

panorama



Official Newsletter of Brighton Art Society Inc.

Issue
358
August

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear BAS members,

Once again we are back on hold, with our groups and tutored classes suspended. The Committee was able to meet just before the present lockdown commenced and we discussed again whether we should plan for the Annual Exhibition in November.

We have decided to go ahead cautiously with preparations, whilst keeping in mind that until the doors open, there can be no certainty. The annual show is much valued and enjoyed. It gives us a focus to work toward and sharing our work with others in this way is always rewarding, so it is certainly worth a try.

As always however, it will be a major undertaking, involving sustained efforts over an extended time by those directly involved and a mammoth effort in the time surrounding those days in November when the doors are open to all.

Our Vice President, Sharon Desailly is leading the charge on the exhibition sub-committee, but we should remember that this event belongs to us all and as a volunteer run group, we all need to see it as an opportunity to participate in making a valuable project possible.

Particularly during the week when the work is delivered and hung and the doors are actually open, we need extra hands on deck. Events like this don't happen by themselves. During opening hours, it will be necessary to have a minimum of three people present at all times. A timetable will be put up in the studio well in advance so you can nominate a time slot at the desk which suits you. Members will also be needed to receive, hang and facilitate the return of works at the close of the show.

We will provide updates as we move toward the date. In the meantime let's all keep our fingers crossed that we can go ahead.

LYNTON DAEHLI

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The Sound and Sprit of Colour

by Joy Lea

Since studying the work of Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky as part of my art studies in the sixties I now find the time to look more deeply into their work. Firstly Wassily Kandinsky.

I have decided to try and synthesize and precis the amount of information I have found out about him. As it happens music, the key to Kandinsky, is my favourite form of Artistic Expression.

In 1996 I won a competition "Why I want a holiday in Sydney". Coincidentally, a major exhibition, 'Kandinsky and the Russian avant garde', was showing at the Art Gallery of NSW. Arriving early my husband and I rushed to the end large room. Huge beautiful rhythmical paintings were hanging there so we danced around the room, it was intoxicating.



Kandinsky had synaesthesia so when he heard sounds, he saw colours and when he saw colours, he heard music. He believed the more abstract the form the clearer and direct its appeal. Music is inherently abstract and that is what Kandinsky was aiming for in his art. He wanted his paintings to be an expression of an inner need, an expression of his soul.

At first his work was realistic.

It was two transformative experiences that shaped his career as an artist. One was an exhibition of Monet's work in Moscow in 1896. When he saw one of his haystacks, he was struck by the thought that it was the colour and form that was triggering his emotional response, and not the objects the haystacks themselves. And the second experience was a performance of Wagner's opera Lohengrin at the Bolshoi Theatre. Also, in 1896. He spoke about the experience later on. "I saw all my colours in spirit before my eyes, wild, almost crazy lines were sketched in front of me"

He travelled extensively and was exposed to Symbolism, Neo-Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism. He read and absorbed the principles of Theosophy and began experimenting with colour.

His moves towards extraction appear around 1903 when he paints the Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider).



Der Blaue Reiter

An artist collective formed under this name and was designed to bring together the best artistic talent in Munich.

In 1912 he began to shift his approach to painting but also to distil his ideas in writing. He laid down his views on the dematerialization of art, but alongside this, he gave significant insights into how he thought about colour.

For Kandinsky each colour had a feeling, a sensation and a sound

‘Green is the most restful colour that exists in music’

‘Light blue is like a flute, a darker blue a cello’

Kandinsky wanted to find a means of communication that was universal through perception of colour. ‘Colour is the keyboard, the eyes, the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another to cause vibrations in the soul.’

What he writes about white I find so profound.

‘White, which is often regarded as a non-colour is like the symbol of a world in which all colours in so far as they are properties of physical substances have vanished - White acts upon our soul like absolute silence. This silence is not something lifeless, but something replete with life potential. It is nothingness filled with childish happiness or, in better terms a nothingness before birth the beginning of all things. This was perhaps the sound emitted by the cold white Earth in the Ice Age.’

But he thought that colour could not be the only consideration. Simple compositions according to Kandinsky are paintings which are constructed in a clear and obvious way. He called these melodic.

