

# VAS MAGAZINE

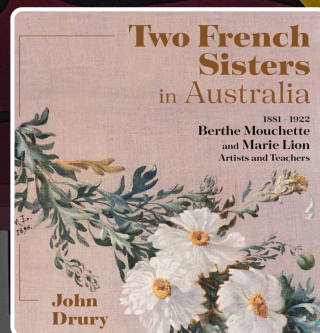
Victorian Artists Society

January to March 2023



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Mark Russell

The VAS Magazine is printed through the Office of the Victorian Artists Society.

Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the VAS Council or the editors of this magazine.

Articles from members will be appreciated. Contributions will be published on a strictly honorary basis and no payment will be made.

The Victorian Artists Society acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which they meet. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and the Aboriginal Elders of other communities.

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Cover Image: Monday Night Jazz Jams,  
by Heather 'Zulu' Towns, French Acrylic,  
Highly Commended 2023 Summer  
Exhibition

#### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Kerry Williams  
Gwen Scott  
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Alexandra  
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Neil Jacobs  
Byron Copland  
Lynden Stone  
Nina Volk  
Georgina Gilbert  
Rita-Marie Hopfner

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Richard Impey FVAS MED DipEd

Sadly, after seven wonderful years, our Manager, Chris Reade has decided to retire. Her immediate plans are to travel Australia and then have a big overseas trip with her father for two well-deserved and relaxing holidays. Chris has been the oil and the driving engine that have kept the wheels of our exhibitions and activities turning. She always has a welcoming smile and has been very accommodating in that she never has an issue in trying to sort out our problems as they arise. She has been my right-hand person throughout my presidency and an excellent sounding board for my sometimes too numerous thought bubbles. She will be sadly missed but hopefully we will still see her frequently around the traps. Please join me in wishing her all the best for the future.

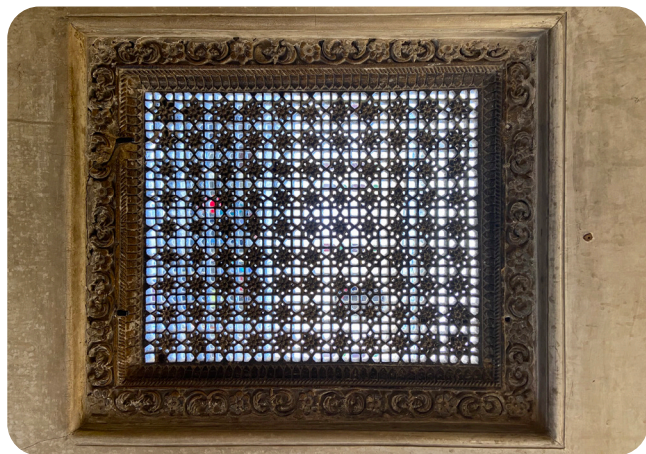
I have just returned from a three-week trip to India with my wife and three friends. What a very challenging and thought-provoking time that was. I certainly enjoyed the experience and have no regrets doing it. Our first three nights were spent in a clean but rundown hotel in the heart of old Delhi. Access to it could only be gained travelling first by taxi, then by tuk tuk and when they could no longer traverse the narrow alleys, we went on foot dragging our bags through the strewn rubbish, unsavoury muck, dodging stray dogs, cows, crowds and delivery people carrying huge parcels on their heads. The noise of tooting vehicles and the smells were unbelievable. It was a baptism by fire. Despite being extremely careful in what we ate and drank, we all took turns getting sick, but we still managed to soldier on. Travelling with three doctors and a retired Australian soldier all eventualities should have been covered. Though one of the doctors was an obstetrician I don't think any of us intended to get pregnant or give birth, but she did have some band aids when I needed them after smacking my head on a low stone doorway at a Jain temple.


The military friend calmly took us to places in the slums we would never have gone to by ourselves. He led the way in single file where the three ladies trotted behind him, and I brought up the rear. The



old parts of the cities we travelled to in Delhi, Agra and Rajasthan were full of very old buildings with carved stone facades and intricate stone lattice work designed to keep the heat out but allow the air to flow through. Truly amazing. Havelis with crumbling exteriors but exquisite internal open courtyards that were surrounded by three or four levels of rooms and apartments. Then there was the Taj Mahal, the huge hill forts and palaces with rooms covered in coloured glass, shiny metal, painted and mirrors. All testament to the wealth and power of the old rulers and the skills of the artisans employed from as far away as Persia.

I returned home with memories of a culture that I understand a bit better but fully realise that I have just scratched the surface. I also have some beautiful hand-painted miniature paintings with characters



from Hindu stories and ten hand-carved patterns on wooden blocks for printing onto paper and cloth. When I walked through the door at home I went straight to the kitchen and poured myself a glass of water. I marvelled at being able to have access to such pure clean drinking water straight from the tap. Something so simple yet we take it so much for granted here. Travelling opens so many doorways. Since returning, I have started a contract job at a local secondary teaching art to Year 7s. Apart from talking to the students about my travels and sharing my photographs I am able to relate on a different level to students from India. An invaluable connection on so many levels. The same applies to VAS. We have so many members here from countries all over the world. To be able to share some common ground with them is very precious and builds bridges. 

# ORIENTATION SESSIONS

Laurel Sloan  
Membership Convenor

A friendly group of new members gathered at VAS for an informative afternoon on Saturday 18 March. We had a tour of the building, an introduction talk with an exhibiting artist, and were given all information for each of us to consider our own exhibition.

One of the best opportunities is to meet other new members and to see some of the work they produce. The conversations about why we create were well received and everyone had a smile on their face when they left.

If you want to participate in our next Orientation session you don't have to be a new member, you may just want to know more about how VAS operates plus want to meet other like-minded artists over a cup of tea.

The date for our next Orientation session is yet to be confirmed but keep an eye out for the announcement. Looking forward to meeting all of you. ✍️



# VAS BOHEMIAN

## Harry McClelland

Ian Hobbs

It is Melbourne in the Roaring Twenties.

Hollywood-bound actress Mascotte Ralston dances an exhibition Charleston as guests supper on sprats and roasted chestnuts by a blazing fire at Harry and sister Nan McClelland's studio party at Flemington.

Straight from a city stage show, Miss Ralston mingles with an ensemble of painters, writers and theatre folk in the lantern-lit studio that regularly hosts dusk-to-dawn revelries.

This is the Jazz Age!

It plays out in the aftermath of World War I and the Spanish Flu pandemic as society re-builds in the 1920s. Technological, entertainment and cultural advances usher in consumerism, experimentation and personal expression. Aviation, radio, motor cars and talking pictures all develop in this decade and young women seek greater freedoms.

Released from pre-war convention and wartime austerity local painters William Frater and Arnold Shore intensify their colour in the post-impressionist manner and Art Deco arrives in all its forms. Surrealism emerges in France to produce dream-like distortions of reality from liberated imaginations.

At the Victorian Artists' Society in this era, Harry McClelland, having first exhibited in 1912 with a painting understandably titled *The Mystic Moon*, is front and centre of entertainment at the dance balls and smoke nights. He is to be associated with the The Vics for over 40 years, three as a councillor.

For the 1928 VAS Bal Masque the Albert St galleries turn into a pirate ship. Guests enter by a gangplank at the front door, have their passport tickets checked and step into a scene full of sea-faring effects, including a cannon at the top of the stairs! Bandits of the high seas (Harry and friends) create merry hell among the dancers as a maiden (Nan) is captured while the band plays on. No doubt Cole Porter's hit of that year 'Let's Misbehave' gets an airing.



Harry McClelland VAS Bal Masque 1928

For the following year's gaities the galleries undergo a Persian market makeover. This time at the top of the stairs a peacock preens its feathers. Harry patrols as a fearsome eunuch and Nan romps about as the sultan's favourite until sun up. The siblings will play and stay together for a lifetime.

Besides Flemington, the independently well-to-do McClellands also have a home and studio on Long Island, Frankston, right on the foreshore, and the house, The Barn, is still there along with a sculpture of a desk in the dunes that recreates a day in Nan's life as a poet and *bonne vivante*. In the 1930s good friend WB McInnes builds on Long Island and wins one of his seven Archibalds for a portrait of Harry dressed as a drum-major at The Barn, a building once described as 'a rare example of Anglo Swiss-Fijian picturesque eclecticism'! Eventually brother and sister call Frankston home.

Artistic associates flock to soirees on Long Island, and visit Harry's bush studio at nearby Langwarrin. A wide circle of friends include Percy Leason, Robert Helpmann and Percy Grainger, along with area neighbours Daryl Lindsay, Paul Montford and Neville Shute.



Above: Rick Amor, *Artist's House, Long Island, Frankston, 1992*, courtesy Niagara Galleries

Below: *The Barn and Studio, Long Island, Frankston c.1930s*



The National Gallery School and Max Meldrum provide early tutelage but McClelland exhibitions attract mixed reviews. Seemingly unfazed, our bohemian pushes on with his Gum Tree School landscapes, stage management and promotion of local art, as well as co-hosting fund-raising functions at Long Island.

As early as 1927 Harry and colleagues are lending paintings to Frankston High School half suggesting 'one day it could become a great art centre'. He soon takes on an art advisory role with the local council advocating all the while for a gallery and enlists the support of Langwarrin neighbour Sir Keith Murdoch.

Some measure of success is felt with involvement in the formation of the still-thriving Peninsula Arts Society, but still no gallery.

Rick Amor is born into an artistic Long Island family in the late 40s and husband and wife team

John Farmer and Polly Hurry, both established tonalist painters, move to this artists' haven by the bay a few years later. Amor's aunt, author and painter, Myra Morris, is already there and will feature in her nephew's depiction of the McClelland home to be painted in the 1990s.


Harry McClelland's last solo exhibition is at the VAS in 1953. He dies the next year aged 66 and his ashes are scattered near the Langwarrin studio that still stands.

Nan lives on until 1961.



Ernest Buckmaster, *The blue lady (portrait of Nan McClelland), 1927*, courtesy McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery

Thanks to her bequest, before the decade is out, family friend Daryl Lindsay lays the foundation stone of the Harry McClelland Art Gallery and Cultural Hall in the studio grounds. Later the Langwarrin complex re-badges as the McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery.

After death, the sibling bond becomes even stronger. 

