

panorama



Official Newsletter of Brighton Art Society Inc.

Issue
349
September

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear BAS members,

The recent extension of the government lockdown provisions and the associated limits on the size of group gatherings well into the future, has seriously restricted our options for the remainder of the year.

We will not be resuming any classes or other activities at the studio and sadly we will not be able to run our Annual Exhibition for 2020.

The Exhibition is always a well attended and popular event and the Committee is all too aware of the disappointment members will feel about its cancellation. The opportunity to share our year's work with others, both within the group and beyond, is an important reward for the effort we put into its creation.

Recognising this and in order to take advantage of the new BAS website, an Online Gallery for members work is going to be set up. Our talented Committee member and Exhibitions Coordinator, Sharon De Saily will manage this and we expect it will be open to submit work by the end of this month. More detailed information from Sharon is available on Page 2 of this edition of Panorama. You will be able to offer your work for sale, although unfortunately, there will not be the usual judging and prizes.

LYNTON DAEHLI

BAS MEMBERS - ONLINE GALLERY for 2020

It seems timely to announce that we will be unable to hold our BAS Annual Art Show this year, given the recent announcement by the Premier of further lockdowns, and the ongoing need for social distancing well into the future. No doubt you will be as disappointed as our Committee Members are, but with so much uncertainty, the health and wellbeing of our tutors and members must remain paramount.

All is not lost! Let us not let the first year of this brand new decade slip by uncelebrated. Our hope is that you have continued to find joy in your artistic pursuits throughout this extraordinary year. So to honour that, share some joy, creative spirit and stay connected, our plan is to create a virtual online BAS Members Gallery for 2020 on our brand new website.

We expect to have this open and ready to submit your work by the end of September.

Here's how the process will work.

- * Each member and tutor is invited to select one of your artworks from this year.
- * Take a clear colour photo.
- * Email that to BAS (brightonartsociety@icloud.com)
- * Deadline for receipt of emails by BAS is by 5pm on 1 November 2020.
- * In the body of the email please include the following:
 - Artist Name
 - Artwork Title
 - Medium (eg acrylic on stretched canvas, watercolour on paper etc)
 - Size (shown in cm)
 - Whether For Sale or Not (BAS will forward any enquiries to you)
 - Your current phone number (this will not be published, only used by BAS if we need to contact you)

We are so excited to launch this new website feature and to share the efforts of our talented BAS members.

SHARON DE SAILLY
(Exhibitions Coordinator)

WASSILY KANDINSKY - *from abstract to non- representational*



The distinction between *abstract* and *non-representational* art, is sometimes not clear or well understood. Particularly where the term *abstract* is used in critical commentary or art history, it can be applied to many diverse styles of work.

If we think of there being three broad categories, they can be described as: *representational*, *abstract* and *non-representational*. The first category focuses on objects, scenes, or events in the real world, with the sources, usually being easily recognisable in the finished art work. The category of *abstract*, begins with its sources in the real world, but then adapts and modifies these, to a point where there may be little if any resemblance in the finished work to the subject matter the artist began with.

We should recognise though, that abstraction exists on a continuum, from work which retains clearly recognisable links to the objects and events in the natural world that have been its source, to works with no obvious links to these. The style of the painters referred to as the New York School for example, which was active in the mid C20th and included artists Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko, was referred to as "Abstract Expressionism". There was certainly little sign of subject matter left in any of their mature work. *Non-representational* art by definition, has no connection in its sources to the visible world.

In truth, there is always some degree of abstraction, even in so called representational art. Perfect reproduction of appearance is an elusive pursuit and the artist is always making selections and arrangements of the source material for expressive purposes. Prior to the later C19th however, the representational approach, certainly within the Western tradition, was dominant and had been unchallenged for many centuries. Impressionism was amongst the earliest of approaches to move away from strict representationalism. With the arrival of the C20th, many artists and movements in art, began to explore approaches which challenged the previous paradigm.

