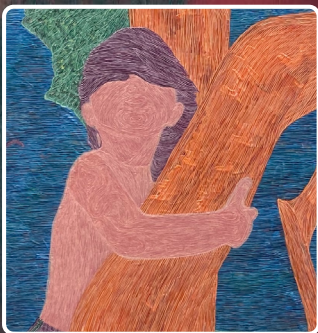
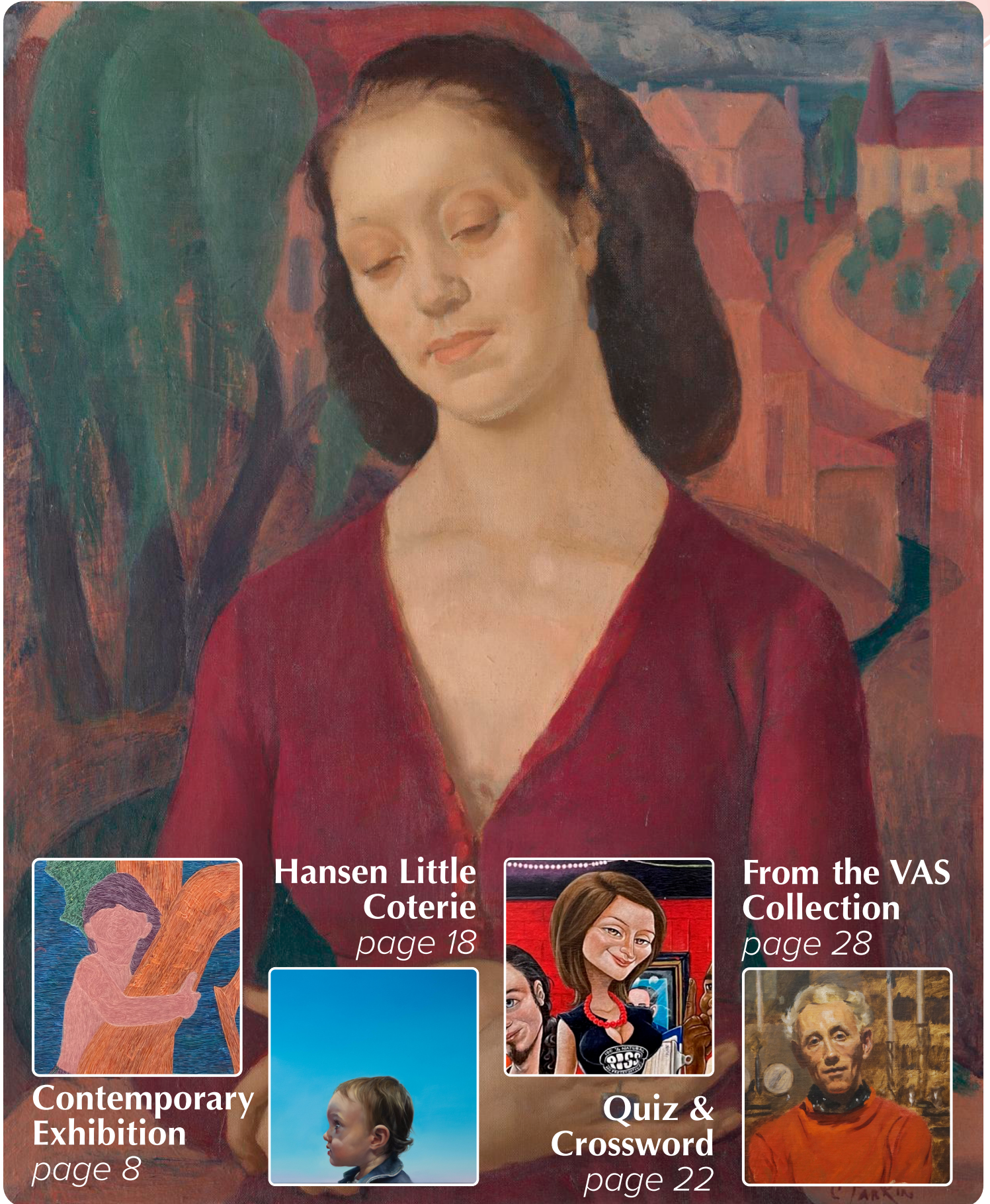


VAS MAGAZINE

Victorian Artists Society

January to March 2024



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PATRON IN CHIEF
Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency
Professor the Honourable Margaret
Gardner AC

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JANUARY–MARCH 2024

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EDITOR
Bruce Baldey VAS

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 we meet. We
pay our respects to Elders, past and
present, and the Aboriginal Elders of
other communities.

