

# Augustus Edwin John

*Portrait of Ida*, 1900

red chalk on paper  
26.2 cm x 21.6 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery,  
Founders' Fund  
VAG 31.67



Photo: Tomas Svab, Vancouver Art Gallery

# Augustus Edwin John

Portrait of Ida, 1900

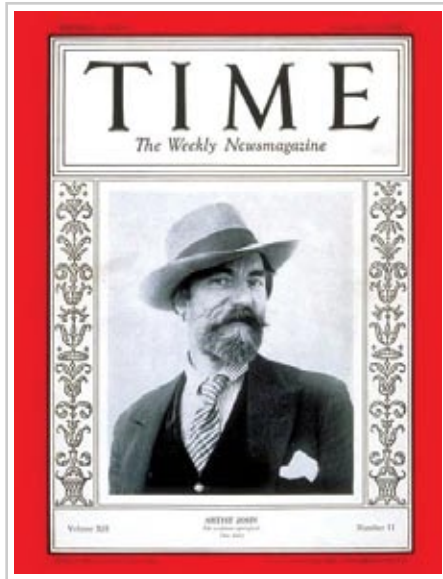


Image source: Time Magazine Archives

<http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,1101280910,00.html>

## Artist's Biography

Nationality: British, Welsh  
Born: 1878-01-04, Tenby, Wales  
Died: 1961-10-31

Augustus John was born at Tenby in Pembrokeshire. He studied at the Slade School of Art UCL in London and even before his graduation had proven to be the most talented draughtsman of his generation. His sister, Gwen John, was an equally talented artist.

Although well-known early in the century for his drawings and etchings, the bulk of John's later work consisted of portraits, some of the best of which were of his two wives and his children. He was known for the psychological insight in his portraits, many of which were considered "cruel" in the truth of the depiction. Lord Leverhulme was so upset with his portrait that he cut out the head and returned the rest of the picture. John painted many distinguished contemporaries, including Thomas Hardy, W.B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, the cellist Guilhermina Suggia, the Marchesa Casati and Elizabeth Bibesco. Perhaps his most famous portrait is of his fellow-countryman, Dylan Thomas.

During World War I, he was attached to the Canadian forces as a war artist and made a number of memorable portraits of Canadian infantrymen.

He was, throughout his life, particularly interested in the Roma people and sought them out on his frequent travels around the British Isles and Europe.

It was said that after the war his powers diminished as his bravura technique became sketchier and sketchier. However, from time to time his inspiration returned, as it did on his 1937 trip to Jamaica.

By his first wife, Ida Nettleship (1877-1907), he had five children, and by his mistress Dorothy "Dorelia" McNeill, who later became his second wife, he had two children. By Ian Fleming's mother, Evelyn St. Croix Rose Fleming, he had a daughter, Amaryllis Fleming (1925-1999), a noted cellist.

In old age, though John had ceased to be a moving force in British art, he was still greatly revered, as was demonstrated by the huge show of his work mounted by the Royal Academy in 1954. He continued to work up until his death in Fordingbridge, Hampshire in 1961.

Source: "Augustus John," *Wikipedia, The free encyclopedia*. December 21, 2005. <http://www.wikipedia.org>

## Artistic Context

Nationality: British

Training: Slade School of Art, London; studied under Henry Tonks

Group: war artist for the Canadian government; portraitist; 19th century; 20th century

Provenance: purchased from P. & D. Colnaghi and Co. by Charles Scott and Henry Stone on behalf of the Founders in 1931

Subject: portraits

# Augustus Edwin John

*Portrait of Ida*, 1900

## Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Augustus John  
*The Bathers*  
lithograph and paper  
Vancouver Art Gallery, Founders' Fund  
VAG 33.21

Augustus John  
*Two Women in the Street*  
pastel and paper  
Anonymous  
VAG 2002.39