Wassily Kandinsky was born in Russia in 1866 and is seen as one of the most significant artists in the emergence of abstraction in European art. He initially studied law and economics and subsequently gained an academic post as a law professor. He had however, long held an interest in art and music and in 1896 at age thirty, moved to Munich to study painting. He had always been engaged by Russian and Germanic folk tales and these became an important source of inspiration in his early work.



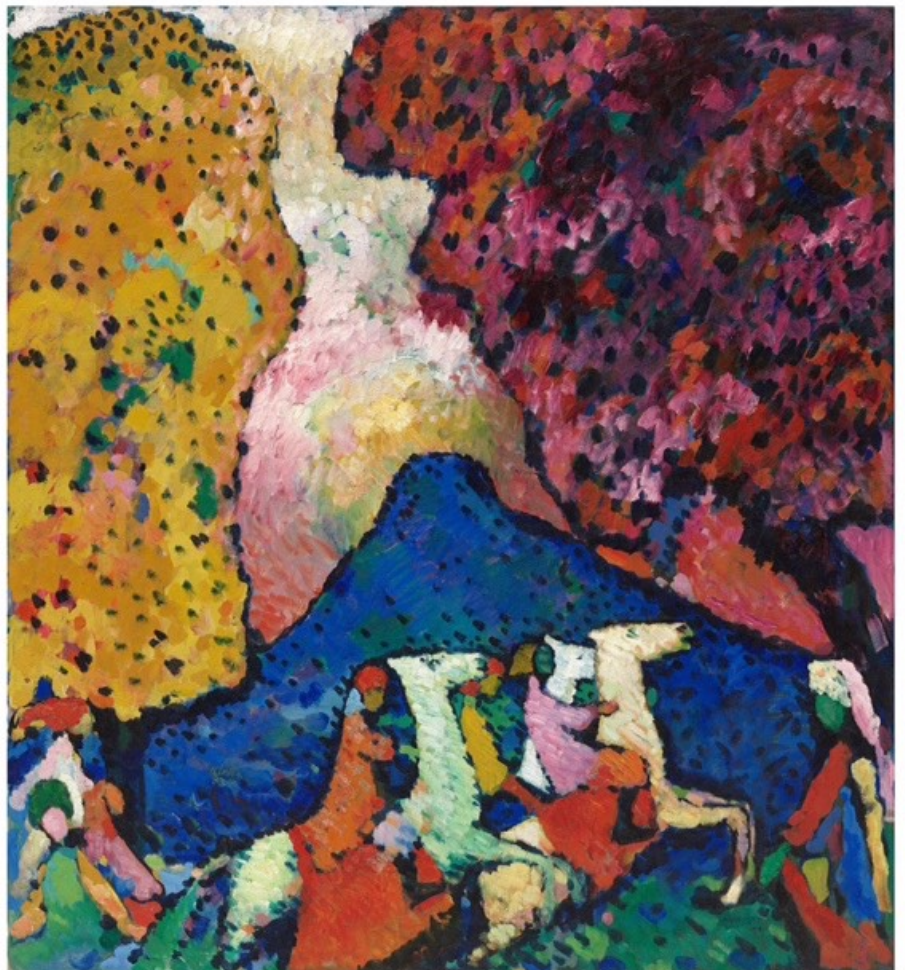
COUPLE RIDING - 1906

“Couple Riding” painted in 1906 during his time in Munich, displays his enduring preoccupation with subjects anchored in folktales and the presence of the onion-domes on buildings in the picture’s distant cityscape, would suggest more a nostalgic memory of Russia than the sights which might have surrounded him in Bavaria.

We can already see a significant degree of abstraction in the picture’s treatment, albeit that it has identifiable subject matter. A connection to the work of the French Post-Impressionists: Seurat and Signac can be discerned in the dotted application of paint. The clarity and firmness of the paint marks is equal, whether what they are depicting is close or distant and this tends to result in a flattening of the space, making it more decorative than representational. The colour also has a richness and intensity which distance it from the genre of representational portrayal.

