

panorama



Official Newsletter of Brighton Art Society Inc.

Issue
368
August

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear BAS members,

A number of you have asked me about the limited number of classes and activities we have on offer at present, compared to the busy pre-covid days. A number of new challenges have arisen in recent times which have led to this.

As mentioned previously, in total, five of the tutors we had in 2019 decided not to continue by the time we restarted in 2022. Finding replacements has been difficult. The long period of stop/start lockdowns has prompted many artists to reassess their situations and fewer are interested in committing to ongoing regular classes.

In addition, it seems that for whatever reasons, there is still some apprehension amongst potential students and enrolments in the new classes we have attempted to establish, have been insufficient to make them viable.

It may be the case that we need to reassess what we are offering and perhaps consider a new approach and program. Our hard working Committee member Charmaine, is currently looking at options for this, with 2023 in mind. However, if our program is to be reinvented, we need not only ideas, but also people prepared to step up and participate in the task of implementing them by joining the Committee. BAS remains a community organisation run by its members and will only survive if over time, new people step forward from the membership to take on the administrative and organisational tasks.

As I said in the April edition, this will be my final year as President. As yet, no one has expressed a serious interest in the job. It is a position not free of demands, but running the group requires someone to take on the task of managerial oversight and in general, this falls to the president. If you feel that you may have the skills and enthusiasm to tackle this, please feel free to speak to me or any of the Committee members.

LYNTON DAEHLI

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THE PICASSO CENTURY

The current major mid-year exhibition on display at the NGV in St Kilda Road, is titled: The Picasso Century. Without question Picasso was a major figure in western art of the C20th and is the key and unifying focus of the work in this show. On reflection, I decided that the exhibition title was well chosen, as it carries the suggestion, both that in some way the century belonged to Picasso (a tad hubristic), but also perhaps that the exhibition charts the long life of this artist, not so far short of a century, in which his work adapted and unfolded with the changing sentiments and styles present over this time frame.

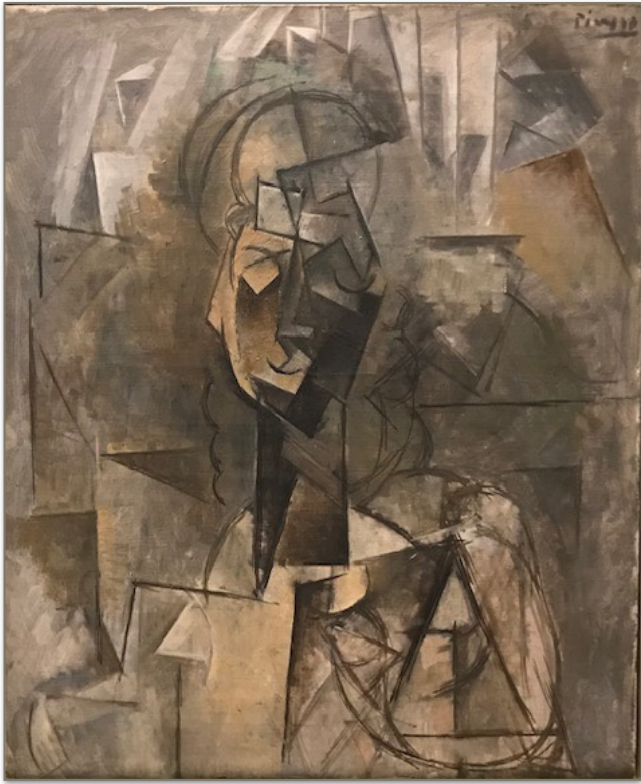
Picasso was something of a prodigy. He was accepted into the School of Fine Arts in Barcelona, where his father was a teacher, at the age of thirteen. Here he received a rigorous formal artistic training, which included figure drawing and oil painting technique. At sixteen, he transferred to the Royal Academy of San Fernando in Madrid, seen at the time, as the country's foremost art school. Apparently he was not diligent in attending his classes, but access to the exceptional collections housed in Madrid, such as that of the Prado Museum, was a delight for him and provided rich opportunities for learning.

The current NGV exhibition is broken up into thematic groups which progress chronologically and combine Picasso's work with that of other artists whom he either influenced or was influenced by. He moved on a permanent basis to Paris in 1901 at the age of twenty and quickly established a studio and connections with others in local artistic circles.