He dedicated 19 years of his life to ten paintings entitled 1 to 10. These were setting colour in motion. Using overlapping forms, rhythms, and motifs to create pure art. In first viewing these paintings seem to lack representation but look closer and you will see objects like the figures, boat, and doors in Composition 5

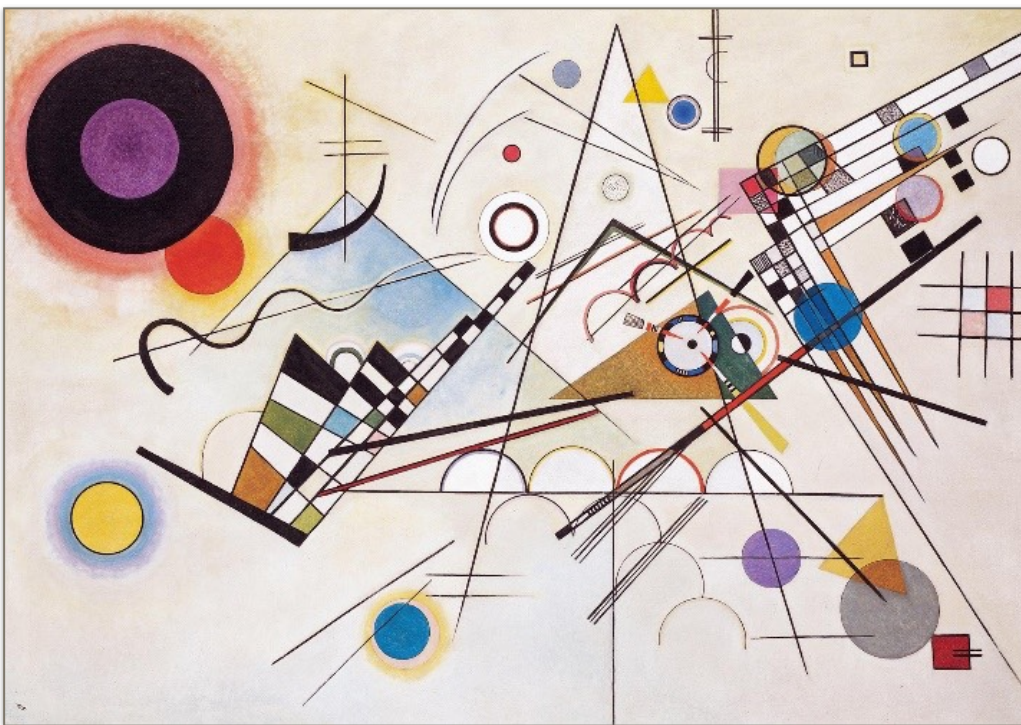


Composition 5



The angel holding a trumpet in Composition 7

Composition 7



The next in the series it could be argued was the closet he ever came to music in art.

Composition 8

It is constructed around several geometric forms, circles, semi-circles, open ended acute angles, squares, and rectangles. Some colours run on and off the white coloured background like musical chords.

And from this rises the art that is truly monumental, everyman who steepes himself in the spiritual possibilities of his art is a valuable helper in the spiritual pyramid, which someday will lead to heaven.

References:

What's the Sound of Colour_ Kandinsky and Music, YouTube

Kandinsky and Music, A History of Modern Art, Sister Wendy's Book on Art, The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols

Joy Lea is a long time and still active member of Brighton Art Society. She was our president in 1990. Her interest in Kandinsky also goes back a long way as does her interest in abstraction in art.

FIRST IMAGES

Eddie Moses: The First Solo Exhibition



OPENING: Thursday 7th Oct, 6.30-8.30pm

DATES: Thur 7th Oct to Sun 31st Oct - 2021

WHERE: Residents Gallery, Montsalvat
7 Hillcrest Avenue, Eltham, Vic

Opening hours: Thursday to Sunday (10am to 4pm)
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AN ENDURING AFFECTION FOR MELBOURNE in THE ART OF JAN SENBERGS

Born in Latvia in 1939, Jan Senbergs, migrated to Australia with his parents in 1950 and they settled in Melbourne, where he still lives more than seventy years later. He had an early interest in art, but left school at 15 and took up an apprenticeship as a commercial screen printer.

Silk screen printing, utilises an expanse of fine grained silk or synthetic fabric stretched taut over a wooden frame. Various types of stencil are then applied to the taut surface. These stencils can be made from cut paper, brushed on with ink-resistant liquids or made from photo sensitive plastic film, which allows photographic images to be reproduced. Once the stencil is in place, the screen is then placed on the surface to be printed, be that paper, fabric or other and a thin film of ink is forced through the screen onto the surface, using a rubber squeegee.

