

# panorama



Official Newsletter of Brighton Art Society Inc.

Issue  
373  
February

## **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

***Dear Members and Friends,***

Our art society has had a great start to 2023 and our community is already hard at work drawing and painting up a storm.

Excitingly our enrollments are up 120% on Term 4 last year. Our Wednesday night tutored group led by Elizabeth Paszko had a waiting list. Pleasingly we were able to support our new members in their artistic journey by offering a Tuesday night class with Heidi Wolfenden.

The month of February is a busy month. In addition to the 13 classes and untutored group activities running weekly we have a guest artist on site. Janice Mills will be running two events for our community in the form of a demonstration and a workshop, looking forward to meeting you there.

### Pastel Demonstration

Sunday 19 February, 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm

Afternoon tea will be provided. Tickets at the Door: Members \$15 / Non Members \$20

### Pastel Workshop

Sunday 26 February, 11.00 am to 4.00 pm

Tickets available here: <https://www.trybooking.com/CEVXN>

This year Victoria lost the Wildlife Art Society of Australasia after 50 years of operation due them being unable to fill key roles in their committee including the President. I'd like to remind members the society belongs you, so please start considering what support you can provide. In our next newsletter we will be seeking assistance with the annual exhibition I encourage you to get involved and share your skills. Please email [brightonartsociety@icloud.com](mailto:brightonartsociety@icloud.com) to share your interest.

Last but not least thank-you for the warm welcome from members I've met over the course of the week, it has been lovely to meet you. Thanks for the additional support offered when learning about my full time employment status. I look forward to seeing you on the weekend at the demonstration should the stars align.

***Kindest of regards***

***Charmaine Cachia  
President***

# JOHN BRACK - FROM SUBJECT TO PICTURE, THE LANGUAGE OF DESIGN

**T**he Australian painter **John Brack**, was born in the Melbourne suburb of East Hawthorn in 1920 and died in Melbourne in at the close of the C20th. He attended evening classes at the National Gallery School from 1938-40 when the training of artists still involved a long period of drawing from plaster casts of classical figures and their body parts, before the student was permitted any access to the life model. Brack enlisted in the army in 1940 and it was not until his discharge in 1946, that he returned briefly to the Gallery School, prior to embarking seriously on his career as an artist.



THE BARBER'S SHOP - 1952

The NGV purchased the first of their now considerable collection of his pictures in 1952, from a small group exhibition at a Melbourne commercial gallery. This was in fact Brack's first show, so he could be considered to have made an impressive start, being immediately acquired by the major public collection. That painting entitled "The Barber's Shop" remains a good example of his early work and contains many of the enduring preoccupations of his art.



MEN'S WEAR - 1953

**A**lmost without fail, Brack's work contains recognisable subject matter and across his career, that subject matter was drawn from his immediate surroundings. He observed at one point:

*My material is what lies nearest to hand, the people and things I know best.*

His early work remains widely popular, because for many Australians it is so recognisably associated with the familiar world of post-war suburban Australia. Even in his later work, which is far more esoteric, the objects depicted were readily found, both within his studio or within the world, close at hand around him. What I find most entrancing with his work, is in trying to assess the transition that takes place between the subject matter with which he begins and the representations of this in the final pictures. The work is clearly within the "modernist" style and the presence of the priorities and preferences of Brack himself are always evident.

In "Men's Wear" from 1953, we can see the strong use the artist makes of graphic means. The subject matter is defined with solid linear boundary lines and relatively flat tone/colours within these. The colour choice is not a naturalistic one, but a stylised exploration around, in this case, the key colour of yellow.

A quiet social commentary on the times is also present here. Brack observes: "Occasionally I pass by little shops...no one ever enters them; their owners apparently do no business, but if you glance in, you can see them sitting there." The silhouetted figure reflected in the mirror, indicates a person outside looking in, possibly suggesting Brack himself. The theme of reflections in shop windows and the ambiguities of persons inside and outside as well as a play on ideas of solid things against illusory or optical things like reflections, are also concerns the artist explores in many paintings.