# THE QUIZ

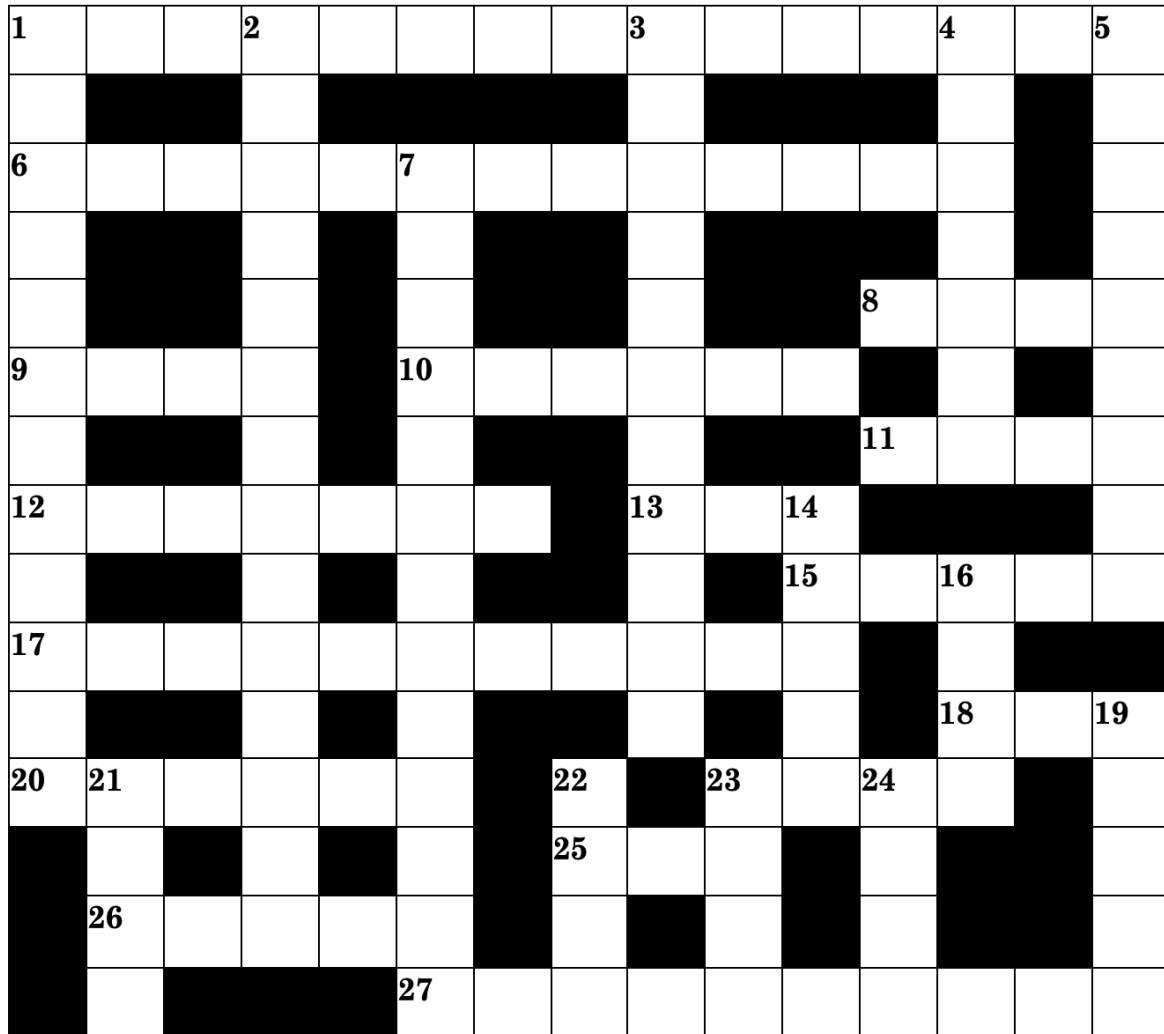


1. What is the least common primary colour in the natural environment?
2. Which Swiss mountain is famous for its pyramidal shape?
3. Picasso's gouache 'La Belle Hollandaise' is in the Collection of which Australian State Gallery?
4. In which Spanish Museum can you find the painting 'Las Meninas' by Diego Velasquez?
5. Which Latin term means 'dark chamber'?
6. What is the shape of conchiglie (pronounced con-KEEL-yay) pasta?
7. Which South East Asian nation is the world's largest producer of rubber?
8. Which natural rock is ground and processed to make the pigment ultramarine?
9. Mark Newson is a prominent Australian painter, sculptor or furniture designer?
10. The textile and fashion company Marimekko originated in which Scandinavian country?
11. The filbert paintbrush derives its name from the shape of which nut?
12. Which word is derived from the Italian 'impastare' means a thick application of paint?
13. Michelangelo's 'David' is sculptured from what type of marble?
14. A cardioid is what shape?
15. What are 'tesserae' in art?
16. Excluding white, what are the three colours in the MasterCard logo?
17. Clement Meadmore was an Australian sculptor and painter, printmaker or furniture designer?
18. Milton Moon was an Australian painter, potter or sculptor?
19. In which Australian capital city is the Holmes à Court Gallery?
20. Walter Gropius was the founder of which School of design?
21. What are Japanese hanging scroll paintings called?
22. Which type of paint is made from pigment and plastic?
23. The work of which Dutch abstract artist was hanging upside down for 77 years in a German gallery?

Answers Page 38

Image: Detail from Mrs Smith's Trivia & the GBH Last Supper by Lucy Fekete





## Across

1. Tom Roberts' famous woolshed painting (8,3,4)
6. Manet's watershed painting of a picnic scene '\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Grass' (8,2,3)
8. Colonial sketcher and watercolourist ST \_\_\_ (4)
9. Apply paint to a canvas in hasty or crude way (4)
10. Flemish painter popularly known for his depictions of full-figured women (1577-1640) (6)
11. \_\_\_ Herman, Swiss-born Australian artist (1898-1993) (4)
12. Art term for genuine depiction of everyday life (7)
13. Type of paint or painting (3)
15. Frightening and ghostly, like Munch's works (5)
17. Depiction of a gorilla-like primate (3,8)
18. \_\_\_ Winspear (3)
20. Paint colour, \_\_\_ red, eponymously originates from Sub-Continental country (6)
23. Colour between black and white (US spelling) (4)
25. Van Gogh lost one (3)
26. To put clothes on, say when a life model finishes (5)
27. Italian-born French painter known for his elongated portraits and nudes (1884-1920) (10)

## Down

1. Spanish surrealist with iconic moustache (8,4)
2. Most well-known portrait award in Australia (9,5)
3. French for 'trick of the eye', an illusion that creates depth in an image (6,1,4)
4. Country of birth of Blue Poles painter Jackson Pollock (7)
5. An arrangement of inanimate objects for painting (5,4)
7. Early 20th Century art movement depicting emotion more than reality (13)
14. Fernand \_\_\_, engaged in Cubism with Picasso and Braque (5)
16. Colour variety of red, also a gemstone (4)
19. Italian painter associated with Heidelberg School members (5)
21. Unclothed, like a life model (4)
22. John and Sunday \_\_\_, of Heide (4)
23. Recent VAS President \_\_\_ Smith (abbrev) (4)
24. Location of Musee Toulouse-Lautrec near Toulouse (4)

# AROUND THE GALLERIES

## Babara Hepworth: In Equilibrium

5 November 2022–13 March 2023, Heide Museum of Modern Art

Rachel Robertson

Considered the ‘doyenne of modernist sculpture’ Barbara Hepworth was one of the prominent British artists of her era and the first woman sculptor to be internationally recognised. Her distinctive and strong use of form influenced by the natural and the human world is instantly recognisable. Hepworth is credited with pioneering the piercing of the sculptural form and as one of the leading proponents of the Avant-garde method of Direct Carving. Her life’s work has had a profound influence on sculpture.

Sourced from private and public collections within Australasia and the UK, this exhibition provides an impressive representation of her life’s work and its evolution from 1932 through to 1973. Two of the three forms that inspired her work are well represented—the standing form of the human within the landscape and the closed form representing ‘the association and meaning of gesture’ within the landscape.



Above: *Stringed Figure* 1956  
Below: *Corinthos* 1954–55



Left: *Two Forms in Echelon* 1961  
Right: *Pierced Hemisphere II* 1937–38  
Below: *Oval Form* 1968



Sculptural materials include stone, wood, bronze, copper and other metals. The exhibition also includes a number of paintings.

‘The exhibition demonstrates the shift in Hepworth’s approach from figurative and naturalistic to increasingly simplified and abstract forms. Though concerned with abstraction, she created work that was predominantly about relationships: between the human figure and the landscape; between forms presented side-by-side; between colour and texture; and between individuals and groups of people.’  
Heide Museum of Modern Art.

# AROUND THE GALLERIES

## Bunnies Galore: Lunar New Year Pop Up

January 2023, Little Bourke Street, Chinatown, Melbourne

Bruce Baldey VAS

In January as part of its contribution to the Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations the City of Melbourne commissioned a Pop Up Street Art Exhibition in Chinatown. The wall murals by the Creative Creatures duo of Chanel Tang and Ambrose Rehorek were scattered throughout Little Bourke Street and its alleyways. This creative partnership is formed from Chinese and Czech backgrounds and naturally their work reflects Asian and European culture and style. Their artworks are 'steeped in tradition, full of symbolism and storytelling to celebrate the Chinese Zodiac and lunar New Year. Water and Water rabbits have similar qualities; they can be gentle, passive, but clever—peaceful and elegant but also fast, swift and full of dynamism and flux'. Their art 'conveys a message of togetherness, state of balance, Yin and Yang, the beauty of coming together'.

