in *Australian Art and Architecture: Essays Presented to Bernard Smith*, eds A. Bradley & T. Smith, Melbourne, 1980, p. 153.
 - 50 Albert Miller's will, drawn up on 13 September 1914, does not list the contents of his residence in any detail, but specifies that 'all household furniture, plate, linen, china, glass, books, statuary, pictures, prints, music, musical and other instruments, wine ... in or about or used in connection with my residence 'Whernside' would be passed on to his wife, Mary (Will of Albert Miller (d. 27/5/1915), Public Record Office, Laverton, Victoria, no. 142 224).
 - 51 See 'Some Notable Australian Homes, No. 1: "Ercildoune", the Residence of Major and Mrs. Alan Currie', *Australian Home Beautiful*, 1 February 1929, pp. 34–42. The Curries moved to the newly acquired 'Ercildoune' in 1920.
 - 52 According to the recollections of Major Currie's niece, Mrs Jean Mackinnon, the picture by Piloty was deemed to be too dark and too large for 'Ercildoune' and was therefore

- offered to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. There may have been other factors motivating the Miller girls to present this generous gift to the Gallery, among them the influence of Daryl Lindsay, who a decade later would become Director of the National Gallery of Victoria and who was a frequent visitor to 'Ercildoune'. Mary Miller died on 8 February 1932, in the same year that the picture was given to the Gallery. She had moved away from the family residence, 'Wherside', after the death of her husband (Will of Mary Miller (d. 8/2/1932), Public Record Office, Laverton, Victoria, no. 250 781).
- 53 Sir Alan Currie (1868–1942) was a highly regarded figure in the city of Ballarat and had been invited by the Gallery to announce the inaugural Crouch Memorial Prize on 20 March 1933 (Minutes of the Council of Ballarat Fine Art Public Gallery Association, 13 September 1933).
- 54 Minutes of the Council of Ballarat Fine Art Public Gallery Association, 19 April 1944.
- 55 This information was provided by Professor Margaret Manion, who was then headmistress of Mary's Mount, Ballarat (letter to the author, 14 March 1995).
- 56 Minutes of the Council of Ballarat Fine Art Public Gallery Association, 19 February 1975: 'Mr. Gilbert reported that he and Mr. Binns had looked at the Gallery's large picture "Beneath the Arena" and they felt that if it were taken out of its frame it could be put into most buildings. They stated that Mr. Michael Young be consulted and a report made of the next meeting'.
- 57 See M. Hogan, 'A Remarkable Gift', in *The Currie Collection: 18th and 19th Century Fine Art Objects and Furniture* (exh. cat.), Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, 1993, n.p.
- 58 For further discussion of the Ballarat picture, see D. Eichberger, "'Unter der Arena" – ein wiederentdecktes Hauptwerk Karl Pilotys in Australien', *Pantheon*, vol. LIII, 1995, pp. 196–202.