PORTRAIT OF HAROLD HATTAM - 1965

**A**cross his career, Brack painted a substantial number of portraits. He did however, say that he preferred working with sitters he personally knew. Harold Hattam was one such. A gynaecologist and family friend, with a keen interest in art, he began as a collector, but in later life, himself took up painting.

Although the picture began with a series of sittings by the model, the final painting has travelled a long way from a naturalistic representation. Brack has tilted the space upward, so that the floorboards are seen almost from above. The figure has been moved to the upper half of the format, which leaves the square Persian rug in the lower half with a role of equal importance to the person being depicted. The distortions of the sitter, with a dramatic broadening of the shoulders give it a playful but powerful expressive value. The writer Kirsty Grant in her commentary on Brack, describes it as: "...one of the most adept psychological portraits ever painted in Australia".

Hattam had apparently lapsed into a period of profound depression and suspended the sittings before the picture's completion. Brack observed that on his return, he was much changed and the deep shadow falling across the upper half of the figure, may be seen as a symbolic representation of this change. The decision to align the base of this shadow on a line rising from left to right, whilst the carpet edge behind the sitter's lower legs descends from left to right, also adds to the unease.

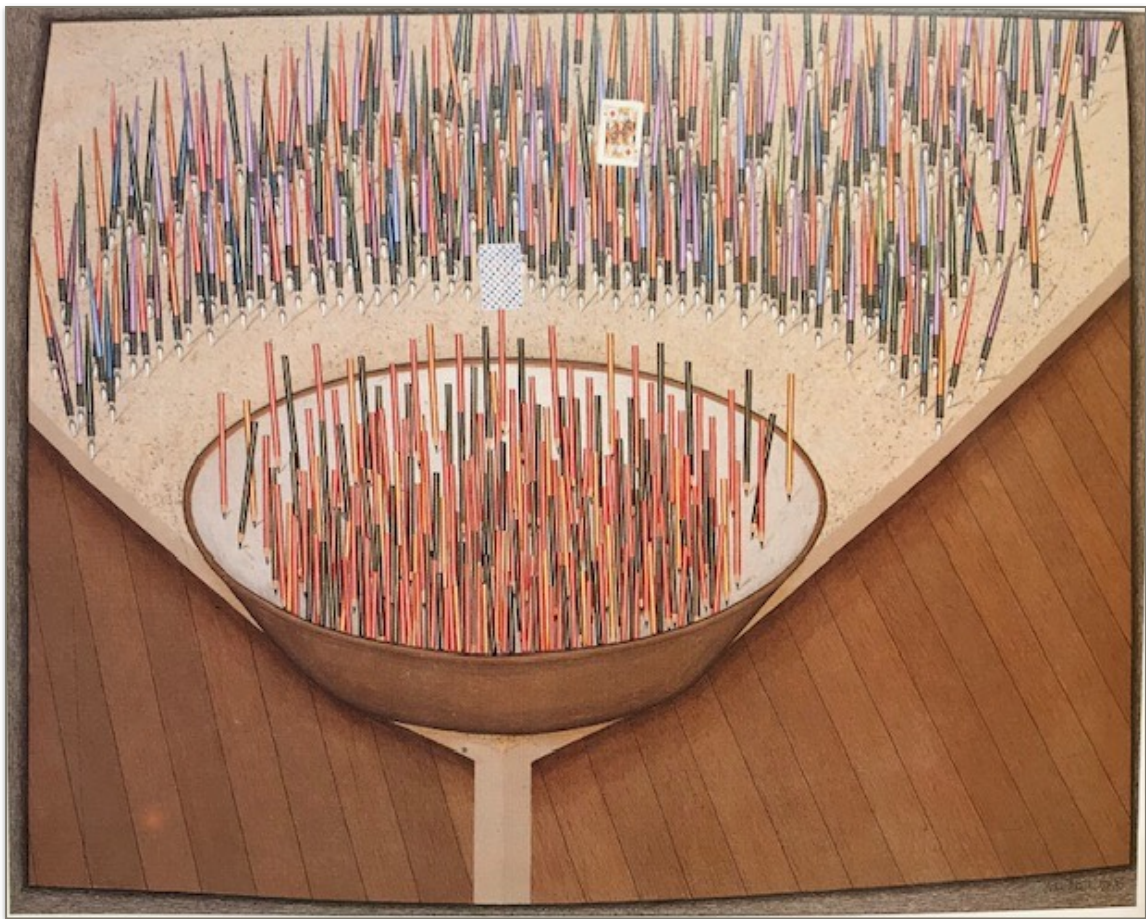


BRITISH MODERN - 1969

In the later 1960s, Brack painted a series of pictures based on the theme of ballroom dancing. I have always found them engaging for their bold inventive design and emphatic use of colour, along with the glimpse they offer into an eccentric and ritualised world. For those of us who recall the 1990s film "Strictly Ballroom", we can never look at this activity again in quite the same way.

"British Modern" from 1969, stands alone in its use of yellow as the main colour key. Most pictures in the series rely on an exploration of a sumptuous red-based palette. The sense in which a graceful if brief moment in time is captured is central to the picture's charm. The coordination required, is stressed by the fact that the four dancers' feet align precisely along a stressed joint in the floorboards and the upper contour of the woman's flaring skirt, alliterates a parallel with the gentleman's tuxedo tails and extended leg.