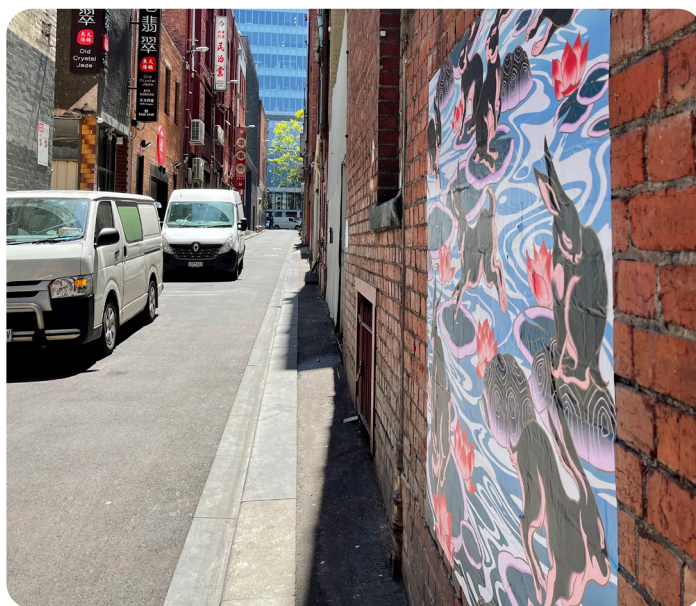


The siting of the murals, more opportunistic than random, is consistent with the spirit of this commercial and cultural space. My eyes were drawn to the juxtaposition of the murals and the proliferation of commercial signage and graphics characteristic of Chinatown. They sit well together in this environment, a satisfying synergy each drawing colour and shape from the other.

Where does commercial art end and fine art begin? 



Above Left: Water Rabbit Yinyang (Heart)  
Above Right: Water Rabbit Yinyang (Moon)



Top: Street Poster (fragments)  
Above: Water Rabbit Lagoon (Eve)  
Left: Water Rabbit Lagoon (Eve)

# AROUND THE GALLERIES

## No Vacancy Gallery: Fragmentation

13–24 December 2022, QV Building, Russell Street Melbourne

### Bruce Baldey VAS

No Vacancy is one of many small independent art galleries tucked away in the alleys of the Melbourne CBD. If you don't enter the QV Building at the 'Jane Bell Lane' sign in Russell Street you may have to 'ask a local' for directions. The Gallery frequently hosts the work of fringe and emerging arts festivals and students from the RMIT and Monash University. Recent exhibitions include the work of illustrators, painters, photographers, and the glass scarves of the Afghan Women's Organisation. In December Gail Whyte a VAS student and Member participated in an exhibition of mosaics titled 'Fragmentation' curated by members of the Mosaic Association of Australia and New Zealand (MAANZ). Exhibitors were tasked with using as found 'fragments' from the environment e.g., buttons, plastics, metals, in addition to traditional ceramic mosaics and were asked to reference life post and during the COVID lockdowns.

Mosaic making itself is fragmentation as a process with breaking and assemblage of pieces. In using innovative materials and current concepts an ancient technique is brought to a modern context.

The following is a selection of works from the exhibition:

Gail (Right) contemplates the freedoms enjoyed by the animal world while Barb (Below), as her name might suggest, records a short, sharp intervention—or is this just a temporary pause in transmission?

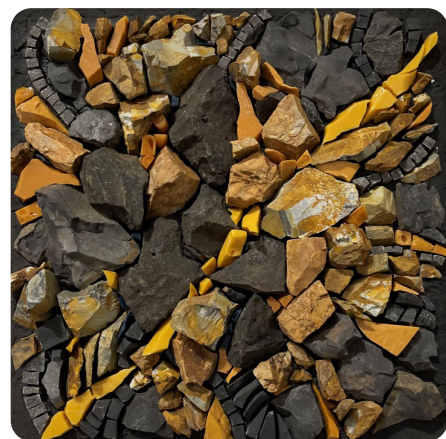


*Grotesque* is self-explanatory on many levels, while Helen Bellino's elaborately coloured *Icarus* flies in the face of a rising malevolent tide.



Above Left: *Grotesque*, Andy Pullar  
Above Right: *Icarus*, Helen Bellino  
Below: *Symbiosis*, Helen Blackman  
Bottom: *Hope*, Gabby Hare-Brown

The tide running through Helen Blackman's *Symbiosis* is more of a weapon than a complementary stream.



But of course there is always *Hope*. The more numerous fragments must eventually overcome the invader.



# MACHINE OR HUMAN?

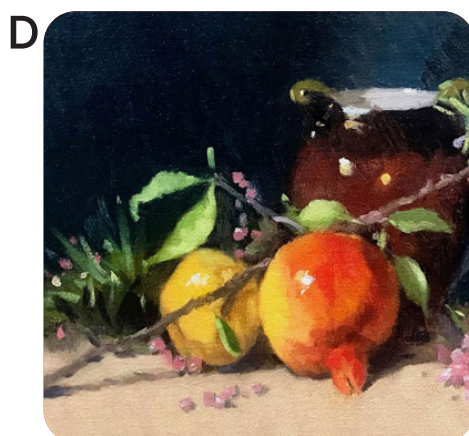
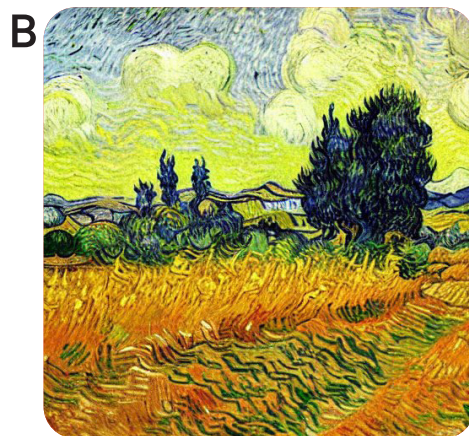
Can you tell AI generated imagery apart from human-made art?

Half of the images on this page were generated using Artificial Intelligence, and half were made by human artists. See if you can tell the difference between works made by machines and works made by humans.

## Spot the Difference

Article by ChatGPT using the prompt 'Write a 5 point list of the main visual difference between AI and Human art, with a 20 word description of each point'.

1. **Uniqueness vs. Uniformity:** Human art is unique and varied, while AI art is often uniform and repetitive.
2. **Emotional Expression:** Human art conveys emotions and feelings, while AI art lacks the emotional depth of human expression.
3. **Details:** Human art often features intricate and unique details, while AI art may lack the same level of detail and nuance.
4. **Creative Process:** Human art involves the creative process of ideation and experimentation, while AI art is created through a predetermined process.
5. **Inherent Meaning:** Human art can contain inherent meaning and symbolism, while AI art may require interpretation or lacks meaning altogether. ✍️



Answers on page 38

# DO YOU PLAY A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MR BUSH?

## A Tribute to VAS Member Charles Bush 1919–1989

Anne Scott Pendlebury

Charles Bush was born in Brunswick East, Victoria and studied at the National Gallery School in Melbourne. He served in WW2 in an artillery survey unit and from 1943 was employed as an official War artist in PNG and Timor.

Charles travelled to Britain after the War and studied under Bernard Meninsky and exhibited at the Royal Academy.

Returning to Australia, he was appointed a drawing master at the National Gallery School where he had studied, and over the years became recognized as a highly regarded painter, tutor, entrepreneur, Gallery owner, public speaker and eventually TV presenter and Quiz Show participant—delighting audiences with his wit, suave style, enormous general knowledge and charm.

Throughout his long career, Bush won over 50 prestigious Awards and his work was purchased by the National Gallery of Australia as well as the Australian War Memorial.

He was a longstanding, colourful and popular VAS member and is represented in the VAS Collection of art works with his fine study 'Old Phelan—VAS Life Monitor'

His long and significant career spanning over 50 years began in the mid 1930s.

Back then Charles was a young lad barely out of short trousers, with a propensity for playing practical jokes. He was a delightful larrikin with a truly mischievous and original sense of humour.

Now read on ...



Charles Bush was a lifelong friend and colleague of my parents Laurence Scott Pendlebury and Nornie Gude.

They met as very young art students around 1935 pursuing a Fine Art course up at the National Gallery Art School, in Swanston Street Melbourne.

Charles (or Chas as he was known) was around 16 when he successfully entered the first year Drawing course.

What he lacked in physical height, he made up for with a sharp wit, a precocious charm and enormous talent.

He looked younger than his years, so with the help of a stick of charcoal, he applied a neat little black moustache above his boyish top lip. This also gave him an additional rakish Clark Gable look—much admired by his fellow students.

Charlie Bush and most of the other lads were, by all accounts—quick thinking, well read, ambitious and fun loving young fellows.

They were excellent students, often getting up to clever pranks and playing practical jokes—just a group of wonderfully gifted young emerging artists, indulging in the carefree joys of pre-war student life.

Most of the boys shared rough ‘digs’ around Collingwood and Carlton, whilst the girls boarded close by at the ‘YWCA’.

When the weekends arrived, many of the young women would pack a suitcase and return to their families. The boys, on the other hand, would take off in old cars and bicycles and roam the country side—enjoying fresh air and some tasty ‘pub’ cooking.

On occasions Laurie Pendlebury took the car which he co-owned with three close mates and drove to Ballarat to visit the young woman he was one day hoping to marry—fellow student Nornie Gude.

Nornie was a quiet, well brought up young woman staying at the ‘Y’ during the week, but returning home to her family each weekend.

The Gudes were one of Ballarat’s most gracious and well-known families.

Mr Gude was a strict music teacher and Mrs Gude was a devoted wife and mother.

Both daughters were exceptional art students as well as being talented young violinists.

It was into this family, that my dad was to marry—he was a lad from a working-class Melbourne suburb—and could not have come from a more different background.

However, art studies and a passion for painting drew both young people together.

So, one fine Sunday afternoon, Laurie, along with best friend Charlie Bush drove up to Ballarat, where the Gudes had prepared a sumptuous afternoon tea—as their elder daughter and young Mr. Pendlebury were now ‘stepping out together’.

There was a lot at stake on this particular visit—as it was considered a kind of engagement celebration.

It was only correct that the nervous young man who came wooing, should bring along his best friend as a companion on the long trip up from Melbourne.

Young Charlie was more than happy to tag along with the promise of a splendid ‘High Tea’ and some fun perhaps. But my father was far too apprehensive to contemplate any sort of skylarking or joke telling.

Certainly not on this day of all days.

At first all went well as Charles was duly introduced to the family.

Mrs Gude fussed and Mr Gude was welcoming and polite, if not exactly full of hearty good cheer.

Afternoon tea went smoothly and eventually it was suggested that the two girls play a violin duet, to introduce a little Bach into the proceedings.

So Charles and Laurie listened politely as the girls showed off their accomplished string technique.

