

panorama



Official Newsletter of Brighton Art Society Inc.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear BAS members,

Our 2020 Online Gallery, featuring 140 artworks of our members and tutors, is now on display via the Brighton Art Society website. It looks terrific and has a wide variety of pictures, displayed attractively, making an excellent showcase of the group. Many thanks go to Sharon De Saily and Charmaine Cachia for the preparation, design and technical skill needed to put this together for us. If you haven't had a look yet, make sure you do so by visiting brightonartsociety.com.au and find it under the "Events" heading.



This will be the final edition of Panorama for 2020. The year has been challenging for all. We hope to be able to return to a more normal range of activities at the studio in the new year, but the uncertainties have made planning difficult, so we do not at this stage, have a firm idea of what the 2021 program will be. We will keep everyone informed once we are able to clarify it.

The Annual General Meeting will be held this year on Sunday December 6th at 2pm. This is the occasion to report on the year, appoint the new committee and contribute your input to the direction of our group. All are encouraged to attend.

We hope that the positive direction in relation to the pandemic continues and we can slowly rebuild a more familiar character to our lives. On behalf of the Committee, I wish everyone well for the summer season.

LYNTON DAEHLI

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There are always different styles and approaches being practiced concurrently, in any period of art history. In the last decades of the C19th and into the beginning of the C20th, the Impressionist approach of artists such as Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts among others, was certainly ascendant, but it can be interesting to look at the work of artists who might not be so familiar, but can draw our attention to other important trends of the period.

Sydney Long was a precise contemporary of Streeton and at the time, critical comparisons were made of their work. The Art Gallery of New South Wales purchased paintings by both artists soon after they were painted and sometimes they worked from the same source material. Particularly in the landscapes both produced in the Hawkesbury River region to the west of Sydney, marked similarities can be seen.

The style referred to as Art Nouveau was also at its peak around the turn of the C19-20th. Perhaps it's greatest influence was felt in architecture and the applied and decorative arts. It took inspiration from the forms of plants and flowers and is characterised by asymmetry and sinuous curving forms. Arabesques and the "S" shaped curves called "whiplash lines" are common. The illustration here shows some examples of the characteristic Art Nouveau style in a range of settings, from a Paris Metro entrance, to a Tiffany lampshade.

SYDNEY LONG - ART NOUVEAU MEETS THE GOLDEN SUMMER

Art Nouveau



Clockwise from top left: Paris metro station *Abbesses*, by Hector Guimard (1900); Lithograph by Alphonse Mucha (1898); Wall cabinet by Louis Majorelle; Lamp by Louis Comfort Tiffany (1900-1910); Interior of *Hôtel Tassel* by Victor Horta (1892-1893).

Another important movement in the arts at the close of the C19th was Symbolism. This was less widespread or influential than Art Nouveau, and more confined to literature. It did however, find a place in painting and concerned itself with attempting to go beyond simple realism or naturalism and use symbols to represent imaginative ideas. Often goddess-like figures were invoked to represent mystical ideas or fantasies, beyond mere representation.

Examples of this approach can be found in the work of both of the prominent impressionist painters Charles Conder and Arthur Streeton. Sydney Long however, took it much more to heart and both Art Nouveau and Symbolist influences can be found in the majority of his output.



The **Conder** painting: *Hot Wind* and the **Streeton** painting: *Spirit of the Drought*, show the influence of Symbolism, with its attempt to represent abstract ideas through the use of mystical figures. Streeton's: *Bush Idyll*, also displays Symbolist influence, though naked nymphettes, dancing through an Australian bush setting in this way, may for contemporary tastes, be a tad quaint and I imagine at the time would also have raised questions for different reasons.

ARTHUR STREETON -
BUSH IDYLL - 1896



ARTHUR STREETON - SPIRIT OF THE
DROUGHT- 1895



Long's: Spirit of the Plains from 1897, captures both the influence of Art Nouveau and Symbolism in his work. Brolgas are a subject in many of his paintings and a large group such as this, allows him to explore a variety of their elegant and graceful postures. The swirling interlinking curves, so characteristic of the Art Nouveau style, triumph here.

The picture's composition is strong and sophisticated. The subject matter is held in two parallel planes, the trees in the more distant one, where they are massed in darker tones toward the picture's left, thinning and reducing in number as our eye moves to the right, so that the lighter toned evening sky can provide an undisturbed background for the silhouetted birds.

The birds and the flute playing nymph they follow, entranced, are contained in a separate more forward parallel plane. In contrast to the trees, their massing increases as our eye moves from left to right. The only other strong compositional element is the horizon line and the picture's overall tonal drama is constrained. The rising moon is positioned just behind the nymph's profiled head, helps to emphasise it.

For us, such a scenario might seem more at home in Ancient Greek mythology, than an Australian bush setting. But at the close of the C19th, the accepted international influence of Symbolism would have made the picture unsurprising.