## Bibliography

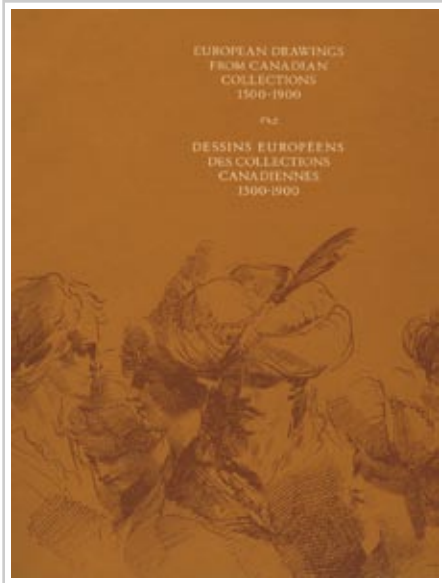
**Augustus John**  
Publication

### [transcription]

*7 Head of a Girl*  
Sanguine, 9 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches  
Signed lower left: John  
The Vancouver Art Gallery

# Augustus Edwin John

## Portrait of Ida, 1900



### European Drawings in Canadian Collections 1500-1900

Publication

#### [transcription]

Augustus John is an artist whose personality outshines his work. It has been, until recently, almost impossible to separate the two, but a biography published in 1974 might help dispel the confusion simply by describing the kind of tedious accretion of detail that comprises most people's lives.

John was a brilliant student at the Slade School of Art in London (1894-1898) during the Slade's peak period as a vital teaching institution in the last years of the nineteenth century. He is particularly noted for his swift and accurate rendering of portrait likenesses, and this drawing is an example of both his vitality as a draughtsman at this period and his ability to invest his sitters with life.

The work is an informal sketch of Ida Nettleship, John's first wife, whom he married in 1900 and who died in 1907 of puerperal fever after the birth of their fifth son. The sketch was done, judging from Ida's extreme youth, about 1900. It captures the eager, serious gaze seen in photographs of the girl, herself a former Slade scholarship student, and suggests the kind of straightforwardness which enabled her to deal with her husband's egocentric personality. It is very much in the tradition of the Slade School of about 1900, but the particular use of the chalk for modeling the head and, at the same time, suggesting an artificial light source, is typical of John's own style.

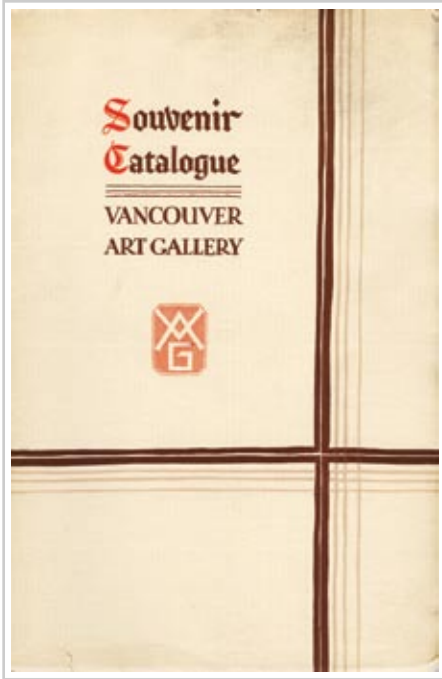
INSCRIPTION: Signed I.r., John  
 PROVENANCE: Colnaghi's London, 1931  
 THE ART GALLERY OF VANCOUVER  
 PURCHASED FROM THE FOUNDERS' FUND, 1931



Augustus John  
 Tenby (Wales) 1878-Fordingbridge (Hampshire) 1961  
*Portrait of Ida* c.1900  
 Red chalk  
 24.8x19.7cm (9 3/4 x 7 3/4 in.)

# Augustus Edwin John

Portrait of Ida, 1900



## Souvenir Catalogue: Vancouver Art Gallery

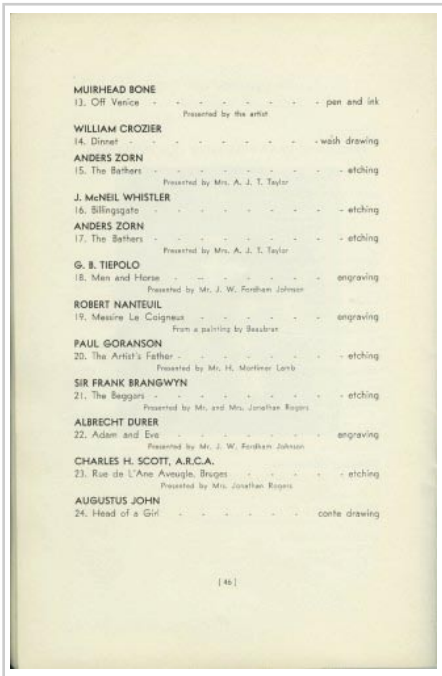
Publication  
1931-10-5

[transcription]