In this painting entitled: The Blue Mountain, from 1908, which is included in the collection of New York’s Guggenheim Museum, we see a further move away from a representational approach. The picture displays a spatial distortion, with the intense blue mountain of the title, flanked by two overwhelming, simplified trees, one red and one yellow, captured in exuberant colour dabbings, with little regard for the internal detail of the forms. In the lower foreground four horse riders pass.

The picture had its origin in St. John’s Book of Revelation with the horsemen being those of the Apocalypse. Be that as it may, the picture has unquestioned vibrancy, an energetic circular rhythm, linking the three expansive masses of primary colours, and a lively paint handling, that take us well beyond any traditional approach.

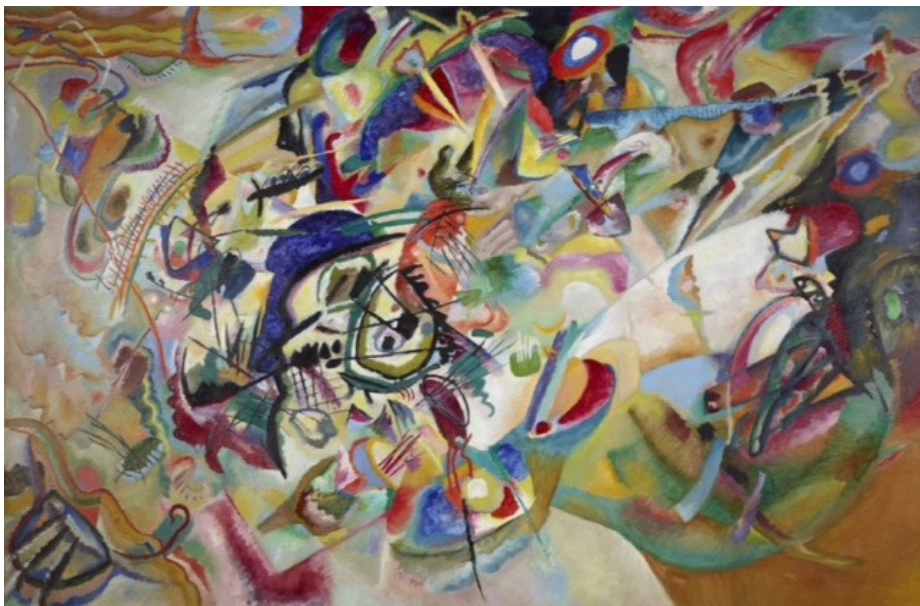


THE BLUE MOUNTAIN- 1908



MOSCOW, RED SQUARE -1916

Kandinsky retained a deep affection for the city of Moscow. This picture, “Moscow-Red Square” was painted in 1916 on his temporary return there. Although elements of the buildings and other structures are present, it is more concerned with capturing a psychological experience of the city. Perhaps if one stood in the centre of Red Square and gradually rotated, titling one’s head skyward and slowly down again, the rich and colourful surrounds would engulf us and leave an elaborate, composite impression of the environment. It is not founded on a horizontal ground plane, with calmly receding linear perspective, but strives to bring us to an emotional experience of place, that perhaps has more in common with the recall we would have in a dream. This would clearly be described as an abstract painting and shares much in common with other of his fully abstracted pictures of the same period.



COMPOSITION VII - 1913

artistic expression possible in the medium of music. Music is in a sense, answerable to nothing beyond itself. It observes technical demands which are self contained within the discipline and as listeners, we respond to its expressive aims, without questioning references outside of the music itself. Some composers have of course attempted descriptive works. Vivaldi’s Four Seasons or Debussy’s La Mer (The Sea) come to mind. But we don’t hear anyone grumbling in outrage: “doesn’t sound like a wave to me”.

