

panorama



Official Newsletter of Brighton Art Society Inc.

Issue
347
June

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear BAS members,

What unsettled and unsettling times we are living through. A few weeks back, it looked like we were easing back towards more normal circumstances, including the possibility of resuming at least some activities at the studio. The recent return of Stage Three Restrictions, has firmly put an end to that option.

During the month of June, the Committee sought the views of our tutors and subsequently of previous participants in the classes not using models, on the possibility of resuming in term three. There were a range of challenges, however, the most recent developments in Victoria have put a firm stop to this and it now seems that any resumption of classes this year, is increasingly unlikely.

Many of us are in the vulnerable age group for the Covid virus and the Government guidelines do set procedural standards for health and hygiene, that can be difficult to meet. The view has also been expressed by some of our tutors, that having the interaction with students, needed to teach effectively, is difficult to achieve whilst maintaining the required Social Distancing.

Unless in what seems the unlikely event, that a vaccine becomes available soon, we may have to wait until the risks diminish sufficiently for participants to feel comfortable and the health and wellbeing of our members and tutors alike, to be ensured. We will follow the situation and keep everyone informed as it becomes clearer.

I have heard from several of our members, that they are pursuing their art via YouTube and other Internet based options. If you are doing so and wish to share your endeavours with us in Panorama, please feel free to do so via brightonartsociety@icloud.com

LYNTON DAEHLI

PORTRAITURE AND PLACEMENT

A key ingredient of composition when it comes to portraiture, resides in where we place the face or figure of our sitter within the boundaries of the canvas. Often, too little attention is given to this and a rich opportunity for adding to the creative expression of our work, is casually neglected.

Of course, attention to placement of key subject matter is equally important in other genres such as landscape, but I have chosen here to maintain a narrower focus and take a more careful look at some portraits by a handful of established painters.



ROBERT HANNAFORD was born in South Australian in 1944. Examples of his work are included in the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra and other major public collections, including a portrait of Prime Minister PJ Keating, in the collection of Parliament House. He has also frequently been included in the Archibald Prize. So let's just say, no small player in the Australian context.

Lowitja O'Donoghue, is an important Australian public figure of indigenous descent. In 2006, Hannaford was commissioned to paint this portrait, which now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. It is painted on a large format square canvas, which measures 137x137 cm. So it is approaching life size.

The square format, is one that this artist often chooses. Although square formats are not traditionally associated with portraiture, they can offer fresh expressive possibilities. The sitter is positioned slightly to the left of centre, with the central axis of the body, moving further leftward as we descend from the face through the mass of the torso. It is also interesting to note, that although the skirt has been cropped just below the lowest edges of the matching red jacket, there is in fact, a generous space remaining above the sitter's head. The figure could have been placed higher up within the boundaries of the canvas, but the artist has made a deliberate decision to position the head, well below the top.

A further bonus of the square format, is that it permits an abundant expanse of the neutral grey background, to either side of the sitter. We can gain much by extended consideration of the relationship between the figure and the background in this picture.

Of course, the sumptuous warmth of her red jacket and skirt over the black jumper, is a powerful foil, to support the detail and richly varied flesh tones of the hands and face. The highlighted silver hair provides the final colour-balancing of the composition.

Great intensity is concentrated in the seated figure. Not just as a result of its colour palette, but in the potent expressive capturing of its sitter. As often, Hannaford includes beautifully rendered and expressive hands, which add much to the wistful look that rests on the sitter's face.

The background by comparison, is assertively neutral. Generally darker in tone, it allows the richness of the seated figure to shine. Its very lack of busyness, increases by contrast, the intensity of detail in the sitter. It is however, the generous extent of this background, in comparison to the figure, which gives it its most important compositional role.

GODWIN BRADBEER was born in Dunedin New Zealand in 1950, but has lived and worked in Melbourne for many years. He was previously Head of Drawing at RMIT and demonstrated at BAS some years back. He exhibits regularly at James Makin Gallery in Collingwood, so is worth watching out for.

His pictures, which he describes as drawings, are technically sophisticated and involve an elaborate process of drawing first with white Chinagraph pencil, also called “grease” pencils, they are made of hardened wax. After drawing with these, he rubs or burnishes the surface with the back of a silver plated spoon, causing the wax to soften and fuse into the surface. A chemical reaction occurs, which produces a blackening at the edge of the wax marks. Crushed pastel dust, either black or coloured, can then be added and further burnished into the wax.

