

# Introduction to John & Katharine Maltwood



M964.1.519-1  
Portrait of John Maltwood  
by Bertram Park, 1921

In the role of a connoisseur and collector John Maltwood shared his wife's love and devotion to art. Persian rugs, antique furniture, silver and *objets d'art* were among his special interests and collecting became an absorbing hobby. In addition his leisure time was spent gardening, hunting, fishing, reading and playing the organ. The youngest of four, John Maltwood was born in 1867 in North London where his father was a clergyman. His parents were of modest means and raised their children in a highly principled and strictly religious household. John Maltwood showed his great astuteness at the early age of fourteen when he passed the senior Oxford University entrance exams. He later entered a very successful business career.

Katharine Sapsworth was apparently a childhood sweetheart and the couple married after a whirlwind courtship in 1901.<sup>65</sup> The artist's father jokingly referred to his new son in law as "the pauper", however in a short time he became much wealthier than her father and retired as managing director of Oxo Ltd. in 1921.

Various portraits of the Maltwoods shed an interesting light on their personal lives. In formal photographs Katharine Maltwood usually poses as a sculptress at her labours and this even after she had turned to other interests. Her husband on the other hand, is portrayed with his eyes transfixed on some small *objet d'art*, often an oriental piece. The suggestion perhaps being that they viewed themselves as inspired artist and admiring patron.

In the major portrait of Katharine Maltwood as a young woman (see below) she is in the pose of a Morris-Rossetti pre Raphaelite woman. Seated on a heavy, rustic chair, she is wearing an early English embroidery fishu with an Art Nouveau pendant and her hair is in the latest Edwardian coiffure. The watercolour is dated 1905 and the artist Nico



M964.1.519-2  
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Jungman signs his name in the Japanese fashion. Jungman was a well-established exponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the portrait, commissioned by John Maltwood, was one of "a series of ladies well-known in society".<sup>66</sup> In copying the pre-Raphaelite style of dress and pose Katharine Maltwood reflects the Arts and Crafts concern to incorporate art and beauty into one's life style.

During their sixty years of companionship the Maltwoods appear to have shared a highly idealized outlook on life. A verse Katharine Maltwood wrote to her husband at the time of their engagement is revealing:

*Beauty in Living*

*How delightful it is to feel bourne upon one's soul the divine law of Harmony, which is neither more nor less than Beauty. Whatever subject you find me taking up will be to help in the study of that, the greatest of all sciences.*

*A beautiful form is better than a beautiful face, beautiful behaviour than a beautiful form, for the last is the assurance of God within. If fate so orders that not only our lives, but our souls shall blend in absolute Harmony, we must never flag in our pursuit of Beauty absolute.*<sup>67</sup>

One has the impression the couple believed they moved under fate to fulfill this mission in life. John Maltwood later wrote: "Perhaps understanding each helping the other is the quest for Harmony absolute. How much is lost because so few have this ideal before them. Selfishness is the curse of individuals and nations."<sup>68</sup> It was this constant pursuit of beauty and truth through art that took them around the world and led to the formation of the Maltwood Collection.



M964.1.105  
*Portrait of Katharine Maltwood*  
by Nico Jungman, 1905