Popular music idioms of course, are often accompanied by lyrics, and we may respond to the representational content of these, but for the music itself, our response is more direct and our emotions (and intellect), rise and fall according to the rules set by the music itself. It answers to no other *external* demands or references.

Kandinsky was interested in exploring ways in which colour and forms might be organised in art, to stimulate pure emotional and “spiritual” responses in the viewer, in the way music does for the listener, freed from any necessary referencing of external subject matter.

If we compare this painting: Composition VII with Moscow-Red Square, although painted three years earlier in 1913, it has stylistic similarities in its riotous use of colour and swirling circular rhythm. The characteristic shapes used and the way the paint is applied also show a relationship. Composition VII however, is fully abstract, or more accurately, non-representational. It answers only to itself and its own pictorial demands.

Kandinsky was a skilled musician and music had an important influence on his painting. At different points in time, more than one visual artist, has expressed an envy of the purity of

In 1910, he published a treatise entitled: "Concerning the Spiritual in Art". Here he elaborated these theories. In particular, the function of colour in art and its potential to stimulate specific responses in the viewer. "Colour is the keyboard, the eyes find the harmonies, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul".

This quote from the text, may sound effete and overly wrought to a contemporary reader, but the important observation to be drawn from it, is the deep and philosophical purpose Kandinsky was giving to abstraction. He was not simply interested in playing with form and colour to produce a pleasant decorative effect, but saw this approach as offering scope for profound and purposeful artistic expression.

In 1922, Kandinsky began teaching at the Bauhaus, a school of architecture and applied art in Weimar Germany. Although the school closed in 1933, under pressure from the Nazi government, it became one of the most influential forces on modernist art and design practice of the C20th. The Bauhaus focused on the unification of the pure and applied arts and the experience of working in this environment, had a significant impact on Kandinsky's painting in the later part of his life.

The work of this later period, focused more on order and geometry. And an increased emphasis on careful compositional balance can be seen, which contrasts with the loose exuberance of his earlier work.



DOMINANT CURVE -1936



AROUND THE CIRCLE- 1940



VARIOUS PARTS - 1940

These three paintings from the late period of Kandinsky's career, illustrate the peak of his refinement in pure non-representational expression. They do of course, each have unique individual characteristics and I will comment on some of these, but there are also common attributes. Each painting comprises a mix of pure and firm *geometric* elements, combined with elements we could describe as *organic* or *biomorphic* in their origin. There are no identifiable objects, but an expressive tension is achieved by the contrasting of these two types of forms.

There is little blending in the use of colour and each colour is contained within the boundaries of the shape it occupies. However, the arrangement and placement of the colours he uses, is done with the most careful consideration. There is a feeling of harmony in this placement, which we might parallel with the harmonies achieved by the bringing together of varied pitches of sound in music.

"Dominant Curve", with its elaborate overlaying of shapes, has more spatial depth and complexity. There is stronger tonal contrast and drama in the picture's upper half, where the central overlapping circles, with their assembly of black barbs, appear to move almost aggressively toward the dominant curve of the title. The lower half is defined by a reduced tonal drama and is more playful in character.

"Around the Circle", with its steady dark green background, is contained within a simpler, shallower space. Again the drama, is more within the picture's upper half. The action radiates out from the centrally located red circle. Placing the main action of each of these two pictures in the upper half of the format, gives the arrangement a lightness, as though it is taking place in a cosmic, rather than earthbound setting.

"Various Parts", is characterised by its division into a series of rectangles of differing colours. The left hand panel, is almost monochrome, with its black graphic markings, resting on an even tan coloured ground. A firm thickened, banded vertical line separates this panel from the others, with only two overlapping graphic tendrils, maintaining its link with the rest of the composition. Each of the rectangular panels, is self-contained in its design and character, yet they hold together to form the larger unity of the final painting. Again, a musical analogy could be drawn with the way in which the movements of a suite or symphony sit together, each having its independent character, but coming together to form a richer, balanced whole.