Again as in the Hattam portrait, Brack has tilted the picture space so that we feel we are seeing it as if from above. Perhaps from the judges box? The use of light is striking, with the two spotlight pools falling to create interacting curved elements which emphasise the feel of fluid motion essential to the activity. The shadow cast by the woman's skirt produces a third overlapping elliptical disc, almost positioning the dancers on a symbolic Venn diagram. The change in the direction of the floorboards behind the woman, is a deliberate contrivance of the artist for purposes of composition and design, the elegance of which rewards careful consideration.



SIEGE - 1980

**B**y the 1980s, Brack had moved almost completely away from common subject matter, though he continued to use the things 'near to hand' and with which he was familiar. The pens and pencils; wooden artist mannequins; furniture and floorboards found in his studio, were utilised to conjure often vast, elaborate, symbolic and metaphorical tableaux. His preoccupations with composition and design however, remain at the forefront and the later pictures are frequently breathtaking in their elegance and finesse.

"Siege" from 1980, is a fine example of the works of this period. It shows a group of upstanding pencils in a range of colours, clustered together in a circular basin, which sits precariously on the corner of a rectilinear table. This basin and its contents, is encircled by a larger group of upstanding nib pens, also of various colours, tailing away off the upper right hand edge of the picture. Toward this group's centre in a raised position, floats a playing card displaying the image of the king of diamonds. A card is also raised in the centre of the encircled pencils. Though we can only see the back of this second playing card, we assume on its face, it displays a king of a different suit.

Brack painted a number of large scale paintings at this time, which were focused on metaphorical representations of historical battles, such as might have been displayed in the past using toy soldiers etc., to depict the strategic configurations of such battles. One of his paintings is of the Battle of Waterloo in which Napoleon was defeated. Another is a schematic representation of the Battle of San Romano, as depicted by the 15th Florentine painter Paolo Uccello. "Siege" is not identified as connoting any particular battle, but is related thematically to those other paintings.

As in most of Brack's paintings from the later 1970s onwards, we can observe an irregular border around the picture's edge. The function of this seems primarily to be the reinforcement of the idea of the picture as an "artifice". Often when we are looking at a representational painting of say a landscape, we can imagine that we are just looking out through an opening to an evocation of the real thing. But Brack is saying to us here: "This is an illusion I have constructed on a flat surface. It is a painting, not a reality! Stay with me!"