Fresh tea was made, after which Mrs Gude played a little Brahms on the piano and then young Laurie offered to play something fairly simple on the cello which stood in the corner. (He had received a handful of lessons years before, and apparently equipped himself reasonably well, thus endearing himself to his future father-in-law.)

Everyone warmly applauded.

Then Mr Gude turned to young Charles, who was eyeing the cello with interest.

‘So do you play a musical instrument Mr Bush?’ my grandfather enquired.

The girls’ eyes widened with interest.

‘Why don’t you try?’ one of them said quickly and reaching across taking cello and bow from Laurie, passed them to the young visitor.

Before my grandfather could protest (for the instrument was an heirloom) Charles took it up with all the aplomb of an accomplished virtuoso, placed it between his knees like a veteran and tentatively drew the bow across an open string. He was a picture of concentration in the velvet fireside chair, a lock of dark hair falling casually across his forehead.

He was a natural.

My father, knowing Charlie as he did, apparently held his breath in terror, and all watched as the bow sawed back and forth, scraping and scratching ponderously. The cello itself seemed to ache and groan in pain.

No one spoke—it probably seemed rude and discouraging to ask this young man with the wispy moustache and waistcoat to stop before he had even begun.

Now, next to Charles’ fireside chair was a conveniently placed low occasional table, still bearing an abundance of uneaten treats. Several asparagus rolls and hardly touched lamingtons were poised dangerously near the edge of the lace cloth—alongside a small tray of salmon sandwich triangles and a dish of meringues.

After a minute or so, young Chas with half closed eyes—perhaps in a reverie of his own making, bent forward.

He casually drew the bow to the right then in what was a neatly engineered manoeuvre—he aimed the head of the bow firmly to his left towards the plate of pink meringues.

The dainty platter was right on the edge of the table—perfectly positioned.

With accurate aim, the bow somehow pierced the soft, sticky inner filling of the nearest meringue. Then it was drawn firmly back on an open string—the delicacy still clinging fast to the tip.

There was a collective gasp from the family. With closed eyes, Chas drew the bow across the strings

several more times—the sweet confection still firmly attached.

The story goes that the young prodigy finally completed his brief recital with a modest grin, the heel of his right hand triumphantly resting on his right knee, bow held aloft in a vertical position with the pink meringue stuck fast.

Mrs Gude, aghast, clutched the pearls at her neck. The two sisters stuffed lace handkerchiefs into their mouths to stifle hysterical giggles and grandfather Gude simply stared in shock at young Mr Bush—his large Edwardian moustache twitching nervously.

Poker faced, my dad applauded the musical efforts of his best friend, before quickly rising—hoping to leave without too much ado—convinced this was the end of any chance of future marriage- or happiness as he knew it. All prospects ruined over a meringue and the reckless, out of control clownish behaviour of a best friend.

My parents cannot recall exactly what exchanges took place immediately following this incident—but they do remember a momentary silence.



Charles, Phyl & Alannah Coleman

However it appears that the remainder of the afternoon actually went surprisingly well indeed and by tea time, young Charles had well and truly charmed his way into the family!



The cello bow remained undamaged, the meringues were all eaten and another pot of tea was brought in whilst everyone sat around chatting as the fire was lit and the curtains drawn.

Apparently all grandfather said as he put his arms around the shoulders of both young men was,

'Is this the sort of nonsense they're teaching you down at that Art School in Melbourne, eh?'

And then a moment later a large smile appeared beneath the imposing moustache and he added,

'Well Mr Bush, I have to say, what an afternoon we've all had!'

(And my father breathed a sigh of relief)

Then as the moon rose, grandfather went straight to the cedar cabinet upon which stood a whisky decanter, a bottle of dry sherry and several glasses -and drinks were offered all around.

To this day no one really knows if the incident of the 'Meringue on the G String' was an unfortunate mishap or another mischievous, larrikan prank wickedly executed in the best Chas Bush style.

But the young man with the Clarke Gable moustache never revealed a thing—not even to his best friend.

However all ended well and within a couple of days a 'Notice of Engagement' appeared in the social column of the Ballarat Courier. My parents' engagement was now official ... and Charlie Bush and my father remained the warmest of friends for the rest of their lives.

In 1986, Charles delivered the Eulogy at our father's Funeral service and just 3 years later I stood sadly before many and read at Chas's own funeral.

For over 50 years, Charles Bush had been a much admired artist within both the VAS and the Australian art community in general, loyal colleague to many, entertainer to millions—and a dear family friend.

Remembered with a smile.



June Davies, Charles Bush & Harold Weinberg

# BOOK REVIEW

Guy Marion

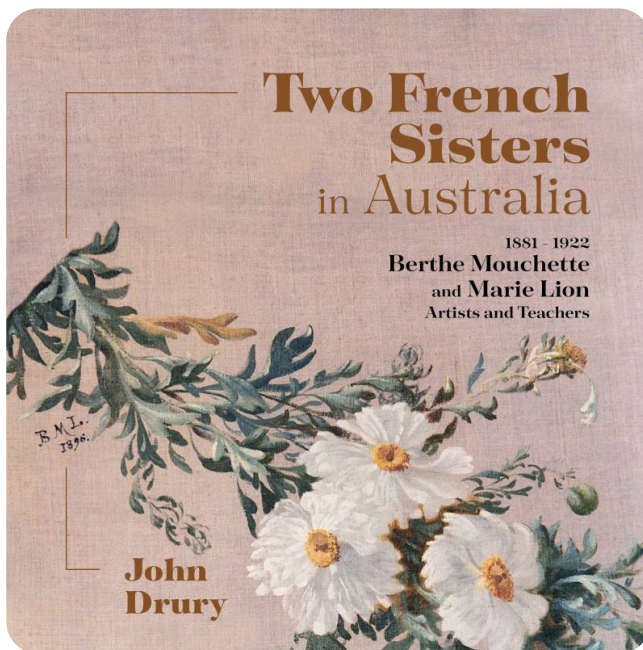
## Two French Sisters in Australia 1881–1922 Berthe Mouchette and Marie Lion, Artists and Teachers by John Drury

Anchor Books Australia 2022  
Paperback, 214 Pages

The library of the Victorian Artists Society has been enriched recently by a book entitled *Two French Sisters in Australia 1881–1922, Berthe Mouchette and Marie Lion, Artists and Teachers*, by author John Drury, and which portrays the life of artists Berthe Mouchette, née Berthe Julie Lucie LION, and Marie Anne Julie LION. The two sisters arrived in Melbourne in September 1881 where they resided until moving to South Australia in 1892, before returning indefinitely to Paris in 1922.

A painting done by Berthe Mouchette in Melbourne in 1884 was once lost and later acquired by the author of this book which led to the quest for the story of the painting and simultaneously retraced the life of the two artists sisters. The painting was of an elegant young lady in a studio setting inscribed 'B Mouchette 1884'. After owning the artwork for twenty years, John Drury donated it in 2009 to the State Library of Victoria where it used to hang in the Red Rotunda adjacent to the Cowen Gallery, but was removed to storage during refurbishments of the library.

This book contains an impressive wealth of information, gained at the expense of extensive and meticulous research by the author. Due to the limited space available in this Magazine, this commentary has been restricted to the period when the sisters lived in Melbourne, and regrettably the review about the duration of their 30 years' stay in Adelaide had to be left out. However, readers are urged to explore the latter part of the book which explores the fascinating lives of those two talented artists who, whilst in Australia, travelled to Noumea, India and Tibet.



## Life in France

Berthe Mouchette was born on 22 February 1846 in Forcalquier in south east France and Marie Lion was born on May 1855 in Marseillan (south west of Montpellier). 'Berthe and Marie Lion spent their childhood and the early years of their education in the idyllic surrounds of Marseillan. By the time the Franco-Prussian war ended (19/7/1870–10/5/1871), Berthe (25 years) and Marie (16 years) were pursuing their studies and careers in Paris as artists and teachers.' In 1872, Berthe aged 26 married Nicolas Emile Mouchette aged 34. In Paris Berthe worked as a Teacher of Drawing in schools as well as being highly regarded as a painter. 'The diplomas which Madame Mouchette holds from the Academy of Paris, from that of Bordeaux, and from the Prefecture of the Department of the Seine, denote the proficiency she had acquired by seven years of unremitting study at the Louvre, and was a thoroughly competent teacher'. Both sisters painted and exhibited in the Paris Salon in 1878, 1879 and 1881.

## Melbourne, Australia

It is interesting to learn the circumstances that prompted the married couple and Marie to emigrate to Australia and it is best left to quote the author from the book.

On 20 July 1880, 'one evening, for no particular reason, as they say, the three of them went to the Geographical Society to hear a talk by Ms Fraser (Tasma). The subject of the talk was Australia. Ms Fraser said so many favourable things about this country, still so unfamiliar to Europeans, and especially to the French; she showed such enthusiasm—and rightly so—for its healthy climate, its hospitality, its institutions; she praised so highly and with such eloquence the possibilities open to foreigners, be they workers, teachers or artists, that Monsieur Mouchette, on leaving the meeting, said, only half seriously, to his wife: "Shall we go to Australia?" "Why not?" replied Madame Mouchette, who has an enterprising and resolute character. Melle Lion added: "I'd love to go", and so they had no other thought than to leave for this Eldorado, to which they felt drawn less by the attraction of making a fortune than by that irresistible appeal to the imagination—to venture into the unknown, to discover a new natural landscape, to brave the perils of travelling!'

'But destiny must be obeyed, and M.s Fraser had decided it for the three members of the audience.'

'The lecture in Paris by "Tasma" about the "Australian Colonies" was reported in a Sydney newspaper, commented that her writings in the *Australasian* had made her well known to a large circle of readers.'

So, without careful planning or preparation, the three decided to make a radical move and travel to Australia. The party of three travelled to London, embarked on steamship *SS Liguria* which departed on 20 July 1881, sailed via Cape Town and Adelaide, and arrived in Melbourne on 2 September 1881.

They landed in Melbourne without knowing a word of English. As there was practically no drawing or French teachers then, the ladies were quickly accepted and much appreciated. Melbourne was forty-five years old when the French party arrived in Victoria; the population was 77,000 and Melbourne was in the middle of a building boom. When the Mouchette party arrived, 'Marvellous Melbourne' was a very affluent city built on the proceeds of gold. They were warmly welcome into the Melbourne society by the local French community, who had been alerted to their voyage to Australia by an article published in *The Argus* newspaper.

