

panorama



Official Newsletter of Brighton Art Society Inc.

Issue
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June

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear BAS members,

Following the complete shutdown of activities at the studio in term one last year, we have made a successful though cautious restart in 2021. However, the current return to a general lockdown in Melbourne, reminds us that the situation remains uncertain. We all hope that this interruption is short lived.

Prior to last year, it was common during the term breaks, to hold workshops with visiting artists. These were always popular and gave us the opportunity not only to stay engaged with our art during the breaks, but also to have a chance to work with diverse artists.

Long term member Wendy Lawrence took on the responsibility of organising and staging these workshops for many years. This is no small job and we should all be thankful to her for the efforts she put in. Wendy has however, now decided it is time for her to move on.

Fortunately, our committee member Charly Knezic has enthusiastically stepped up to take on the task and is keen to get some workshops underway in the coming break which starts on June 26th. Charly has planned two workshops.

Saturday July 3rd: Vivi Palegeorge will offer a one day session. The theme is "Seascapes in Watercolour".

Tuesday July 6th and Wednesday July 7th: David Chen will offer a two day workshop, focused on "Landscapes in Oils".

Both these artists are popular and we expect places to fill up quickly. Further details and booking via the TryBooking link, are now available on the Brighton Art Society website under the **Events** heading.

We must of course respond to any changes in Government restrictions that might occur. Should it be necessary to cancel the events, fee refunds will of course be made.

LYNTON DAEHLI

brightonartsociety.com.au



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Watercolour Seascapes with Vivi Palegeorge

Saturday 3rd July 2021
10am till 3pm

Vivi is a local artist with 20 yrs expertise across all media and has a particular interest in nature. Her proximity to the sea & Bayside inspire her to paint Seascapes.

In 2006 Vivi was accepted as a full member to Australian Guild of Realist Artists, Vivi is also a member of Aust. Watercolour Soc, Vic. Artist Soc. & Melbourne Soc. of Women Painters & Sculptors.

In this workshop you will learn.....

- Capturing light
- Creating mood & setting
- Reflections on water
- Composition skills
- Understanding contrast

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Cost: \$120- Members or \$135- Visitors

Venue: 1st Floor, Old Town Hall
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ONE ROOM AT A TIME

Back in the good old days when we were able travel more readily, many of us would have found ourselves from time to time, visiting a major art gallery and wondering how to do justice to the large collection of work housed there, without becoming totally overwhelmed and exhausted in the process.

If one has the luxury of time, it can be far more worthwhile and satisfying, to limit the scope of what, in these major collections, we might try to see and absorb in any single visit. The advantage of a collection such as the NGV in our own city, is that its accessibility means we can visit without much effort and hence afford to be selective in what we try to cover on any given visit. I quite commonly venture there, to visit a particular section or just to catch up with a handful of “old friends”: paintings I have already looked at on many occasions, but enjoy rediscovering or finding a fresh insight into.

Careful curatorial attention is given in major galleries, to the selection, placement and combination of the artworks in any given space. Chronological or stylistic connections between individual works are common, but there can also be thematic links or related regional origins informing the choice and combination.

I recently found myself at the NGV, lingering in the first room of the section of the gallery dedicated to European work from the C17th -18th. In the particular room, there were a total of only six paintings on display. With such a modest number, selection and placement is critical. All but one painting, was from the C17th Dutch landscape tradition.

In truth, my reason for returning here was that a particular painting by the artist Jacob van Ruisdael, entitled: The Watermill, had caught my attention on a previous visit and I was interested to give it a some further time and consideration. It's placement in the room with those other handful of paintings, offered some clues to its appeal and distinctiveness. Several of the other paintings displayed however, were striking and deserving of attention in themselves, so I shall begin here with a look at a few of them.



MEINDERT HOBBEEMA -The Old Oak - 1662 - (101 x 144 Cm)

“The Old Oak”, was painted in 1662 by the Dutch painter MEINDERT HOBBEEMA. It is in some ways a portrait of the grand old tree of the title, which occupies much of the left hand half of the painting. A sombre palette, which shifts from a range of deep greens to a lustrous treacly black, characterises almost the entire foreground of the picture and is a palette familiar in Dutch landscapes of this period. Compositionally, this dark toned passage, is kept near to the front of the picture, giving this area almost the quality of a silhouette against the sky and landscape beyond. It is as though heavy cloud blocks all sunlight from this passage of the terrain. All the mid and lighter tones are reserved for the sky and the deeper recesses of the picture.