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Cover Image: *The Village*,
Constance Stokes, c1935,
oil on canvas, 61.4 x 51.0cm

National Gallery of Victoria,
presented by the artist
under the terms of the
National Gallery of Victoria
Travelling Scholarship,
1946



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Qing Xie
Liadaan

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been a busy start to the year. The building has been a hive of activity. Last month, in addition to our various booked exhibitions and events, the VAS was delighted and honoured to host a memorial event following the passing of Robert (Bob) Wade OAM. This was organized, along with a retrospective exhibition of his works, at the request of Bob's family, with around 250 attending the event. The evening was not only a fitting celebration of Bob's life but also from a Society point of view highlighted our ability to efficiently plan and successfully manage larger events at short notice.

As members of the Victorian Artists Society, we are very fortunate to have available to us, throughout the year, a number of quality opportunities to exhibit work within our magnificent galleries. These exhibitions cater to all whims irrespective of your genre preference. It's what distinguishes the VAS from other Societies and now that the building restoration has concluded, the Galleries are in hot demand. We are only in February and already the exhibitions calendar is full (all five galleries) for 2024, with 2025 filling up very fast. It's a great time to be a member of and/or associated with this Society.

It's also a great time to get serious about your art. As we exponentially increase activities within the building, more and more visitors are coming through the doors to soak in the ambience of the building and view the artworks. As we move forward, your artwork will be viewed like never before. Not only by the general public but also established artists, collectors and distinguished and prominent members of the community particularly given the calibre of the private exhibitors who have booked the galleries in 2024.

It really is time to put your best foot forward as an artist, irrespective of what stage you're at in your artistic journey. Your credibility and reputation as an artist are critical components to your success. If you submit work that is substandard, poorly presented and simply submitted to 'throw something in',

you'll certainly do yourself no favours. In no other exhibitions is this more important than our 'Select' exhibitions, the Autumn, Winter and Spring.

The 'Artist of the Year' is our flagship award and the three seasonal Select Exhibitions leading to it, are our major exhibitions. It is a peer voted award; therefore your work is being assessed by other artists. It is vitally important that your best work, presented to a high standard, goes in. It's also important that you self-reflect on whether your work is at the level required to enter these Select Exhibitions.

In past messages, I have alluded to tightening the selection process for the Autumn, Winter and Spring exhibitions. This new process will commence in April for the Autumn Select. A panel of three experienced and established artists/Fellows of the VAS along with me as the Chair will conduct the selections. Please have a read of the terms and conditions before entering.

This edition of the VAS Magazine includes an interesting article and book review about one of our 'lost' artists, Constance (Connie) Stokes. Prominent in many ways during the 1900s, she had a strong connection to the VAS over many years, having joined the society in 1928. Well worth a read. It never ceases to amaze me just how many prominent artists have been connected to the VAS over the years.

Finally, don't forget this is your Society. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved with the many and varied activities we undertake throughout the year. From participation on sub-committees and volunteering through to fundraising, donations and sponsorship, these are all ingredients that make the society grow and flourish. Don't be hesitant to come forward if you can contribute in some way.

Mark Bagally
President, Victorian Artists Society

FROM GREEK APHRODITE TO MELBOURNE'S CHLOE



A long tradition
of nudity ... and
controversy

In the days of Classical Greece, Praxiteles created the first life-sized female nude in the form of a marble sculpture of the goddess of love, *Aphrodite*.

Rejected on decency grounds by the island of Kos, the statue found acceptance on Knidos where it became an instant tourist attraction and an enduring theme, along with the much-analysed interaction between a female figure and male viewer.

Moving on almost two and a half millennia to Victorian-era Melbourne, Frenchman Jules Joseph Lefebvre won the highest award at the 1880–1881 International Exhibition with a full-sized nude painting named *Chloe*.

It provoked such public debate when on loan to the city's National Gallery two years later, the owner felt compelled to withdraw it to quell the conservative outcry. Later, *Chloe* found a home at Young & Jackson's Hotel opposite Flinders St Station to become Melbourne's best-known painting.

Sailors revered *Aphrodite* in antiquity, servicemen have drunk a toast to *Chloe* since World War 1.

Lost in a fire, the *Aphrodite* sculpture of c.350 BC, via Roman copies, influences the depiction of the female nude in Western art to this day through its standard body proportions and beauty.

Both *Aphrodite* and *Chloe*, with head tilted away, adopt the contrapposto stance that has the right leg straight and left bent to afford a more natural and relaxed pose. Recent neuroimaging studies confirm contrapposto also enhances sensuousness! It is no surprise either that the word aphrodisiac is derived from the goddess of love's allure.

While *Aphrodite* has her right arm placed in the pudica gesture for modesty, *Chloe* is akimbo with elbow bent and hand into her side possibly to indicate waiting as the painting is based on the poem *Mynsyle et Chloe* where *Chloe* is a water nymph yearning for her lover.