Prior to January 1882, they moved into a house, the first terrace built at 128 Gipps Street East Melbourne.



Lucinda Elizabeth Gullett, 1884, by Berthe Mouchette

Madame Mouchette, a painter of some talent, opened a life-school for female students in a studio which she had erected at the rear of her residence. 'Her intention was to establish classes in Melbourne for instruction in painting from living models, according to the French system, and from flowers, fruits and other natural products; and also for instruction in all kinds of decorative art such as fan painting, porcelain painting, faïence painting, screen painting and miniature painting.' In March 1883, Berthe introduced a branch of art already greatly in vogue in France: an imitation of Gobelins tapestry, designs painted on tissue; at a little distance it is undistinguishable from a piece of ordinary *tapisserie*.

In March 1882, the Victorian Academy of Arts held its twelfth exhibition in which the two sisters exhibited seven works and Frederick McCubbin exhibited also three oils. The two sisters were listed in the catalogue as Associate Members of the Academy.

The Victorian Academy of Arts was founded on 31 January 1870 and in 1888 was amalgamated with the Australian Artists Association to form the

Victorian Artists Society. It is heartening to note that our prolific artists at VAS today continue to evince much talent as in the days of Mme Berthe Mouchette.

In September 1882 Berthe leased a large studio in Collins Street East where she painted and gave lessons, while Marie painted and also directed French courses in schools.

The studio in Collins Street East was located not far from the corner with Swanston Street, in the newly built house of Haigh Bros, tailors—today at 186 Collins Street, where the Atheneum building stands (opposite the Regent Theatre).

In 1884, Madame Mouchette and Melle Lion vacated the studio in Collins Street East and moved to the upper floor of the ‘Imperial Chambers’ at 77 Collins Street West, nowadays 408 Collins Street. An exhibition was held in Berthe’s studio in July 1884 showcasing 130 exhibits—quite an impressive number for a private exhibition! The April 1885 issue of *Once a Month* magazine commented ‘Madame Mouchette’s studio is always worth visiting, as steady work is evidently done in it. A good feature of this lady’s system of teaching is her plan of taking her pupils out for a sketching expedition every Thursday’. The annual exhibition of the Victorian Academy of Arts in March 1885 showed some 145 oil paintings and watercolour drawings, again an impressive number.

On 4 May 1886, Queen Victoria opened the Colonial Indian Exhibition in south Kensington, London, in purpose-built buildings designed in the Indian style. The official catalogue listed entries from all countries and included several paintings and sculptures by Berthe Mouchette and her sister Marie Lion. Other entries included, amongst others from Victoria, Tom Roberts, Julian Rossi Ashton, Eugene von Guerard and Baron Ferdinand von Mueller. Berthe Mouchette had also executed a painting of ‘Oberwyl’ for the exhibition.

Madame Mouchette often visited Government House where she gave lessons to her patron, Lady Loch, wife of Governor Sir Henry Loch. Berthe often exhibited alongside several prominent artists in Melbourne, such as Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts, Charles Conder, Walter Withers, to name but a few, who were also members of the Academy.

On 16 December 1886, ‘another exhibition in which works by students of Mme Mouchette and Melle Lion were displayed was at the Art Students’ exhibition at

“Oberwyl” school’ and showed ‘great advancement in their art, evidencing artistically directed study on the part of the pupils and zealous methodical teaching and training on the side of their instructress’.

‘The Victorian Academy of Arts held its Seventeenth Exhibition in April 1887 where Mme Mouchette was again listed as an Associate. Arthur Merric Boyd submitted four entries and his wife, Emma Minnie Boyd, three works. The secretary of the Academy, F.B. Gibbes, was a prolific artist with six paintings on display,’ and ‘Arthur Streeton showed only one, *Midday at Mentone*.’

In 1888, ‘the Victorian Academy of Arts had changed its name to the Victorian Artists Society and an Autumn Exhibition was held in the Grosvenor Gallery at the National Gallery, Melbourne. An illustrated catalogue was produced for the first time’.

‘In August 1888, *The Sydney Morning Herald* ran an announcement of the forthcoming “Exhibition of Women’s Industries” which opened in Sydney on 2 October in the Intercolonial Exhibition Building at Prince Albert Park, Redfern.’ Several countries took part: France, Germany, United States and Great



Top: *The Queen's Bouquet*, Berthe Mouchette

Bottom: *Still Life with Fruit, Flowers and Birds*, Berthe Mouchette

Britain. ‘When a list of awards declared by the jury was published, there were numerous protests in the newspapers and anger from the public. The Victorian Artists Society held a special meeting of protest against “the clumsy and ill-intentioned distribution of medals, with too few going to France and too many to Germany”.’

The book gives detailed accounts of other artists and several exhibitions where the sisters and their pupils were involved but which have not been reproduced here for the sake of space in this review.

Despite the depression and economic crisis that deepened later through to 1893, it is noteworthy that the Victorian Artist Society mounted an exhibition in May 1892 in which there were 353 oil and watercolour paintings and 24 pieces of statutory on display!

On 10 October 1884, Emile Nicolas Mouchette died from an acute haemorrhage of the lungs. After his death, Berthe and Marie took a short two-week holiday, sailing to Noumea on 29 December 1884.

## Oberwyl

At the end of 1885 Berthe and Marie ‘purchased “Oberwyl School for Young Ladies” in Burnett Street, St Kilda, from Mme Elise Pfund for 200,000 francs, approximately £8,000, and

spent a further 20,000 francs on modifications and furnishings’. She announced ‘that she would carry on the school hitherto conducted by Mme Pfund. “Oberwyl” school was a highly regarded boarding school for young ladies. Madame Mouchette was the Principal, assisted by a large and efficient staff of teachers. The French classes, literature and conversation were conducted by Marie Lion, who held the highest diplomas of the Paris Academy for the instruction of French, Arithmetic, History, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Mineralogy, Botany, Zoology, Hygiene and Bookkeeping’. Berthe taught drawing and painting, and ‘French was the language spoken out of class’.

‘Education for girls developed dramatically over a relatively short period. Berthe and Marie had been in Melbourne for only a little over four years and had already made a large contribution in artistic and educational development for the young ladies of Melbourne’.

Mme Mouchette advised ‘the boarders obey strict rules during lesson hours, but after lessons they enjoy considerable freedom. They may take from the library a book they wish to read, they may write, draw, paint, practise music, do needlework and have permission to decorate their room to their taste. Every month they have an evening for dancing, which they partner each other [...] to train them for the role of mistress of the house, for most of them will be called to occupy a place in society’. At the end of each year there is



*Etloe Hall (Renamed Oberwyl), Burnett Street, St Kilda, c.1861*

‘a grand evening of music and drama at “Oberwyl” and the theatrical performance of the borders is entirely in French!’, attended by the French Consul, the Governor’s wife and daughters, and concluded with the annual distribution of prizes. Exhibition of works by Berthe’s pupils were also held at ‘Oberwyl’.

Oscar Comettant, a French writer, arts critic and man of letters, visited Oberwyl towards the end of 1888 and reported ‘I do not believe there is anywhere in Europe an establishment for young ladies, organised on a better system and directed with wiser authority, both in regards education and administration, than the boarding-school kept by Madame Mouchette’, ‘where we find gathered the daughters of the foremost families’. ‘I was struck by the existence of an infant class’ composed of children between ages of 5 and 8, ‘little Australian girls belonging to the best families of Australia, is conducted entirely in French’; ‘This sweet little troop of children is the flower in this French oasis’—‘the inspiration of a noble French heart in a foreign country’. Comettant further added: ‘If the poet’s words are true: “Every man has two countries—his own, and then France”’. Madame Mouchette replied ‘Children in this country have a marvellous gift for languages. I hope to be able to enable the new generation to speak French fluently’. The French writer went on to report extensively and glowingly about the elite ‘Oberwyl’ and his admiration for Berthe Mouchette’s achievements, even after she returned to Paris.

She died on 28 June 1928, aged 82. Her beloved sister, Marie, had passed away six years earlier.

## Decoration Award

In April 1889, the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères in Paris advised the Consul de France in Melbourne, M. Déjardin, that the President of the French Republic had requested the Minister of Fine Arts to award the status of *Officier* in the Order of the *Palmes Académiques d’Académie* to Madame Mouchette. *The Argus* announced that “this decoration carries with it the appointment of officer of the Academy, in recognition of her ability as an artist, and the valuable services she had rendered to the cause of higher education, both in France and Victoria. This distinction is all the more honourable and gratifying, inasmuch as it is rarely bestowed upon women”.

Flowers in a Vase, Berthe Mouchette



## Alliance Française

In 1883, the foundations of the *Alliance Française* were established in Paris as the *Association Nationale pour la propagation de la langue française dans les colonies et à l'étranger*. In 1884, Barcelona was the first European city abroad to welcome the Alliance, and was also established in Sénégal and Mauritius that year.

In 1888, a French-speaking Mauritian, M. Astruc employed by a Melbourne solicitor, proposed to M. Pierre Foncin in Paris the establishment of a branch of the Alliance Française in Melbourne. After consultation with the French Consul the proposal was approved in October 1889 for a *comité d'action*. Foncin delegated Mme Mouchette to set up a committee and she chaired the first meeting of the Alliance Française, convened at Oberwyl on 6 June 1890, and she remained its President for the duration of her time in Melbourne. Hence was founded the first branch of the Alliance Française in Australia which ‘is Berthe Mouchette’s lasting legacy to Australia’. ‘Her memory lives on through the Alliance Française’s annual competition—the “*Concours Berthe Mouchette*”—established in 1895 and continuing today’ after 128 years. ‘It plays a key

role in promoting French language and culture in Australia.'


'Thirty five candidates entered the first Concours and participants now number over 16,000.' Students from Years 3 to 12, entering the Berthe Mouchette Competition 'are evaluated in general conversation, recitation of a poem suggested by the Alliance, and older students from years 11 and 12 sit a two-hour written examination that tests comprehension and expression, with prizes awarded of a certificate, French books at a special ceremony and a trip to New Caledonia is presented to winners of the Prix La Pérouse, in Years 11 and 12.'