Gustave Coquiot was a writer, collector and art critic, known for his colourful tastes and an enjoyment of Parisienne night life which Picasso also shared. Behind this assured depiction of the sitter, Picasso has included what appears to be a stage performance. Coquiot, himself in evening attire, with waxed moustache and unnaturally white face, evokes the persona of an MC at a cabaret. The capturing is confident and energetic, with a balance between the dramatic use of black and white for the sitter and the rich varied colour play of the background .



PABLO PICASSO - Gustave Coquiot 1901



PABLO PICASSO -Female Bust 1909-10



GEORGES BRAQUE - Woman With Guitar 1913

By the end of that first decade of the C20th, Picasso had moved far from a representational style and along with his fellow artist, **Georges Braque**, was immersed in the style referred to as “Cubism”. Paul Cezanne, who was admired by both these painters, had done the groundwork for this style, with his emphasis on seeking the underlying geometric volumes in the subject matter of his pictures.

Looking again at these early cubist works of Braque and Picasso, I was struck on reflection by how rapid the transition away from a representational approach in painting had been at that time. The height of Impressionism was not that far in the past. The similarity in style of these two artists at this point is also of interest as can be seen in the illustrations above.

Both painters have begun with familiar enough subject matter, but very quickly, by playing inventively with geometry, capturing multiple simultaneous viewpoints and celebrating the pictures as decorative ends in themselves, a very new way of thinking about painting has emerged. One final observation I'd like to make in regard to the paintings in this group, is the characteristic restraint of their palette. An extensive suite of them depend primarily on tonal variations from black to white and the greys between, supplemented only by limited use of a few earth tones based around sienna.



PABLO PICASSO -
La Source (The
Spring) 1921

In the ensuing years, Cubism acquired many followers and imitators, but Picasso moved in a fresh direction altogether, adopting what came to be known as the “Neo-classical” style. This style looked back to the world of Ancient Greece and Rome as well as to the late C18th Neo-Classicalists such as Jacques Louis David and Jean Dominique Ingres.

“The Spring” is a large drawing on canvas, measuring perhaps 1.5 mtrs in width. Although stylised, it makes reference to Classical Greek motifs. The amphora which rests on the lap of the imposing figure and from which a stream of water flows, is symbolic of the origin of a spring-fed stream.

The second illustration here is a portrait of Picasso’s first wife Olga, whom he met when she was travelling as a dancer with the renowned Ballet Russe. It is rendered in a polished traditional style, which the accompanying description links to the earlier mentioned French painter Ingres. Both of these works demonstrate Picasso’s skill with traditional techniques and this from an artist who ten years before had been fully absorbed in the abstractions of cubism described above.



PABLO PICASSO - Portrait of Olga in an Armchair 1918



If we step forward a further decade, Picasso has a new mistress and a new approach to rendering the female figure. This small painting with its bold red, white and blue colour scheme, displays a whimsy and lyricism in its swirling curvilinear drawing of the form.

PABLO PICASSO - Reclining Woman 1932

From the later 1920s, the movement of Surrealism came to exercise an increasing influence on Picasso. Although he never formally joined the movement, Surrealism’s exploration of the unconscious as a source of creative potential was engaging for Picasso and incorporating his unconscious desires and fantasies became evident in paintings such as this one.



PABLO PICASSO - Figures by the Sea 1931



DOROTHEA TANNING - A Very Happy Picture 1947

The exhibition includes work by a number of important artists such as: Max Ernst; Dorothea Tanning; Joan Miro and Andre Mason who were associated with the surrealist movement. Although I had not encountered her before, I found this painting from 1947 by the American painter Dorothea Tanning, enticing. It displays important elements associated with Surrealism. The skilled and meticulous rendering of fantastic subject matter and the juxtaposition of incongruous elements, such as might come together in a dream, remind us of the work of painters such as Salvador Dali or Rene Magritte. Tanning depicts a swirling abundance of white fabric, winding around fragments of several figures. A painting of industrial smoke stacks sits upon an easel at the right hand edge and assorted mysterious architectural elements and objects occupy other parts of the picture.