AUGUSTUS E. JOHN, R.A. 1879

Born at Tenby, South Wales. Made his name as a master draughtsman while at the Slade School and soon became prominent in England as a vigorous painter and portraitist. His drawings and portraits are remarkable for a keen insight into character and movement. Attached as an artist to the Canadian Army in France. Represented in many national and private collections.

102 Head of a Girl (Red Chalk)



## Souvenir Catalogue: Opening the New Vancouver Art Gallery, 1951.

Publication  
1951-09-26

[transcription]

AUGUSTUS JOHN

24. Head of a Girl - - - - - conte drawing

# Augustus Edwin John

*Portrait of Ida*, 1900

## Further Reading

*Augustus John: Early Drawings and Etchings*. London: P. & D. Calnaghi and Company Ltd., 1974.

Earp, T.W. *Augustus John*. London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1934.

Easton Malcolm. and R. John. *Augustus John*. London, N.P.G., 1975.

Easton, Malcolm and Michael Holroyd. *The Art of Augustus John* London, 1974.

*Etchings of Augustus John, R.A. and Gerald L. Brockhurst A.R.A.*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1937.

Evans, Mark L. *Portraits by Augustus John*. Wales: Cardiff National Museum of Wales, 1988.

*Gwen John and Augustus John*. London: Tate Publishing, 2004.

Holroyd, M. *Augustus John: The New Biography*. London, 1996.

Rothenstein, John. *Augustus John*. London: Phaidon, 1967.

Wistow, David. *Augustus John*. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1987.

## Exhibition History

### Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

*Inaugural Exhibition*. October 5, 1931.

*Opening the New Vancouver Art Gallery, 1951*. September 26 - October 14, 1951.

*Portrait: from the Permanent Collection*. March 7, 1981 - May 31, 1981.

*75 Years of Collecting: British Masters, Group of Seven and Pop Icons*. February 4, 2006 - May 14, 2006.

### Selected Exhibitions outside of the Vancouver Art Gallery

Art Gallery of Toronto, Toronto. 1935.

Augustus Edwin John  
Portrait of Ida, 1900

**CHECKLIST FOR EXHIBITION**  
**WORKS OF ART ON PAPER**

TITLE: Portrait of Ida ACC No.: 31.67  
ARTIST: Augustus, John DIMENSIONS: 26.5 x 21.5  
MEDIA: conte crayon LOCATION:  
EXHIBITION DATES:

**DESCRIPTION** WORKS REQUIRED BEFORE EXHIBIT DEPT. OR  
MUSEUM

Type: Acid free window mat

Condition

Mount (Mount) work is adhered to back of mat at all 4 corners  
— possibly with tape.

**SUPPORT**

Type: med. weight machine made paper.

Condition

- Brittle
- discoloured in central area where exposed to light — areas protected by window rail are lighter than unprotected areas
- work is convex — It has bowed outwards towards window
- smudging from finger prints on all corners

**MEDIUM**

Type: Conte crayon — sepia color

Condition

- Treatment Proposal
- Remove from present mat
- reduce smudging
- humidify + flatten.

CONDITION APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_  
CONSERVATOR \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## Archival History

### Checklist for Exhibition Conservation

#### [transcription of excerpt]

#### CHECKLIST FOR EXHIBITION

#### WORKS OF ART ON PAPER

TITLE: Portrait of Ida  
ACC No.: 31.67  
ARTIST: Augustus, John  
DIMENSIONS: 26.5 x 21.5  
MEDIA: conte crayon  
LOCATION:  
EXHIBITION DATES:

#### MOUNT

Type: Acid free window mat

#### Condition

Hinge (Mount) Work is adhered to body of matt at all 4 corners.— possibly with tape.

#### SUPPORT

Type: Med. weight machine made paper.