## Adelaide

Following the success of the gold rush and the land boom in Victoria during the late 1880s, the whole investment structure collapsed and from January 1889 the financial slump deepened the economic crisis and the horrors of depression set in. Unfortunately, in this economic climate, pupils were

withdrawn from Oberwyl and Berthe and Marie could no longer viably operate Oberwyl and sold their college in 1892 and moved to Adelaide in late June.

So ended 11 years of successful careers in Victoria. Berthe Mouchette and Marie Lion were two remarkable women who 'had attained a high standing in the social community and much respect for their abilities in the education and art scene'. Both sisters went on to 'become involved in the South Australian Art scene, opened studios, tutored members of Adelaide society, were founding members of the Adelaide branch of the Alliance Française. The Theosophical Society gained a foothold in South Australia on 26 May 1891 and as interested members of the Society, the sisters were early travellers to India and Tibet. After they returned to Adelaide, Marie Lion wrote two novels based on her experiences.' That latter part of the books opens a window on their resourceful and adventurous lives.

This excellent book of 214 pages by John Drury contains several photographs and illustrations that adequately complement the story. 



Berthe Mouchette is to the right of the man in the centre, wearing a floral hat. Marie Lion is to his left, wearing a veil.

# BOOK REVIEW

Bruce Baldey VAS

## The Grand Affair: John Singer Sargent in his World by Paul Fisher

Farrar, Straus and Giroux NY 2022

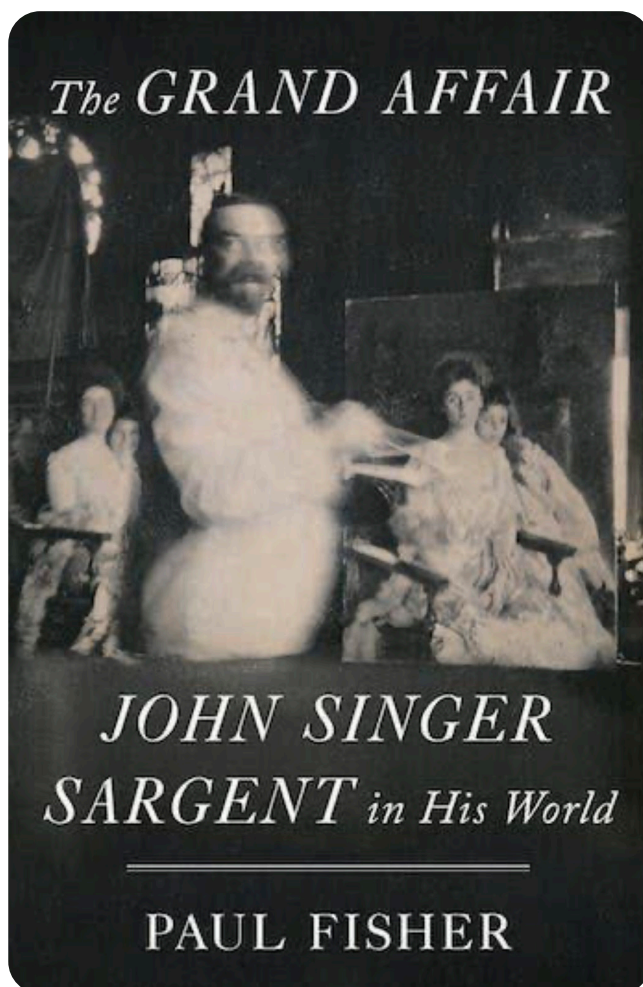
Hardcover, 496 Pages

Available from Dymocks Online \$92.99

and Amazon Australia \$61.13

Promoted by Amazon as ‘A bold new biography of the legendary painter John Singer Sargent, stressing the unruly emotions and furtive desires that drove his innovative work and defined the transatlantic, fin de siècle culture he inhabited’ this recently published book could be a must read for his many admirers at the VAS and beyond. From teenage prodigy to watercolour master John Singer Sargent’s (1856–1925) career spanned the turn of the century and its array of Art Movements. His friends and associates may have been the instigators of such Movements e.g., Monet, but his technique was firmly rooted in the traditions of the Paris Beaux Arts Academy of the nineteenth century. Sargent’s consummate painterly technique and skill and his ability to portray the character and emotions of his subjects assures him of a permanent place in the pantheon of artists. He led a peripatetic lifestyle; an American born in Florence who returned to his homeland frequently and who lived and worked variously throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. It was a pattern set by his mother and a somewhat reluctant father who embraced wanderlust and a love of the Arts finding Europe a much cheaper place to live than North America.

Following this pattern one of his first stops abroad after his first Salon admission was the heavily populated, romantic Isle of Capri off the coast of Naples. There he met and painted one of the resident models, ‘tawny-skinned, panther-eyed, elf like’ Rosina Ferrara. Significantly this was one of the first exotic and unconventional women who would establish his international career as a portraitist.



*Head of a Capri Girl* features Sargent’s virtuoso painterly technique—the broad, fluent brush strokes and suggestive edges are reminiscent of his artistic heroes Diego Velasquez and Frans Hals.

Paul Fisher’s book is almost 500 pages long (100 of these are occupied by copious Notes plus Index) however the narrative rarely stalls driven by these constant changes in scenery. There is only a small core of colour images however enough monochrome sketches and drawings are distributed throughout the book to keep the visual artist engaged.



An insistent, and distracting, thread is the author's continual speculation about Sargent's sexual proclivity. One reviewer offers the following resolution:

Navigating Sargent's world, Fisher is careful to label all the trees. But he doesn't seem to realize that the entire forest was cut down decades ago. Victorian attitudes toward sex-prudery and respectability on the surface with everything and anything going on in the down low-have become completely alien to 21st-century conceptions. It takes an enormous effort of the imagination, apparently more than Fisher can muster, to reconstruct them. Whatever sexual landscape Sargent inhabited, it is forever out of reach.

'Forever out of Reach' Peter Walsh, *The Arts Fuse* November 2022



Head of a Capri Girl (*Rosina Ferrara*) 1878  
Private Collection

Sargent fell out of favour with the art world's cognoscenti after his death however an artist of this ability and versatility can never disappear from view. The quality of his work has reasserted itself and interest in Sargent has surged worldwide in recent years. Unfortunately one must travel overseas to see his oeuvre. There is only a small amount of his work (mainly drawings) in the collections of Australian Galleries i.e., NGV has a small collection of drawings and watercolours with an oil from a brief less successful fling with Impressionism, AGSA has two of his charcoal portraits and AGNSW one. Most of his work is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and of course, the NY Met, the Art Institute of Chicago and the NGA Washington. 

# FROM THE VAS COLLECTION

## Gregory R Smith VAS FVAS

This still life painting in the VAS Collection was done as a demonstration piece and published in Australian Artist in 1996. Working direct from life Gregory selected 'a few bits and pieces' from his studio arranging them around a cast of a male torso. The artist enjoys studying the subtleties in casts regarding them as a sound training tool. The majority of Gregory's studio work is done under strong artificial light although occasionally he will use the natural light through southern windows.

The 'constant study of light falling over any surface, no matter what the subject, is the challenge set before any good realist painter ... understanding and reading the relationships between various tonal values is my visual quest, and has become my sole reason for painting'.

Artist: Gregory R Smith

Title: Still Life with Torso

Date: 1996


Medium: Oil

Size: 50.8cm H x 61cm W

Donor: Artist



Greg is a Teacher at the VAS and an honorary Life member. He is also a Past President (2010–2013) and our 1994 Artist of the Year. Greg has more than 40 solo exhibitions to his credit and over 170 Awards

for still life, portraiture, landscape and floral work. Last month Greg's oil painting *Could do with a Drop, Barfold* won Second Prize in the 2023 VAS Summer exhibition. 



Left: *Eunuch from Forbidden City 2019*  
Right: *Inner Circle of Friends 2022*

# ST HUBERTS

Less than an hour's drive from Melbourne, St Hubert's cellar door sits at the gateway to the stunning Yarra Valley—the perfect first stop on your journey into wine country.



1 - 3 St Huberts Rd (Cnr Maroondah Hwy and St Huberts Rd), Coldstream VIC 3770

# A BRUSH WITH THE GHOST

Linda Weil

On the top of Eastern Hill, opposite the imposing Catholic Cathedral, you will find the Victorian Artists Society. The Society was set up in the 1870s by a group of (surprise) colonialist privileged white male artists who thought they really needed a dedicated space to smoke cigars, drink grog, talk crap about art and paint naked ladies.

Starting with an unassuming bluestone warehouse type block building, eventually in 1892 it mushroomed into grand and imposing Romanesque façade with high Victorian style interior. Inside crystal chandeliers drip from the ceiling rosettes. Fancy plaster moldings of fruits and flowers adorn the corners, architrave, and cornices. Stained glass windows and a grand staircase lead up to the gallery spaces. Dame Nellie Melba once sung from the balcony to enthralled crowds gathered on the street below. It's a grand old building with a rich history; many famous artists have taught and exhibited here.

So, I felt rather chuffed when I was asked to join the Society and teach there. To know you are teaching in the same space and see the paint splatters on the floor from famous brushes is an ego thrilling experience. But my classes are in the evenings and no matter how grand the building, at night it can get kind of creepy in there alone, there are creaks and crackles and moans as the building settles each night. The wind can moan and wuther around the bluestone eaves. Homeless are known to set up outside, or substance dependent sorts roll in uninvited, so you cannot forget to lock the gates on the front steps before and after students arrive.

It was late one windy cold night and I had been delayed by a final student asking for help. I was all alone and late putting away the easels, stacking drying paintings in the pigeonholes and doing a general sweep and clean when I first heard it. Faintly, the sound of creaking footsteps in the gallery above the studio. One, two, three ... slow steps. Then nothing.



As this was in the middle of renovations, I suspected a workman was still upstairs and I called out 'Hello? Hello? Anyone there?' With no reply and a quick look around, I clocked it up to the wind, turned out the lights, locked up and went home thinking no more about it.

The following week I was delayed again (same student), and once more, while cleaning up I heard a step again—but it was louder this time, and only a single STEP, almost a bump in the night ... then nothing. Once more, I called out 'Hello? Is someone there? I'm locking up now!' Again, there was no reply and although my spine shivered, I convinced myself it was my imagination exaggerating the sounds of the building acclimatizing into the nighttime cold.