This method of printing was used extensively in commercial applications until recently, when it was largely replaced by digitally generated printing. It has also been used and continues to be, in artistic printing practice. With his firm skilled technical grounding, Senbergs soon adapted this medium to his artistic practice.

Altered Parliament House was painted in 1976 after Senbergs had spent a couple of years based in Canberra. It was one of the first of his pictures I saw many years ago and I was immediately intrigued. Although it is not connected with Melbourne, it does incorporate many of the elements which are characteristic of his work. He admits to an ongoing fascination with architecture and this painting begins with careful observation of the building in question: the old Federal Parliament. He then sets about playing with the raw subject matter in a whimsical and ironic way. At 2.4 mtrs wide by 1.8 mtrs high, the picture has a dramatic presence.

This recognisable Australian edifice, is positioned high in the picture's format. If we look closely, he has made some cheeky modifications. More importantly though, is what we find strewn across the lawns in front. Architectural detritus, which spreads out and finally collapses into an abyss at the pictures base. It is perhaps no coincidence that this picture was painted in the year following events inside the chamber, where some would say, the institution itself, was trashed by the dismissal of the Whitlam government.

Although painted in acrylics, many of the picture's details are applied using the silk screen printing methods in which Senbergs was trained. Seen in the flesh, it gives the picture surface a distinct and characteristic registration.



ALTERED PARLIAMENT HOUSE - 1976 - NGV



STUDIO INTERIOR - 1995



STUDIO INTERIOR - 1995

Over the years, Senbergs kept his studio in various locations of inner Melbourne. In the late 1970s, he was in Port Melbourne and there is an interesting series of paintings related to that locale. The drawings above were done at a studio in North Melbourne not far from the Queen Victoria Market. What I would draw attention to here, is the rigorous and systematic observation. The first image shows his cluttered studio interior. This drawing is enormous, with an overall measure of 1.5 mtrs high by 4.6 mtrs long. Drawn in oil pastel, there is a steadiness, almost an obsessiveness of mark-making across the surface. The space is convincingly captured. This drawing represents the information collecting phase in his work.

The second image is captured looking from a window in this crowded space to the nearby surrounds and Melbourne skyline. Located just near the intersection of Victoria and Chetwynd streets, for those who know the area, the buildings are accurately captured. The single story structure in the foreground with its saw-toothed roof still stands, as does the C19th bluestone church and school opposite and the CBD towers more distant in the picture's upper left. Although the drawing style is idiosyncratic, Senbergs is engaged by the subject matter and immersed in a process of meticulous observation. These are fragments of a city, he understands well and for which he greatly cares.



MELBOURNE - 1998 - State Library Collection

This painting is but one, of a large series of *large* paintings, which are imaginary birds-eye views of the city of Melbourne. In 2016, the NGV mounted a major retrospective exhibition of Senbergs work, including this picture and titled the show: *Observation - Imagination*. This captures the point I would wish to make here. Senbergs is an astute observer of the physical world around him. He knows the city of Melbourne intimately, its geography, its individual buildings and structures, their shapes and spatial relationships. He cares about and obviously delights in this place.

Particularly in his drawings, he sets about careful observation, both from an intimate and wide viewpoint. But he then moves on to a much more personal and playful imagining of his subject matter. His work is gritty and at times challenging, but for the viewer, there is reward to be had in engaging with him in the exploration.