Although there is no presence of anything resembling written text in any of these paintings, there are sometimes echoes of hieroglyphs or calligraphic characters from some, perhaps ancient and obscure text. In any case, the paintings demand patient "reading". We cannot absorb them in one glance, but must allow our eye to move over the surface patiently, to discern the picture's narrative meaning. It is however, a meaning, that resides solely in the expressive visual language of organised colour and form. At its best, it is sumptuous and profound.

LYNTON DAEHLI

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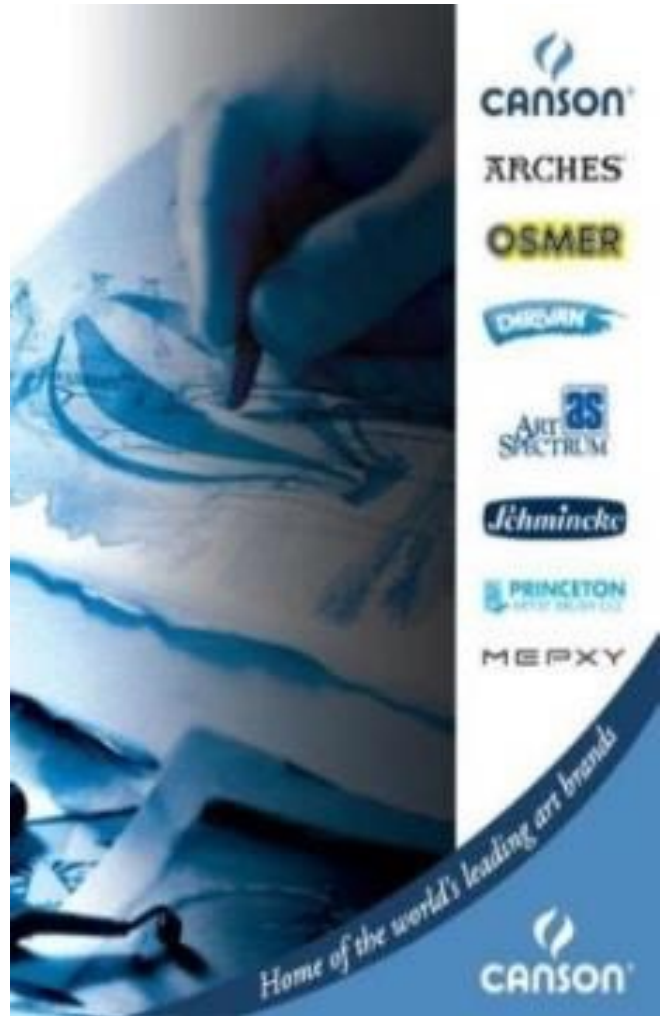
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Michelle Zuccolo was selected for the Portia Geach Memorial Award (for the 6th time). She painted a young girl from Orbost who has joined the Fire Crew