Nothing untoward happened for several months, classes finished on time, and renovations were finally completed. The noise of happy, chattering students masked any mysterious footsteps. Then one night in Spring, I was working back on my own completing a work after class. I completely lost track of time and was absorbed in my work when I heard from upstairs one almighty THUMP. I squeaked in surprise and dropped my brush—adding to my mark on the floor to all those other artists before me. Listening carefully, I heard it again, STEP, STEP, STEP ... Then silence.

'Right' I thought, 'this is ridiculous. I don't believe in no ghosts!' I grabbed my Stanley knife and marched up the stairs shouting out 'OY! WHO'S THAT THERE! CUT IT OUT!' I sounded braver than I felt as I stomped around the galleries looking for, I don't know what, but there was no one there. No one at all.

But then I smelt it.

The distinct smell of cigar smoke.

And on the wall, three paintings had been pushed out of line and were hanging askew. Each was a painting of a nude female.

I freaked, raced downstairs, threw my gear in my bag leaving my wet painting on the easel and shot off home. I was shaking on the drive all the way home and did not sleep well that night.

The next morning, in the bright spring sunlight, I began to doubt the entire episode and call myself a fool. And I remembered I left my painting on the easel and would have to apologize for not cleaning up after myself. Before I could call up and do so, I received a call from the Society Secretary.


'So, you've met him' she began without preamble. 'I wondered how long it would take before you met our ghost. Don't worry, he's harmless, just likes to make his presence known now and again.'

'Who? Wha?' I stuttered.

'We don't know exactly who he was, and he must have been an artist because whoever he was, he can be quite critical and really focusses on the nudes. I noticed he had moved those three nudes about last night.'

'Uh, my work on the easel in the studio, that's a nude' I replied somewhat fearfully.

'Oh yes! Well, you must have met with his approval as it isn't touched! You can pick it up next week from the office.'

That was my experience with our Art Ghost. I have never heard him again, I guess he still approves of my work. Now, after every night class when I leave, before I lock up, I make sure to shout out 'Good Night!' to him. 

**Author's note:** Obviously, this is fiction. I don't paint in the studio for one thing, I teach drawing. And apart from turps, have never smelt anything out of the ordinary. But my Halloween tale is based on a real experience, AS I REALLY DID HEAR FOOTSTEPS one evening ... and no one was there.

The Victorian Artists Society building is a wonderful place to work, filled with history, and it deserves to have its own ghost! So, has anyone else heard something that they cannot explain? Seen a picture move out of place? Smell something odd? Why not write in to the VAS magazine and tell us all about it!

# A FORGOTTEN PAINTER

Josephine Muntz-Adams

JD Park

This smiling dimpled beauty titled *Gypsy Belle* (below) is rendered with the dash and elan of a modern portraitist. Some will be surprised to know that it was painted in the Nineteenth century by Josephine Muntz-Adams. More surprising, that it was painted about 1896 after her return from training in Paris.

This marvellous evocation of an old lady (1893) was titled *Care* and hung 'on the line' at the Paris Salon. It was the first painting by an Australian artist purchased by the Queensland Art Gallery.



In the same vein this pensive portrait titled *An Italian Lady* (above).

Some might wonder, who was this superstar and why don't we know more about her? I have wondered the same thing. In twenty first century Australia, Josephine Muntz-Adams appears to have largely been forgotten and become irrelevant to the main stream of mid-century Australian art. I rang a prominent Australian gallery which owns several



*Care*, 1893

of her paintings. The curator seemed to be totally unaware of her as were most of my artist friends.

At the seminal 2001 exhibition 'Modern Australian Women' 1925-1945 at the Art Gallery of South Australia, she does not rate a mention among the thirty odd women painters who are detailed in the catalogue.

Her iconic image *Gypsy Belle* (below) is in that Ballarat Gallery and the image is usually prominently displayed in the gallery publications room. Muntz Adams was a celebrated artist in her lifetime but has not received much attention since her death in 1949.



This may interest VAS members as she lived in East Melbourne and was an exhibiting member of VAS.

Josephine was the daughter of the shire engineer in Kyneton where she was born in 1862. She came from an artistic Irish family and at the age of thirteen is recorded as travelling alone to Ireland to visit her grandparents in County Down—an adventurous young lady. Her father it should be recorded eventually became the shire engineer and subsequently the mayor of Prahran.

A student at the Gallery School with Streeton she studied in Paris, was a friend of Rupert Bunny and exhibited several times at the Old Salon, Paris. In London she won a gold medal for portraiture.

She married in her 30s and was soon widowed. Her family situation left her in comfortable circumstances and she pursued a career in portraiture of the more traditional kind, no doubt demanded by customers in the early Twentieth Century. Perhaps her wealth and output of conventional portraiture dampened both the lively painterliness of her early images, and the impact she might have made on early modernist painting.

The following image of a Victorian state premier reflects this evolution.



Above: Duncan Gillies (*Premier Vic 1886–90*)  
 Right: Mrs Montgomery (1930)


This having been said she left a number of later landscape images which very definitely reflect a Modernist treatment.



*A Day in the Park (1919)*

Similarly, this portrait of Mrs Montgomery, painted when Josephine was 68 years old has a definite contemporary flair.

Josephine died in 1949 aged 87 years. This was the year after William Dobell won the Archibald Prize with an image of Margaret Olley.

There may be some renewed interest in Munz-Adams as a self-portrait painted about 1896 was recently sold by Deutscher and Hackett at a record price of \$73,636. Perhaps we should resurrect the memory of this painter who was a VAS member, a supreme talent and who made some marks which appeared well ahead of her time. 



# PATHWAYS

## Art on the Move

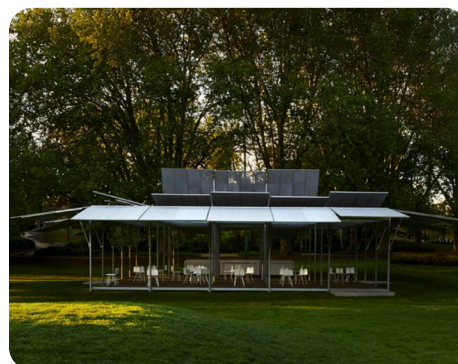
### Bruce Baldey VAS

In Queen Victorian Gardens the taut, dynamic figure of the *Pathfinder* (John Robinson 1935-2007) is sited against the background of the languid drapes of the current MPavilion.



The sculpture was acquired by the City Of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection in 1974 and is now a fixture in the QV Gardens. The 2023 MPavilion is just the latest version of a project that is built and then disassembled at the end of each summer when it is reassembled at another site in Melbourne. The purpose of these pavilions is to make a place over the summer months for recitals, presentations, lectures, readings and performances in a 'well designed and nurturing shelter'. MPavillion 2023 is its tenth iteration and soon the site will again be cleared of any evidence of built work and await next summer when another temporary structure designed by another architect will appear.

The inaugural MPavilion was designed by Melbourne Architect Sean Godsell in 2014 and opened to the public from October 2014 until February 2015. Following this 'season' MPavilion was gifted to the City of Melbourne by the sponsors of the MPavilion the Naomi Milgrom Foundation and now has a new home inside the grounds of the Hellenic Museum where it is used as a Hire Venue.





Permanence is an appearance not a reality. In reality in the long arc of time other items in the City of Melbourne Collection have moved about the city.

*The Eight Hour Day Memorial* (Percival Ball 1845-1900) in the City Collection commemorates ‘the 8 hour (day) movement initiated in Victoria 1856’ It is a 12 metre high obelisk hewn largely from Victoria’s own Harcourt granite, a stone used extensively throughout Victoria for both architectural and sculptural purposes It was originally sited in Spring Street in 1902 near Parliament House but in 1923 was relocated to its current site near Trades Hall following the objections of conservative MPs. Ball was born in England but travelled and worked throughout Europe before arriving in Australia in 1884. The statue of *Sir Redmond Barry* outside the State Library and that of *William Wallace* in Ballarat are among his Australian public commissions.

*The Vault* (Ron Robertson-Swann 1941-) has proven to be more mobile having been moved around the City of Melbourne twice before finding its current home outside the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) in Southbank. Commissioned by the City of Melbourne and originally sited in the Melbourne Town Square in 1980 it was christened by the public and the media as ‘Steelhenge’, ‘The Thing’ and the ‘Yellow Peril,’ a term that stuck in spite of its racial connotations. In 1981 this unloved work of art was banished by the Council to the relative obscurity of Batman Park where it was embraced by the homeless. In 2002 it was rescued, cleaned of its graffiti and moved to ACCA where it is generally considered to be more sympathetic with the surrounding environment. Ironically it has outlasted not only the Council that condemned it but also the City Square which has been swallowed temporarily by the Town Hall Metro Station.

In the meantime, the *Pathfinder* will probably survive the MPavilions and the politicians and the passengers in the trams along St Kilda Road will continue to wonder at the forces holding the steel ball in space. ✍️



Left, above: MPavilion 2014 in QV Gardens  
Photo courtesy of Naomi Milgrom Foundation  
Left, below: MPavilion 2014 at the Hellenic  
Museum (2023)

# THE 2023 VAS SUMMER EXHIBITION

Mark Bagally  
VAS Exhibitions Convenor  
& co-curator

The VAS Exhibitions Calendar commenced amid much enthusiasm with the hanging and curating of the Summer Exhibition in the Hammond, Frater and McCubbin galleries. A total of 135 artistic works were received over Wednesday 8 and Thursday 9 February. As a trial, the building remained open for the receipt of entries until 8pm on the Wednesday, which afforded members having difficulty dropping off works during the day another more conducive option. Despite a couple of minor administrative challenges, I feel it's a service that should continue to be provided for our members, for each of our calendared VAS exhibitions.

The entries were a diverse body of work and a terrific representation of our membership and their passion for the various art movements. Due to the sheer number of works entered some double-hanging occurred in the McCubbin gallery under the watchful eye of co-curator, Julian Bruere. This added another very visually pleasing dimension to the exhibition and will certainly be a feature of future exhibitions, particularly given an exponential growth in membership will no doubt lead to an increase in entries as we move through 2023.

The 10 sculptures were an eclectic mix of works. Included was a life-size cedar sculpture titled 'Go, Daphne, Go!' by sculptor and art therapist, Ilona Herreiner. The work provided a real visual presence in the Frater Gallery and obviously caught the eye of the judge as it was awarded third place in the sculpture category.