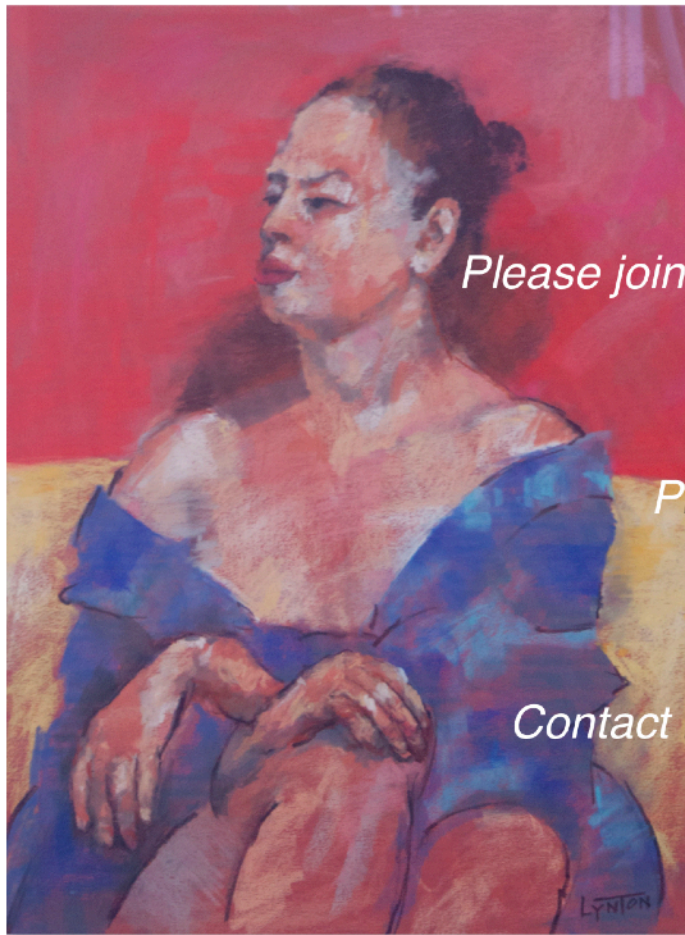


GEELONG CAPRICCIO - 2010 - Collection Deakin University

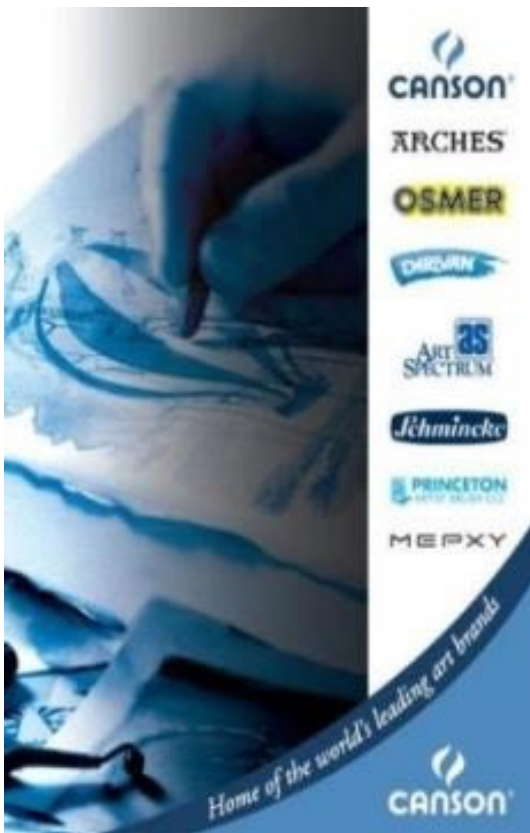
For a final example, I have chosen this picture titled: Geelong Capriccio. It is held in the collection of Deakin University. Although the characteristic shape of Port Phillip Bay is immediately recognisable, we puzzle at the detail of the urban build up. Surely there are no bridges crossing between Point Nepean and Point Lonsdale? The meaning of “capriccio” in this context is playful or fanciful. In brackets after the title is the sentence (If Geelong were settled instead of Melbourne). We see the artist showing a characteristic flight of whimsy.

It isn't inconceivable that Geelong might have been the primary European settlement. Port Phillip Bay would still have the same contours. The Youyangs would still sit to the west and the Dividing Range to the east. Here is joy and a quiet joke between we insiders who know our city well.

LYNTON DAEHLI



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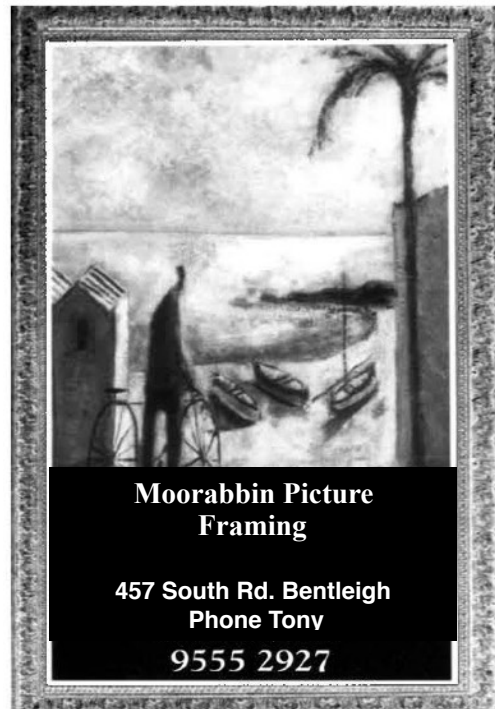
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Dates to remember:

July 19 - September 17
Term 3 BAS Tutored Classes

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