SYDNEY LONG -
SPIRIT OF THE
PLAINS - 1897



SYDNEY LONG - THE VALLEY - 1898

These two paintings of Sydney Long, celebrate his affinity with the Australian Impressionism of the time. The location is not specified, but they are believed to be based on scenes of the Hawkesbury River region, where Arthur Streeton also painted several of his best known works.

Long's painting: *Midday*, captures the majestic nature of this landscape. In the foreground is a shepherd and flock, positioned before the large dark-toned mass of trees. To the left, our eye travels out across pastures, the river and on to the faint but massive distant blue range. It links in with the heroic nationalist sentiment, present in regard to rural Australia, in those years leading up to Federation. The composition is powerful and assured, as is the technique. The palette is perhaps a little richer than Streeton's, with its use of turquoise in the sky and more acidic blues and greens in the foreground pastures, it is however, the equal of anything from the era.

The Valley, painted a couple of years later in 1898, is likely to be based on a view from the same location. It is smaller in size and somewhat more simplified in treatment. Again a strong capturing of depth is achieved by including the vertical group of foreground trees counterbalancing the distant horizontal range. An interesting thing to observe here is the treatment of this group of trees. There is a decorative sinuousness in the rendering of their trunks and the foliage of the crowns, blends across from one to the next. This is characteristic of Long. They register as eucalypts, but the influence of Art Nouveau is present. The next and final picture we look at, takes that influence as well as that of Symbolism a generous step further.



SYDNEY LONG - MIDDAY - 1896



SYDNEY LONG - PAN - 1898

The Art Gallery of NSW purchased this painting in 1898, the year it was painted. However, for whatever reasons, it was returned to Long four years later in 1902, in part exchange for another of his pictures. In fashion today and out tomorrow it seems. Fortunately, it was re-acquired by the Gallery in 1943 as the gift of a private benefactor and has since become a valued and much loved part of the Gallery's collection.

In this painting, we are immediately whisked away to the world of dreams and imagination. Nymphs and satyrs prance about to the tune piped by the mythological figure of Pan, pictured at the left. The action takes place in a shadowy forest glade. Little detail is discerned in the dark lower half of the painting and the upper half shows the figures silhouetted against an evening sky. The treatment of the trees here is highly stylised and with a strong Art Nouveau character.

Long claimed many years later, that he had based the painting on a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, an English poet who lived and worked during the Victorian era of the early C19th. Long also had an association over many years with Sydney based poet Christopher Brennan, who was in his turn, a follower of the French Symbolist writers. This is just by way of highlighting the links to literary trends of the time, which was characteristic of the Symbolist movement.

The painting can be enjoyed purely for its own qualities, however it is valuable for us to reflect on what it can show us about the wider interests and approaches of artists of that time, beyond what we might first think of.

LYNTON DAEHLI

VALE - JOHN WHITTENBURY

Sadly we report the death in October of long term BAS member John Whittenbury. John was a skilled graphic artist and former teacher, who attended classes and activities at BAS over many years.

An exhibition of his cartoons, which included depictions of many familiar BAS faces, was displayed in the Kevin Taylor Gallery in July/August last year and was enjoyed both by members who had known him and those who hadn't.

Our condolences go to his family.

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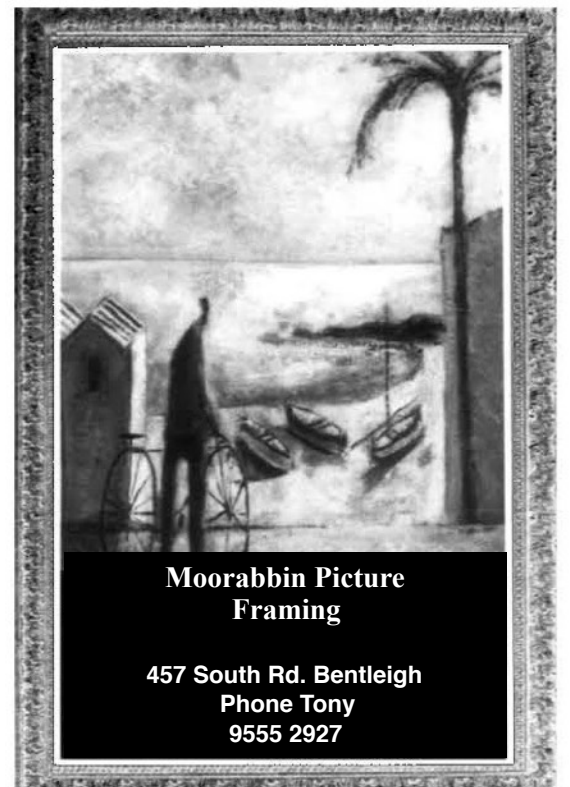
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Dates to remember:

Sunday December 6th
at 2pm
ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING

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