To the right of the main tree trunk, our eye has the opportunity to travel off into the remote distance, where a hill rises up on the horizon. The area occupied by this far distance is however small in size. Most off the painting's surface and attention is given over to the foreground. This is a rich and engaging zone with much to make our eye linger. We might however, once sated, accompany the rider and his dog, observed moving away in the picture's lower right, to eventually explore the landscape's more luminous and distant reaches.

SALOMON van RUYSDAEL - River
Landscape With Boats - 1650 - (105 x 111 Cm)



Detail

On the wall opposite is a painting from 1650 by SALOMON VAN RUYSDAEL entitled: River Landscape With Boats. Salomon should not be confused with Jacob van Ruisdael, whose "Watermill" we will look at shortly.

This composition is again dominated by a grand mature tree. Again also, the foreground is the picture's darkest toned area. On close examination, the way in which the tree is painted is intriguing. From a distance it is totally convincing, yet if we look closely, detailed definition is confined to very limited areas, with the paint applied in the thinnest of glazes. The golden foliage at the picture's centre is more articulated, but if we move leftward into the central mass of the tree's foliage, the definition is only occasional. From time to time we can pick out a branch cluster, or defined leaves, but often it is just a turbulent swirl of the thinnest of washes. Of course, the firmness at the edges, where the form of the leaves is silhouetted against the sky, is precise. Otherwise we are free to become lost.

To the right of the tree, are the graceful contrasting forms of ships and their sails. There is firmness in these, particularly when seen against this lightest passage of sky. It is from here that the artist allows our eye to sweep back to a distant horizon.

As with the HOBEMMA, the area of the painting's surface given over to distant views is small. However, both paintings grant us the luxury of an experience of vast space, whilst ensuring that most of our attention is reserved for the near distance. In addition to the vessels and their crew, if we look to the lower left, at the base of the grand tree, we can observe further human activities. A horse drawn carriage and its occupants and assorted other people engaged in their pursuits. In contrast to the diffused way in which the tree's foliage is captured, these figures are very crisply and tightly rendered.



CLAUDE LORRAINE - River Landscape With Tiburtine Temple -1635 - (38 x 53 cm)

Amongst this suite of Dutch paintings, there is one picture of French origin by the master Claude Lorraine. At 38x53 cm it is comparatively small. It is however a gem and although it displays important differences, it is understandable why it has been hung with the other paintings in this group.

The first difference I would draw attention to is the presence of the classical ruin to the right of centre. This is the Tiburtine Temple of the picture's title. A familiar inclusion for a Claude landscape, it is intended to invoke the classical Roman past with its elevated glories to which those in the C17th century could do well to aspire. I'm not sure if the glowing sky beyond would infer a sunrise or sunset, but if the former, the symbolism could be of promise to come. If the latter, perhaps a wistful nostalgia for glories past. The Dutch didn't bother with these remote allusions. C17th landscapes in the Netherlands were firmly anchored in the here and now. The lives and scenes that Dutch folk of the time would have found around them.

The Claude landscape however, does have important stylistic similarities, particularly in its rendering of the trees and foliage and its compositional balance between the dominant dark toned foreground and the opening up to a lighter toned area which allows our eye the release of sweeping out to a distant vista.

SATURDAY PORTRAIT PAINTING

The long running untutored portrait painting/drawing session, which runs at the studio on Saturday afternoon between 2 - 4 pm, will resume on Saturday March 6th.

The pose is set for 3 weeks, so there is plenty of time to develop your picture. The atmosphere is friendly and relaxed and all BAS members are welcome.

The Convenor of the session is **Ann Black**. If you are interested, Ann will be happy to hear from you on: **9598 7626**



JACOB van RUISDAEL - The Watermill - 1660 - (65 x 71 cm)

And now to the picture that prompted these meanderings of thought. Sometimes, although we may be swiftly charmed by a particular painting, it can take some reflection to analyse why we have had that response. When I first caught sight of Ruisdael's Watermill, it was the sonorous lustre of its dark palette that captured my eye. There was also something distinctive about its composition, which I only came to understand by spending time with the other paintings in the room, including those which I have discussed above.