14 August – 20 September 2020

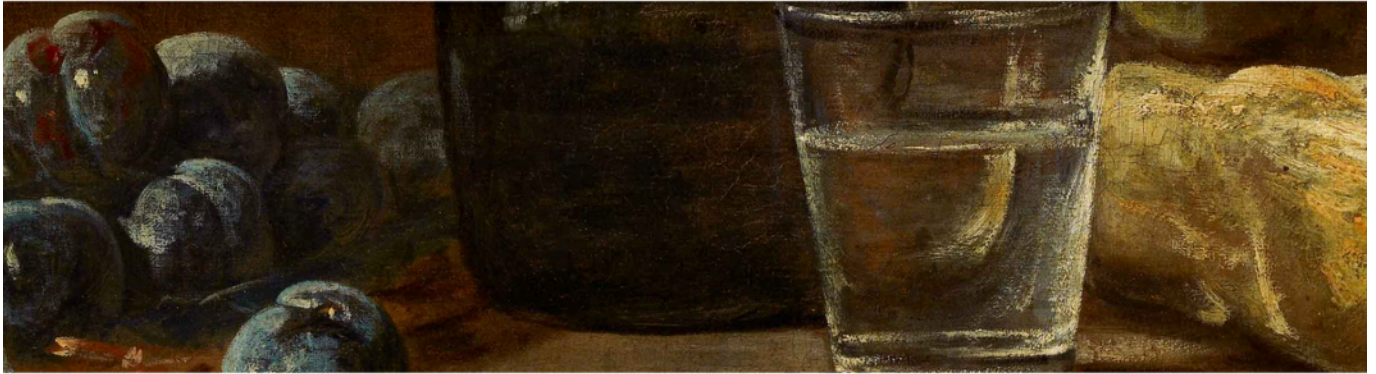


The Portia Geach Memorial Award

is Australia's most prestigious art prize for portraiture by women artists. The Award was established by the will of the late Florence Kate Geach in memory of her sister, Portia Geach. The non-acquisitive award of \$30,000 is awarded by the Trustee for the entry which is of the highest artistic merit, '...for the best portrait painted from life of some man or woman distinguished in Art, Letters, or the Sciences by after any female resident who was born in Australia or was British born or has become a naturalised Australian and whose place of domicile is Australia'

If you are looking for some entertainment plus getting some knowledge about Art, fantastic programs on YouTube:

https://www.frick.org/interact/miniseries/cocktails_curator



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Cocktails with a Curator



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Upcoming YouTube Episode(s)

Friday, September 11

Please note, in commemoration of September 11, there will be no new episode this Friday.

Beechey's Elizabeth Sophia Baillie

Xavier F. Salomon, Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator

Friday, September 18, 5:00 p.m.

[Watch on YouTube](#)



Elizabeth Sophia Baillie (née de Vismes)

Cocktail Recipe

Great Malden's Blush

Equal parts of:

dry gin

lemon juice

elder flower cordial

on the rocks

Top with rosé champagne

Audiences under 21 are encouraged to join with a non-alcoholic drink.



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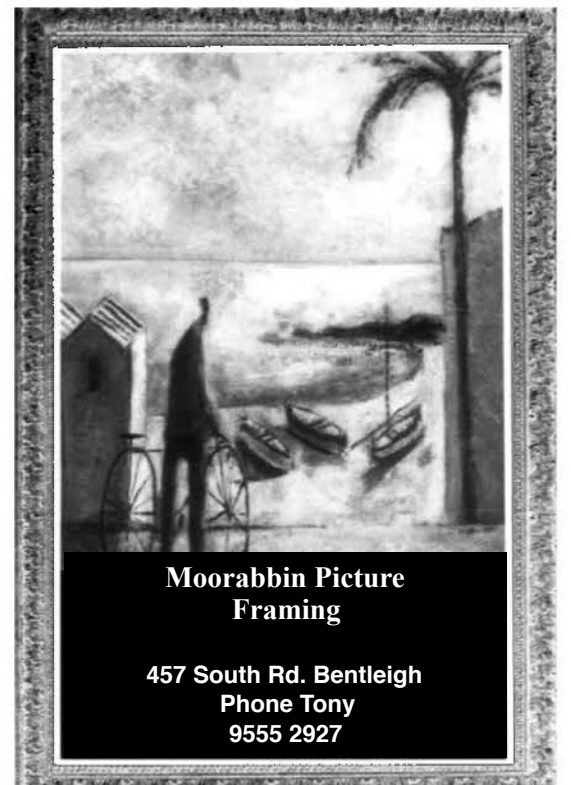
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Dates to remember:

BAS Members Gallery for 2020

*Deadline for receipt of entries for Online
Gallery is 5pm on 1 November 2020*