PABLO PICASSO - Massacre in Korea 1951

Picasso painted a number of expressly political works. Perhaps the best known being the enormous canvas entitled “Guernica” which he painted in 1937 in response to the bombing by Franco’s forces during the Spanish civil war, of the small Basque town of the same name. He gifted the painting to Spain, but insisted that it not be taken there until liberty and democracy was established. In the event, this did not happen until after his death.

“Massacre in Korea” was painted in 1951 in response to the Korean War. It lacks specific reference to that event and location, but has a firm political subtext. The drama of the group of naked woman and children to the picture’s left, standing defenceless before a phalanx of heavily armed, if also naked, robot-like soldiers is assertively rendered and constitutes a powerful statement.

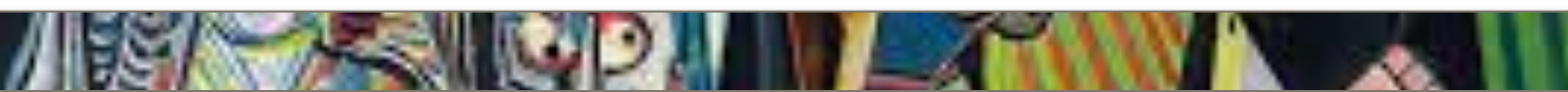


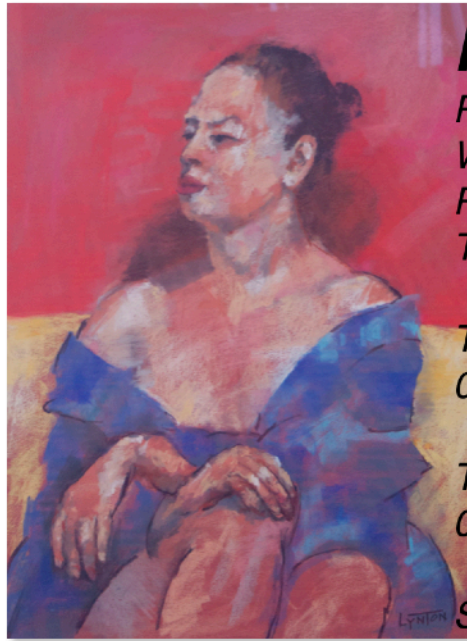
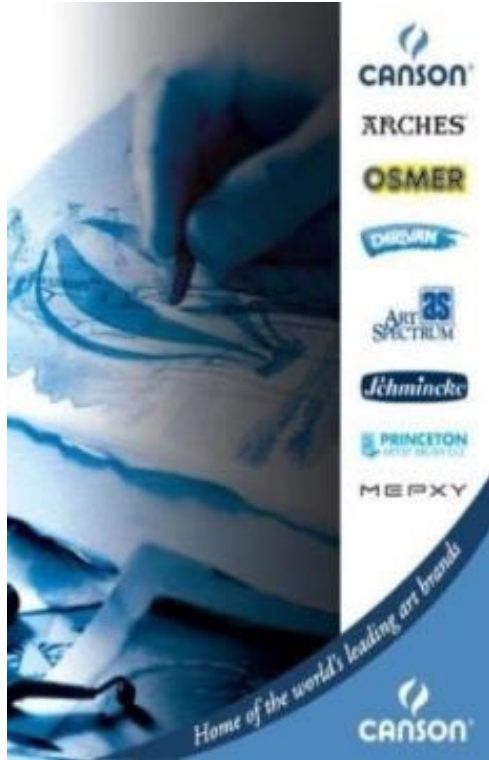
PABLO PICASSO - The Studio At La Californie 1956

Picasso relocated to the south of France in 1946. The artist Henri Matisse, for whose work he had always maintained great respect and affection, was living in the locale at that time. In those last years leading up to Matisse’s death in 1954, their friendship became closer and contact more frequent. Picasso is said to have remarked, “no-one has ever looked more carefully at Matisse’s painting the I and no-one has looked at mine more carefully than he”. The painting we see here takes its name from Picasso’s grand villa in Cannes and shows clear deference to the decorative qualities and approach of Matisse.

This NGV exhibition is rich and extensive, so allow plenty of time to absorb and enjoy it. It remains open until October 9th.

LYNTON DAEHLI





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August 2022
EDITION

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BAS OFFICE 9553 8506

Dates to remember:

DATES TO REMEMBER:

July 25 - September 23
BAS Term Three