His work has a unique and beautiful appearance, but the critical thing here, aside from the striking elegance of his skill in figure drawing, is the great attention he gives to placement of the figures within the boundaries of the page.

Self Portrait as a Wasp from 2009 at 141x141 cm, is a large drawing. If we look closely, a delicate wasp can be seen resting on the left shoulder of the blackened figure, giving the picture its title. The tonal contrast between the figure and its background is extreme, but the most notable feature is the comparatively small proportion of the surface occupied by this darkened chap.

Most of the surface is given over to the background, which is assuredly quiet. A few small marks and smudges only, disturb the whiteness of the page. We can imagine it's depth as we wish.

It may be a wall surface sitting close behind the figure, or an ethereal vastness. The beautiful modulated and softened edge, transitioning between the figure and background is deserving of careful attention. It provides much of the drawing's power.

As with the Hannaford portrait, the balance between the active area of the picture, the figure, and the passive area, the background, is carefully considered. Each plays a critical role. An opportunity for our eyes to rest on a calm passage, gives more strength to those parts of the picture which are lively.



Oblique Man, at 133x103cm is also of a generous size. This time, the figure occupies a greater proportion of the surface. However, what is notable in this case, is the cropping. The figure doesn't sit comfortably within the boundaries of the page, but at several points, boldly stretches beyond them. The clear tonal contrast between the figure and the ground, create a surprising and engaging shape, which we might not usually connect with a human form. For the artist's expressive purposes however, it is a boon.

The irregular cropping we see here, became familiar in the later C19th with the increasing presence of photography. The camera's rapid and varied selection of fragments, “snapped” from a wider field of vision, suggested to artists that this more random framing of subjects could offer new expressive possibilities not offered in early periods, when the important elements of a picture for the most part, sat calmly within the boundaries of the frame. The paintings of the Edgar Degas and Edouard Manet, clearly attest to this new insight and the expressive possibilities of a more irregular framing of the subject.

To return to the Bradbeer drawing, I would draw attention to the darkened edges on the picture's left and right sides. On the left hand side, a firm black wedge flares up from the centre to the top. Its edge against the white page is crisp. On the right hand side, the darkening continues down the full length. Its edge however as it meets the white page is softened. A curtain or suspended sheet of paper is suggested. What is of interest here however, is the role of these darkened edges in the placement of the figure within the format. Particularly on the right, it allows the figure's darkened left hand to transition to the edge. We have to look carefully here to see whether the hand is within the boundary or not.

AMEDEO MODIGLIANI was an Italian born painter, who moved to Paris in 1905 at the age of 21. His life was turbulent and death came to him early, at age 35. He painted almost solely portraits and figures in a highly distinctive and now much loved style. The NGV in St. Kilda Road, has a fine example of his work titled: Portrait of the Painter Manuel Humbert, which has recently undergone a major restoration and is well worth seeking out.



This portrait entitled: **Madame Zborowska on a Sofa**, was painted in 1917 and is now housed in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Like the painting in Melbourne, the palette here, is characterised by a rich burgundy backdrop, the black of the clothing and the flesh tones of the hands and face. The composition is governed by a strong diagonal thrust in the figure from the top left to the lower right and this diagonal is reaffirmed by the alignment of the face and hands, which are the lightest toned elements in the painting.

The definition in the background is minimal, although we can recognise what appears to be a tapestried rug or cushion descending from beneath the hands. Madame's black dress has even less definition and serves in combination with her black hair primarily as an engaging shape against which to place the more developed face and hands.

If we look at the portrait through our lens of "placement", the figure's diagonal thrust is its strongest component. The judicious cropping however, just placing her right elbow outside the frame and the more substantial cropping of the black dress on the right hand boundary, contribute to the compositional strength.

Modigliani painted this Portrait of **Madame Reynouard** in 1916. It's composition is idiosyncratic, even within the parameters of his output. The format is slender for its height, but within that, he has made the choice to place the figure decidedly to the left of the picture, as though the hands and shoulder are being compressed on approaching that boundary. The strong curve of the black dress as it moves from her right shoulder down and around her back, provides a firm rhythmic contrast to the straight lines in the background. Again, the legs and just the top of the head are cropped.

The decision to place the sitter at the front of the picture space, looking directly out at the viewer and with her back turned indifferently toward the room she sits in, even though Modigliani describes it in only the most simplified way, has a distinct expressive value. It enables him to say particular things about the character of the sitter. In the process, we are offered a dynamic and fresh composition.



