

Book Notes

Tom Thompson (ed.), *Australasian Artists at the French Salons*, Exile Bay (NSW), ETT Imprint, June 2019, 138 pp., rrp AU\$ 30.00, ISBN 978-1-92570-670-3.

Compiled from material published in *Les Peintres britanniques dans les Salons Parisiens des origines à 1939* by Béatrice Crespon-Halotier, L'Échelle de Jacob, Dijon, 2002, this book is a directory of artists from Australia and New Zealand who exhibited at the Paris Salons between 1872 and 1939. It will be of interest to art historians, students and art lovers alike.

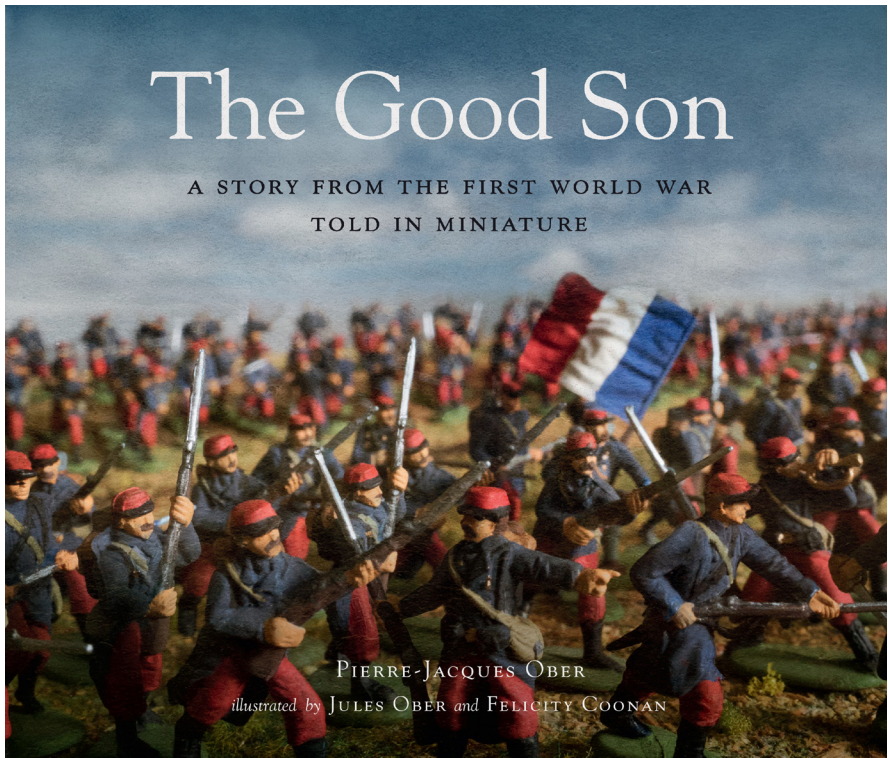
Many of the Antipodean artists whose Paris exhibitions are listed here lived and worked in Paris for a large part of their lives. Rupert Bunny, for example, lived in Paris for almost fifty years so it is not surprising that fifteen pages of this book are devoted to records of his exhibitions in France. John Peter Russell too spent most of his life in France, painting, interacting with and influencing other artists, particularly those who visited him at Belle-Île-en-Mer (Belle-Île); and Kathleen O'Connor lived in France (apart from the war years which she spent, miserably, in London) from 1907 to 1950. The desire to live and work in France is still prevalent among Australian artists today.

This is an important reference book and Tom Thompson from ETT Imprint is to be commended for bringing it to us, after having been himself introduced to the original book by longstanding ISFAR member Jean-Paul Delamotte.

E. L.

Jacques Ober, Jules Ober & Felicity Coonan, *The Good Son: A Story From the First War, Told in Miniature*, USA, Candlewick Studio, May 2019, 104 pp., rrp AU\$ 22.00, ISBN 978-1-53620-482-7.

Always searching for new ways to tell stories, Melbourne author and filmmaker Pierre-Jacques Ober pondered the idea of making a book—a different kind of book which would combine his story-telling, his experience at film-making and his love of little soldiers with his wife Jules Ober’s outstanding ability to create beautiful, atmospheric photographs with particular emphasis on light and mood.



Using hobby-shop figurines, they painstakingly painted them, placing them in miniature hand-made sets, and photographing them to create Pierre-Jacques’ story of Pierre, the young soldier who goes home for two days to visit his mother and returns to his regiment to face the music and to try to work out his own salvation.

As Pierre-Jacques writes: ‘He is just one of the millions of young men who in 1914 signed up to fight, expecting to be home by Christmas’. The emotional complexity of the soldiers’ lives at this time is powerfully conveyed by the photographs, as are the details in the landscape. Working with natural light, at various times of the day, photographer Jules brings the little soldiers and their settings to life and contributes to the overall beauty and emotional power. Digital designer Felicity Coonan contributed to the final effect with digital enhancements to the design.

A reviewer from *The New York Times Book Review* writes: ‘though it is based on a real story, the book has the force of a timeless fable, thanks to minimal, poetic text. Shallow depth-of-field photography by Ober’s wife, Jules, and digital enhancements by Felicity Coonan make the images especially lifelike. These striking miniatures have the power to put us in the minds of the true “little soldiers,” the common men who fought in a long-ago war and yet whose story feels so present here’.

The Good Son is historically accurate so should appeal to historians as well as to children and adults who love beautiful books.

The French version of this book, *Petit Soldat*, published by Seuil Jeunesse, won the Prix Sorcières 2019 and has already been reprinted.

E. L.