At first glance, the scene is simple. The watermill of the title, dominates the composition. It is a humble rustic structure that would have been a common enough sight at the time. The expanse of terracotta tiled roof of the mill building, sets up a firm complimentary colour contrast with the greenish foliage to its left. The mechanism of the wooden water channel and wheel it turns, are centrally positioned and present a distinctive contrast of the mechanical, to the expansive natural form of the trees behind it.

As always detail is lost in the reproduction, but in the flesh, the whiteness of the frothing water as it plunges into the darkness of the pond below, is beautifully articulated and the pond itself, which is painted in a build up of thin dark glazes, has a seductive gloominess. As with the first two paintings discussed above, the bulk of attention is given to the picture's foreground. In this case however, that detail is all retained within a shallow space and is kept strictly parallel with the picture surface. In some ways, this may seem an unsophisticated compositional structure, but I came to feel that it's very unfamiliarity for a work of its time and genre, gave it a curious strength.

Unlike in the previous pictures discussed, apart from exploring the turbulent cloud-filled sky, the artist here, gives our eye no possibility of progressing beyond this foreground subject matter. The trees rise on a nearby hillock and if we look closely, a peasant and his dog are departing the scene on a path which begins to the left of the mill structure and meanders away, scaling the hill's rise. The peasant and his companion, will soon get to see what lies beyond. We however are denied that and remain confined to the picture's immediate location.

If we return to each of the paintings discussed above, although the foreground is dominant to each picture's narrative, the regression into a deeper representation of space is a critical element of the composition. The Watermill presents us with a space almost as confined as an interior and my contention would be that this is a considered choice of the artist. It could even be experienced as somewhat claustrophobic for an exterior space. It is however, a gem of a picture and I would encourage seeking it out. Alternatively, choose a room of your own preference and begin your own explorations.

Landscapes with David Chen

Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th July
10am till 3.30pm

David Chen was born in China. He holds both Bachelor & Master degrees in Fine Arts. He has over 50 years artistic experience and taught at university level. David has lived and worked in Melbourne since 1993. He was invited to be part of the HYDRA Art Group. In 1994, 3 paintings were exhibited at the National Gallery of Victoria. David has won many prizes including Best in Show at Camberwell Art Show 2013 & Victor Harbour 2011. He's a member of Australian Guild of Realist Artists judging panel. He has judged many art shows including the Camberwell Art Show 2014.

In this Oil workshop

>Demonstration

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BAYSIDE ACQUISITIVE ART PRIZE
14 MAY-4 JULY 2021

BACC GALLERY

Downstairs from the BAS studio is the Gallery space run by the Bayside Council. I'm sure many of us pay it a visit when we are coming or going from our classes. The exhibition titled: Her Own Path, which featured an interesting collection of work from the early C20th, by women associated with the Bayside area, has just closed, but for those who managed it, was well worth a look.

May 14th, will see the opening of the annual Bayside Acquisitive Prize. Amongst the entrants is our tutor Michelle Zuccolo. At \$15,000, the prize is valuable and although the inclusions can at times be controversial, it is always worth a visit. The show will remain on until July 4th, so make a note to visit.

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Trick Mirrors in Paintings by Famous Artists: from Van Eyck to Serov, from Strange to Scary

If you want a good thrill, fun and consternation, look in the mirror. This secret is known to Russian girls who tell fortune on the Epiphany eve. Mirrors are borders between life and death, truth and falsehood, reality and illusion. We were not scared and chose seven unusual picturesque mirrors worth taking a closer look at. These are mirrors that give more questions than answers. They protect their secrets. You feel uncomfortable and sometimes joyful when looking at them.



Guests in van Eyck's mirror

For sure, this review cannot do without one of the most famous and mysterious paintings in the world, The Arnolfini Portrait by Jan van Eyck.