The way in which he crops the light coloured surface of the table along the upper edges, also contributes to this. It changes it from something which offers a three dimensional illusion, to something quite flat. It is not easily seen here, but many of the paintings in this series, display beautiful *trompe l'oeil* effects. Surfaces which mimic marble, travertine or detailed timber-grain effects. Here below the table surface, are the enduring timber floorboards, rendered patiently and with loving attention. For me, this painting has a powerful underlying geometry which carries its own expressive meaning. Its slight irregularity is an important part of this, but in essence it brings together the square, the circle and the triangle with the authority of an ancient "mandala" symbol known to us from the eastern religious traditions.



THE CELEBRATION - 1991

**T**o finish up, I will say a few things about one of the last pictures Brack painted. It is perhaps more modest, both in scale and concept than “Siege” discussed above, but contains many similar thematic and design considerations, elegantly executed. Again we see the irregular surrounding border, reminding us of the truth of a painting as a two dimensional illusion. The placement of the green baize covered card table is deliberate and establishes a firm geometric division of the picture’s format as well as of its colours. The illusion of carpet weave beneath and the textured or wallpapered wall behind, is confidently captured.

On the table surface, a circular group of wooden artist’s mannequins is arranged in dancing couples, returning us to the earlier interest shown in ballroom dancing. A number of artists in the past have used dance as a metaphor for life, and I expect Brack is also evoking this here. The pedestal table they move around, is a familiar piece of 1940s design, although we might see it here as some sort of maypole or even a rocket-like form which the wooden figures ritually encircle. I remain unsure as to what is suggested by the upstanding circle of coloured pencils, but perhaps it is again, the mandala form of the circle within the square (of the table top), which has its own symbolic sense of reconciling contrasting forms. The picture is enigmatic, but it’s a mystery which prompts us to ponder.

Several books have been published on John Brack as well as a couple of excellent catalogues following major retrospective exhibitions by the NGV. His work is also represented in many of the major collections. He is amongst the finest Australian artists of the later C20th and well worth further contemplation.

# What's On

## **Demonstration**

### **Pastel Demonstration with Janice Mills**

**Sunday 19 February 2023, 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm**

Cost: Members \$15 Non Members \$20 payment on entry  
Afternoon Tea will be provided

## **Workshop**

### **Seascape Pastel Workshop with Janice Mills**

**Sunday 26 February 2023, 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**

Cost: Members \$125; Non Members \$150  
BYO Materials and Lunch

To book go to [www.brightonartsociety.com.au/workshops-demo](http://www.brightonartsociety.com.au/workshops-demo)

## **Workshop**

### **Still Life Flowers Workshop with Megan Abrecht**

**Sunday 19 March 2023, 10.30 am to 4.00 pm**

Cost: Members \$125; Non Members \$150  
BYO Materials and Lunch

To book go to [www.brightonartsociety.com.au/workshops-demo](http://www.brightonartsociety.com.au/workshops-demo)

## **4 Week Class Trials**

**6 March to 31 March 2023**

Always wanted to see what another class is like but didn't want to commit to a full term?

We are going to offer mid term enrollments for classes with vacancies.  
Bookings will be available on website on Saturday 18 February, while spots last!

To book go to <https://www.brightonartsociety.com.au/classes>

## **President Painting Competition**

The President painting competition is back. Look out for an update in the March

# ATRIA REAL ESTATE



## Simone supports The Brighton Art Society

I would love to hear from anyone who has questions about preparing to sell, or who simply would be interested in a discreet chat about how this current market has affected their property value.

Call me on 0403 857 266 to book a confidential, no-obligation chat.



Simone Chin  
Licensed Estate Agent and Auctioneer

E: [simone@atriarealestate.com.au](mailto:simone@atriarealestate.com.au)

P: 0403 857 266

A: 407 Bay St, Brighton 3186



***Please join us for an Untutored Portrait or Figure session  
Warm and friendly environment.  
Professional models  
Three week poses.***

***Tuesday 3:30 - 6:30 (Contact **Roz:**  
0413 918 486)***

***Thursday 4:00 - 7:00 (Contact **Rod:**  
0488 344 889)***

***Saturday 2:00 - 4:00 (Contact **Ann:**  
9598 7626)***





Proudly supporting artists Australia wide

We have an extensive range and offer free shipping\*



SOME OF OUR BRANDS  
HOW MANY DO YOU KNOW?