JEFFREY SMART was born in Adelaide in 1921. He initially trained and worked as an art teacher, but left to study painting in France in his late twenties. He returned for a time to Sydney a few years later, but moved permanently to Italy in 1963.

His paintings are carefully constructed and are often the result of many preparatory drawings and studies. Figures are a common presence in his paintings, but he is perhaps better known for his evocative urban and industrial landscapes.



Clive James who died earlier this year, was a journalist, television writer and presenter and ultimately gained respect as an author and poet. He was of the same generation as Germaine Greer and Robert Hughes and like them, left Australia in the 1960s, when artistic and cultural life here, was seen as barren.

This first portrait of Clive James, was one of several done by Smart in preparation for the more eccentric painting we will look at shortly. It places the sitter in a distinct and detailed context. A common feature of Smart's portraits. Clive James stands to the left hand side of the scene, clutching a blue and white handrail, which continues beyond the frame. How far does it extend? What is its purpose? We can only speculate.

More of the picture's surface area is taken up with the large lettering, painted on the wall behind the figure. A strong diagonal shadow is cast down the wall, changing angle to cross the pavement. The geometrical division of the canvas is assertive and places the figure in a subservient role. For those familiar with Smart's painting, these ingredients will be no surprise.



This final version of the **Clive James** portrait, which now hangs in the Art Gallery of NSW, is even more cheeky and surprising than the study. At 109x120 cm, it is not a particularly large painting. The sitter however, is minuscule. It is still identifiably Clive James, but Smart certainly could not be accused of false flattery of his patron. The lower two-thirds of the painting is given over to a brilliant rippling yellow corrugated-iron fence. High up on a bridge stands the diminutive figure of James, competing for attention with the two tower blocks and a road sign. All these set against a broad, cloud-scattered sky.

This Jeffrey Smart portrait is perhaps at an extreme, when we are considering the role of placement in portraiture. It does however, encourage those of us who enjoy and work in this genre, to think more imaginatively and perhaps more attentively about the expressive possibilities of just where we might position our sitter on the page, the next time we embark on a portrait.

LYNTON DAEHLI

SIMONE CHIN

Licensed Estate Agent
and Auctioneer

Demonstrating a proven ability to build and develop long-lasting relationships, Simone offers the highest levels of service and integrity.

M. simone@nickjohnstone.com.au
P. 0403 857 266

Simone supports The Brighton Art Society.

I would love to hear from anyone who has questions about the current market, and our selling process during the COVID-19 restrictions.

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



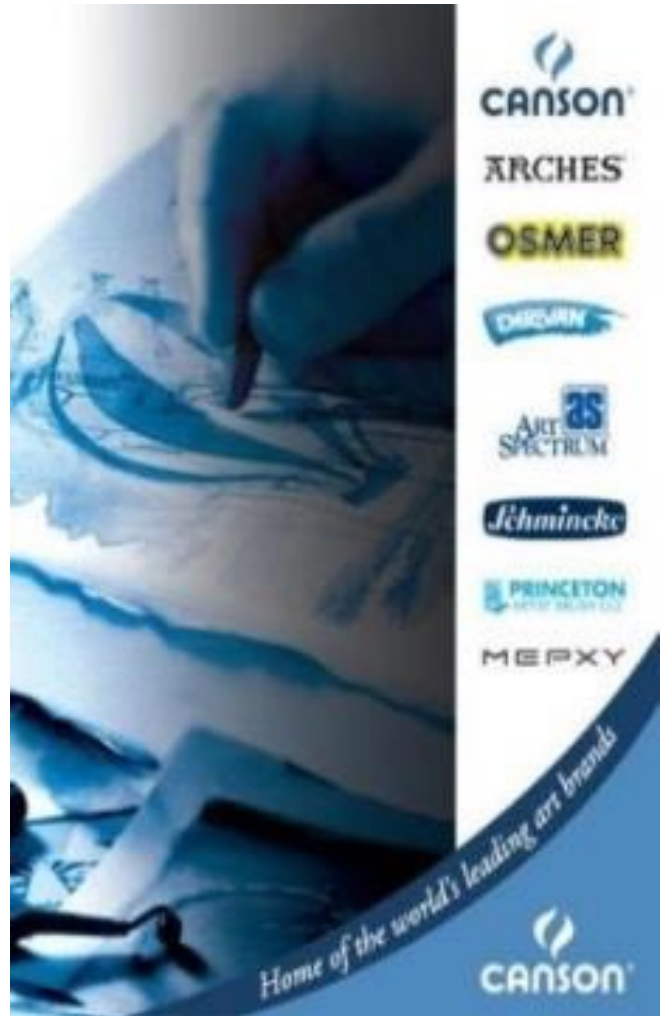
“
The ease of
my sale and
attention to detail
was first class. Simone
is an amazing agent!