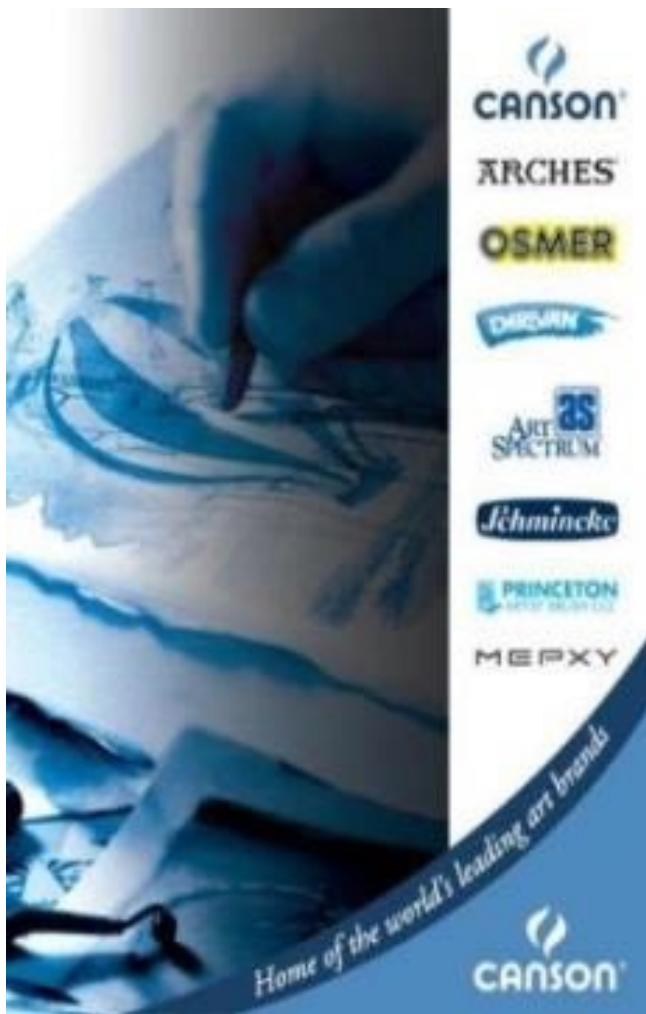


The Arnolfini portrait
Jan van Eyck
1434, 82x60 cm

This picture is overflowing with details that were probably understandable to the client of the picture and his contemporaries, but cause conflicting interpretations after centuries. One such detail is the mirror in the back of the room, decorated with medallions depicting the Passion of Christ. On the left (from the side of the man), the events of the medallion depict episodes that took place before the death of Christ, on the right (from the side of the wife), what happened after His death. This is an argument for the theory that the portrait was commissioned to van Eyck by an inconsolable husband in memory of his deceased wife. On the other hand, the mirror itself is a symbol of the Virgin and the integrity of the bride: an evidence for the fact that the picture is a wedding portrait (or the merchant Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini wanted the posthumous portrait of his wife to be performed as a wedding scene).


The mirror reflects two men entering the room. One of them, the one in blue, may be van Eyck's self-portrait. It may be the reason why the artist wrote "Johannes van eyck fuit hic" above the mirror, which is usually translated as "Jan van Eyck was here" (reading of this phrase also has several versions just as its translation).

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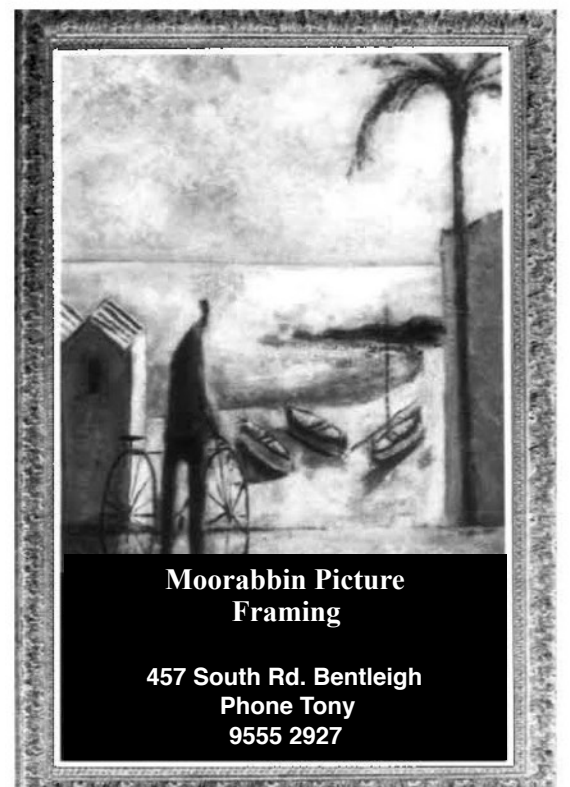
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BAS OFFICE 9553 8506

Dates to remember:

June 14
Term 3 Class Bookings Open

June 25
Last day of Term 2

July 3
Workshop - Vivi Palegeorge
Seascapes in Watercolour

July 6 & 7
Workshop - David Chen
Landscape in Oils

July 19 - September 17
Term 3 BAS Tutored Classes

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