*da Vinci*  
ARTIST BRUSHES



ARCHES®

MABEF



CANSON®

MATISSE

LIQUITEX®

REMBRANDT  
The Professional Choice



Escoda®  
BARCELONA

Conté à Paris™  
DEPUIS 1795

COPIC®  
WORLD'S LEADING REFILLABLE ALCOHOL MARKER SYSTEM

Williamsburg®  
HANDMADE OIL COLORS



GOLDEN



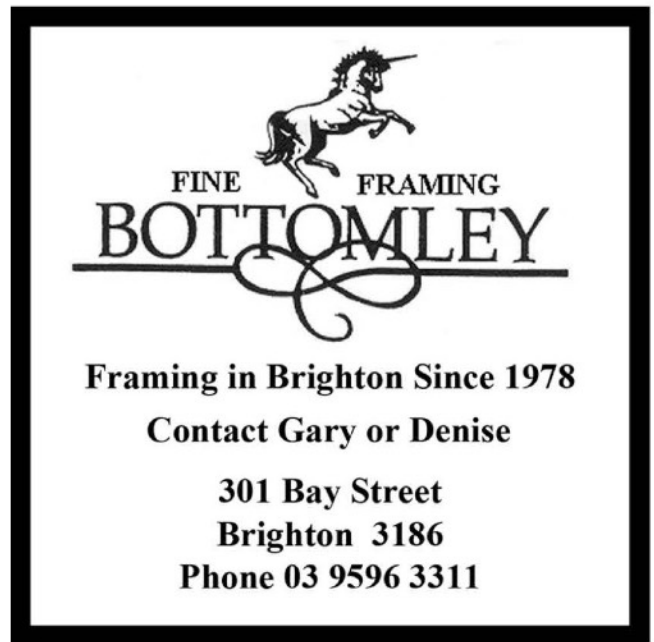
Schmincke  
Finest artists' colours

Art Toolkit  
ADVENTURE FOR SUPPLY

NEW WAVE®  
FINE ART PRODUCTS

[www.seniorart.com.au](http://www.seniorart.com.au)

FREE EXPRESS SHIPPING ON ORDERS OVER \$149  
Excludes Bulky Items



# Melbourne Artists' Supplies

Proud sponsors of the Brighton Art Society

Stocking Melbourne's finest  
selection of quality art materials

Hampton East  
916 Nepean Highway  
9553 3663

**Tony Benedict**  
Director

**BENFORD**  
CUSTOM FRAMING

03 9555 2927  
239 East Boundary Rd  
Bentleigh East. 3165

Bentleigh East 3165  
239 East Boundary Rd

BrightonArt Society Inc.  
PO Box 2234, Brighton North, 3186  
PRINTPOST APPROVED 100001166

February  
2023 EDITION

Postage  
Paid

## 2023 Committee

President - Charmaine Cachia  
Immediate Past President - Lynton Daehli  
Treasurer - Tom Rowston  
Secretary - Elly Abrat  
Committee Member - Rod Edelsten  
Committee Member - Eddie Mosses  
Committee Member - Ron Vanderburg  
Panorama - Vladimir Tsyskin

BAS OFFICE 9553 8506

## Dates to remember:

**Term 1** – Monday 30 January to Friday 31 March

Pastel Demonstration with **Janice Mills**  
Sunday 19 February 2023, 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm

Seascape Pastel Workshop with **Janice Mills**  
Sunday 26 February 2023, 11.00 am to 4.00 pm

Still Life Flowers Workshop with **Megan Abrecht**  
Sunday 19 March 2023, 10.30 am to 4.00 pm

[brightonartsociety.com.au](http://brightonartsociety.com.au)