2 Normanby St, Brighton



NICK JOHNSTONE

248 Esplanade, Brighton
96-98 Station Street, Sandringham
nickjohnstone.com.au



Framing in Brighton Since 1978

Contact Gary or Denise

**301 Bay Street
Brighton 3186
Phone 03 9596 3311**



You can share with other
members, send us your snaps, thoughts by email today:

brightonartsociety@icloud.com



Stocking all the major brands such as

Arches	Mabef
Art Spectrum	Matisse
Atelier	Masters Choice
Canson	Mi Tients
Charvin	Michael Harding
Colourfix	NEEF
Da Vinci	Old Holland
Daniel Smith	Prismacolor
Derwent	Rembrandt
Escoda	Saunders
Faber Castell	Schmincke
Golden	Williamsburg
Holbein	Winsor & Newton
Lefranc	& Lots more

**Visit us
at**

Frankston
72 Dandenong Rd West
Ph 9783-6044

Malvern
1310 Malvern Rd
Ph 9804-3404

Melbourne
21 Degraves St
Ph 9639-6662

Bulleen
217 Bulleen Road
Ph 9191-7862

having trouble getting in

Try online at

WWW.SENIORART.COM.AU

JENNY'S ORIGINAL BOARDS

ABN: 67 338 542 407
Business No.: B1736223U

Artist Supplies

Professional Canvas Board

Winsor & Newton Paints

Arches & Saunders Watercolour Paper

Brushes

Pastel & Mi-Teintes Pastel Paper

Frederix Products

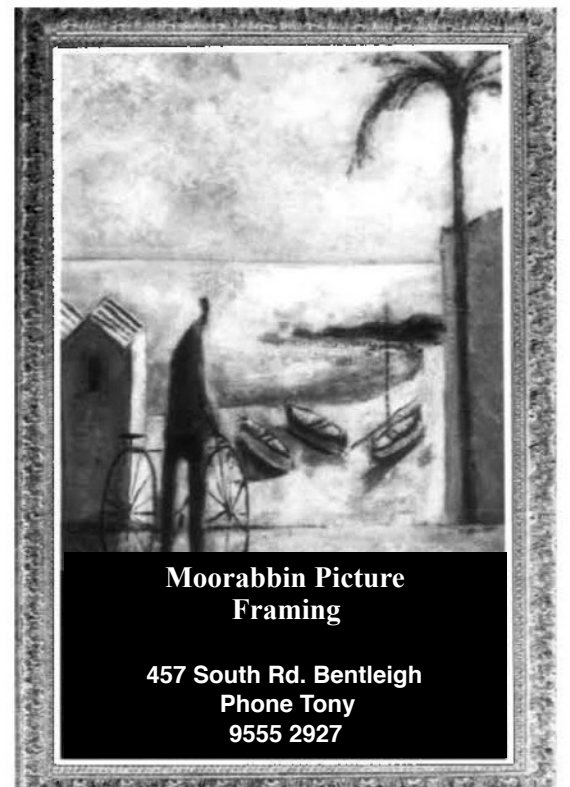
*Proprietor: Jenny Laurent
with Guidance from Gwen Newbegin*

32 View Road. Vermont 3133

Phone/Fax: (03) 9873 1147

Email: jenny.laurent1@bigpond.com

Mail orders a specialty



**Moorabbin Picture
Framing**

457 South Rd. Bentleigh
Phone Tony
9555 2927

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



Agency of the Year
Suburb: Brighton VIC

NICK JOHNSTONE
your personal agent

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

July
2020 EDITION

Postage
Paid

2020 Committee

PRESIDENT	Lynton Daehli
TREASURER	Tom Rowston
SECRETARY	Jane Broadmore
PAST PRESIDENT	Karen Hall
STUDIO MANAGER	Frank Schaefer
DEMONSTRATIONS	Rod Edelsten
WORKSHOPS	Wendy Lawrence
PANORAMA	Vladimir Tsyskin
EXHIBITIONS	Sharon De Saily
COMMITTEE	Charmaine Cachia
COMMITTEE	Anne Hattam
COMMITTEE	Charly Knezic
COMMITTEE	Rosemary Marsh
BAS OFFICE	9553 8506

Dates to remember:

brightonartsociety@icloud.co