#### Condition

—Brittle.  
—discoloured in central area where exposed to light—areas protected by window rail are lighter than unprotected areas.  
—work is convex. It has bowed outwards towards window.  
—smudging from finger prints on all corners.

#### MEDIUM

Type: conte crayon; sepia color

#### Condition:

Treatment Proposal  
—Remove from present mat  
—reduce smudging  
—humidify and flatten.

Augustus Edwin John  
Portrait of Ida, 1900

Black & White Room		
1027	1 Drawing of head "A.E. John R.A."	30.0.0
1028	1 Line engraving "The waiting room" "Steady workman"	2.5.0
1044	1 Drawing "Daisy head" "Daisy Head"	5.0.0
1121	1 " " " " " " " "	26.0.0
1170	1 " " " " " " " "	.....
1271	2 " " " " " " " "	6.10.0
1347	1 " " " " " " " "	.....
1348	1 " " " " " " " "	14.10.0
1376	1 " " " " " " " "	2.2.0
Purchased at auction sale, Burlington St. (.....)		
147	2 " " " " " " " "	1.10.0
148	2 " " " " " " " "	3.0.0
149	2 " " " " " " " "	4.0.0
149	2 " " " " " " " "	1.10.0
149	2 " " " " " " " "	1.10.0
148	1 " " " " " " " "	1.0.0
149	1 " " " " " " " "	10.0
145	2 " " " " " " " "	10.0
177	1 " " " " " " " "	9.10.0
180	1 " " " " " " " "	2.10.0
182	1 " " " " " " " "	2.5.0
186	1 " " " " " " " "	5.0.0
184	1 " " " " " " " "	2.0.0
- 3	" " " " " " " "	.....
160	1 " " " " " " " "	2.5.0
1	" " " " " " " "	7.6
		126.9.6

**Accession Record**

Acquisition Record  
1931-08-06

[transcription of excerpt]

Black and White Room

1 Drawing of Head A.E. John R.A. 30.0.0

[31.67 in pencil]

**FINE ART CONSERVATION**  
ART ON PAPER-TEXTILES-CONSERVATION & TREATMENT 3167

CONDITION REPORT/TREATMENT PROPOSAL

OBJECT: drawing  
MATERIAL: paper, matboard  
TITLE: Portrait of Ida  
MEDIUM: pastel on conte  
SUPPORT: off-white, medium-weight, machine-made, wove paper  
DIMENSIONS: 21.2 x 26.2 cm  
FROM: Vancouver Art Gallery 2h47

CONCLUSION  
The drawing is in good condition. The main problem is that it is glued overall to a matboard backing. The matboard appears to be acid-free, and there appears to be an interleaf of Japanese paper between the drawing and the backing board. The support appears to be slightly discolored overall. There is some surface dirt overall.

TREATMENT PROPOSAL  
Restoration and surface dirt cannot be removed without danger to the media, and no treatment is recommended for these conditions.

1. Remove drawing from backing.

Estimated cost: \$100.00

CONSERVATOR: Vanessa Pearce  
DATE: January 21, 1989

100 East 6th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6E 0B4 Telephone (604) 681-2000

**Condition Report**

Conservation  
1989-01-21

[transcription]

Fine Art Conservation

ART ON PAPER TEXTILES CONSULTATION & TREATMENT

CONDITION REPORT/TREATMENT PROPOSAL

Object: drawing  
Artist: John, Augustus  
Title: Portrait of Ida  
Media: pastel on conte  
Support: off-white, medium-weight, machine-made, wove paper  
Dimensions: W 21.2 x H 26.2 cm  
Owner: Vancouver Art Gallery [31.67 in pencil]

CONDITION

The drawing is in good condition. The main problem is that it is glued overall to a matboard backing. The matboard appears to be acid-free, and there appears to be an interleaf of Japanese paper between the drawing and the backing board. The support appears to be slightly discolored overall. There is some surface dirt overall.

# Augustus Edwin John

*Portrait of Ida, 1900*

## TREATMENT PROPOSAL

Discoloration and surface dirt cannot be removed without danger to the media, and no treatment is recommended for these conditions.

1. Remove drawing from backing

Estimated cost: \$150.00

CONSERVATOR: Rebecca Ravitt

DATE: January 21, 1988

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