The judge for the Summer Exhibition was Melbourne based artist Nic Plowman. Nic is primarily known for his dedication to both traditional and experimental drawing. His broader practice includes painting, printmaking and sculpture.



The inaugural 'Curator's Choice Award' was also introduced and was the subject of lots of positive feedback. The task of selecting the winning work fell to me as the curator. Selecting one work from 135 is no easy task. I was fortunate to have spent much time up close and personal with the works, having been involved with receiving, drilling, hanging and curating each of the pieces. One particular painting caught my eye from the moment I received it. The painting was titled *Reflections of Noumea* by Frankston artist Lulu Clifton-Evans. The work itself,



*Curator's Choice Award recipient Lulu Clifton-Evans with her magnificent oil painting Reflections of Noumea. A very worthy winner of this award.*

an oil on board, is quite modest in size but big on impact. A loose tonal impressionist painting done with a limited complimentary palette the work says a lot while containing very little detail.

In the sculpture department, Manfred Tursky took 1st place with his glazed terracotta work titled *Morning Stretch*; second place was awarded to Linda Weil for her bass/aluminium and wood sculpture titled *Dancer Ecarte* and in third place was Ilona Herreiner's *Go Daphne Go*.

The other award winners included Joe Whyte first place for a large oil on linen titled *The Art Room*; second place was awarded to VAS teacher, Fellow and former president Gregory R Smith for a visually pleasing landscape in oil, titled *Could Do With a Drop Barfold*; third place went to VAS Fellow and Twenty Melbourne Painters Society artist, Clive Sinclair for a loose and interesting portrait in acrylic titled *Kevin*.

The judge also issued five Highly Commended Awards. Works by Maria Radun, Heather 'Zulu' Towns, Robyn Pridham, Ray Wilson and Ursula Tursky were all highly commended.



A fabulous graphite drawing by Sarah Ackland Titled 'Into the Woods' Highly Commended.



The Art Room, Oil on Linen by Joe Whyte, first prize winner 2023

*An interesting sculpture by Zoja Trofimiuk titled Sisters, cast glass, lead crystal. The work certainly added to the ambiance of the Frater gallery.*



*At the opening event with the maestro Clive Sinclair FVAS dressed in his finest summer outfit and VAS Councilor Nat Marion.*



The Opening Event on the Tuesday night (14 Feb) was a tremendous evening and well attended. The removal of most of the plastic backed chairs from the Hammond Gallery, as a trial, really opened up the gallery and allowed for better viewing of the artwork. A very small number of these chairs were retained for attendees that needed to sit and required back support. All in all, it worked very well and there were a number of positive comments around the vibe across the galleries. People were moving about and enjoying the casual atmosphere and wine and importantly people were chatting among themselves. New friendships were made and networking opportunities were heightened. There was no denying a very positive vibe permeating through-out. As the curator (along with Julian Bruere) of this exhibition, I was extremely pleased with the outcome. The awards ceremony was a timely event, with no complaints about having to stand during the formalities. There were of course folding chairs for use by attendees, but most were happy to casually stand around and have a drink during the formalities. I think this added to the vibe.



*The nerve centre of the exhibition. Registering the entries.*



The champagne corks would've been popping at the Tursky household. Left is Manfred Tursky's 1st prize (sculpture) winner titled Morning Stretch and above is Ursula Tursky's Highly Commended oil painting titled Freshly Picked. Great people and worthy winners.



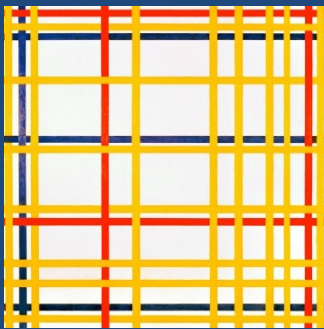
2nd prize: Could Do With a Drop, Barfold by Gregory R Smith FVAS VAS. A moody yet beautifully harmonious landscape in oil.



Above: Keeping an eye on the attendees at the Opening Event. Manul Cat a Watercolour on Canvas by Jun Lui  
Left: A visually appealing sculpture titled Rikishi by Maxine Wain

# ANSWERS

1. Blue
2. The Matterhorn
3. Queensland
4. Prado
5. Camera obscura
6. Seashell
7. Thailand
8. Lapis lazuli
9. Furniture designer
10. Finland
11. Hazelnut (filbert nut)
12. Impasto
13. Carrara (or Luna)
14. Heart shape
15. A small piece of stone, glass, etc. used in making a mosaic
16. Red, yellow and orange
17. Furniture designer
18. Potter
19. Perth
20. Bauhaus
21. Kakemono
22. Acrylic
23. Piet Mondrian



*New York City 1*  
by  
Piet Mondrian



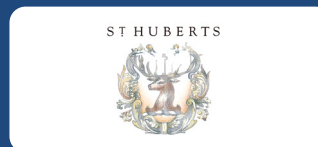
# ANSWERS: AI ART

- A. Left: AI Generated  
Right: Detail from *Launceston and the river Tamar* by John Glover
- B. Left: AI Generated  
Right: AI Generated
- C. Left: *Portrait of Lady Agnew of Lochnaw* by John Singer Sargent  
Right: AI Generated
- D. Left: *Pomegranates and Peppercorns* by Paul McDonald Smith VAS FVAS  
Right: *The Red Dish* by Paul McDonald Smith VAS FVAS

All AI Art generated with Stable Diffusion.

# OUR SUPPORTERS

Eileen Mackley AM VAS FVAS & Hylton Mackley AM  
Gordon Moffatt AM - Noel Waite AO  
Stuart Leslie Foundation  
The Naphtali Family Foundation  
The Hugh Williamson Foundation



# UNTUTORED LIFE DRAWING

These sessions are untutored and suitable for artists who can work confidently on their own. All experience levels are welcome for those who want to draw or paint the human form in a relaxed and quiet environment.

Artists need to bring their own materials. We supply easels and tables. Non-members are welcome to attend.

No bookings are required. Cash or eftpos is to be paid to the class monitor on the day.

Please be aware that these sessions feature male and female nude models. Artists must be 16+ and will need to show proof of age. Attendees aged 16 to 18 must provide proof of consent from a parent or guardian.



## FRIDAY SESSIONS

Portraiture and Life group sessions each feature a single long pose for the entire 2 hour session.

### PORTRAIT SESSION

4PM–6PM

\$20 (members)

\$25 (non-members)

### LIFE GROUP

6:30PM–8:30PM

\$20 (members)

\$25 (non-members)

### BOTH SESSIONS

4PM–8:30PM

\$25 (members)

\$35 (non-members)

## SATURDAY SESSION

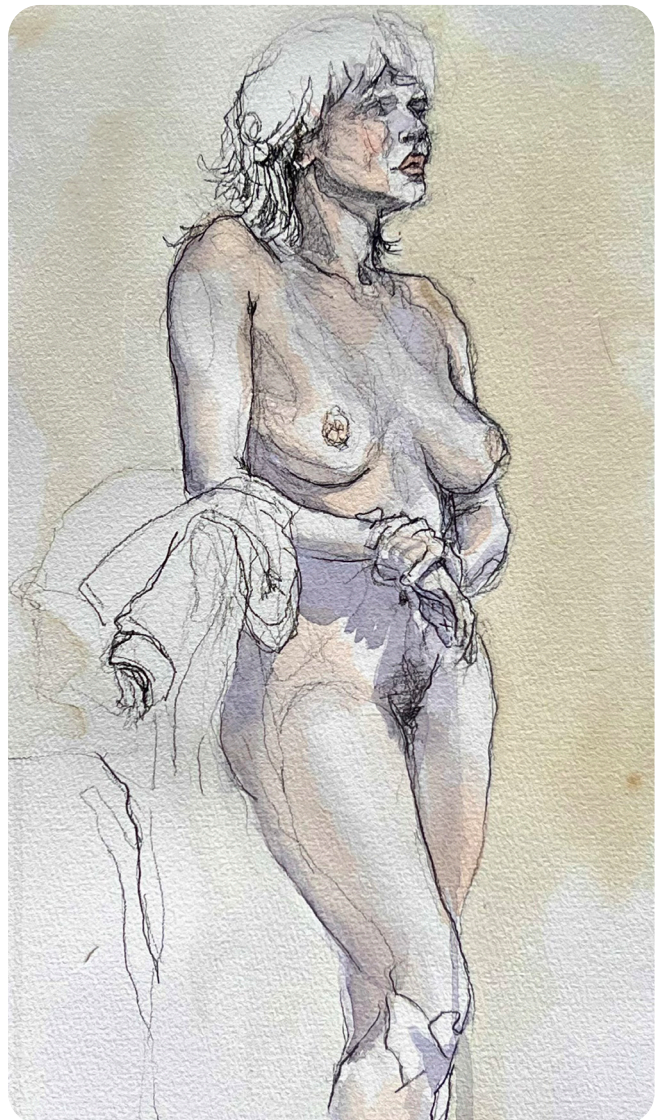
Weekly sessions alternate between Long, Medium and Short poses as well as sessions with a single longer pose for painters who want more time to work on a piece. See the schedule of poses online.

### LIFE GROUP

1PM–4PM

\$25 (members)

\$30 (non-members)



Sketches by Nathalie Anne Marion

# 2023

## DATES TO REMEMBER

SEE FULL EXHIBITION DETAILS IN THE 2023 PROGRAMME CALENDAR



### THE VAS COLLECTION EXHIBITION

27 MAY 2023 – 12 JUN 2023

Frater Gallery



### OUR HISTORY IN PICTURES

27 MAY 2023 – 12 JUN 2023

McCubbin Gallery



### ARTISTS OF THE YEAR: 1973–2023

27 MAY 2023 – 12 JUN 2023

Hammond Gallery



### VAS 9X5 EXHIBITION 2023

27 MAY 2023 – 12 JUN 2023

Cato Gallery & Mackley  
Members' Room



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Use the hashtag  
[#victorianartistsociety](https://www.instagram.com/hashtag/victorianartistsociety) when  
posting about an artwork you have  
created.

- TRANSPORT OPTIONS -  
5 minute walk from  
Parliament Station  
Trams 11, 12 and 109 stop on  
Gisborne Street  
Meter parking is available along  
Albert Street

Map design by David Kaneen