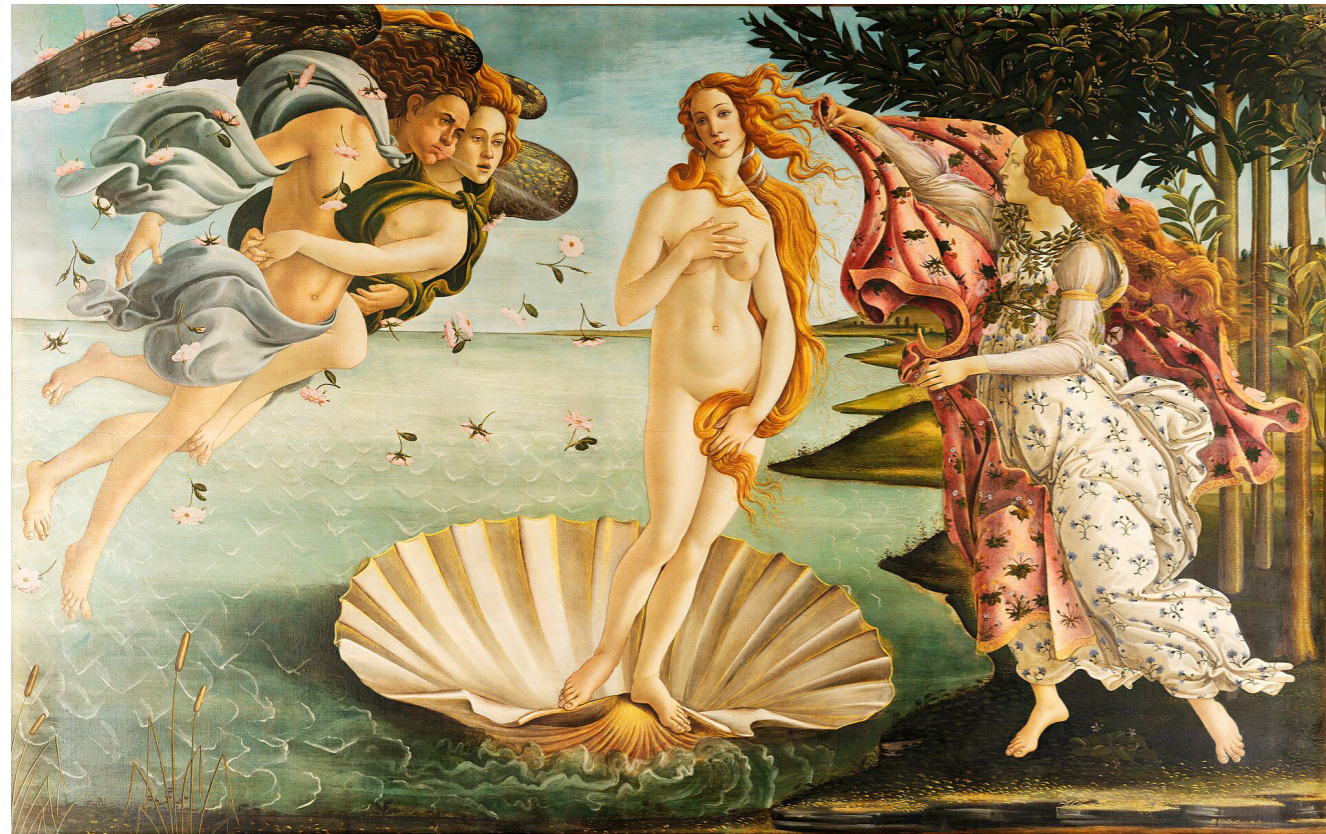
So much for the technicalities, what did the judges say in 1879 on awarding a First Order of Merit Medal to the painting when exhibited first in Sydney?

'Lefebvre's "Chloé" displays great skill in classic composition; it is a strong unswerving study of the female form, is well drawn, and comes boldly off the canvas. It is of a too real type to be god-like, but is honest and truthful, and treated in a chaste and perfectly natural manner.'

Similar glowing praise accompanied its gold medal-winning showing at the Paris Salon in 1875, the year of its painting.

Lefebvre, a professor at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris and a leading narrative figure painter of his time, has left works that enrich some of the great collections. One such work is *La Cigale*, another female nude veiled in mythology, having been acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria in 2005 without it seems any public reaction!

Aphrodite of Knidos, Praxiteles, c.350 BC
Chloe, Jules Joseph Lefebvre, 1875, Young & Jackson's Hotel



Chloe, valued at \$5 million dollars in 2016 and forever heritage-linked to Young and Jackson's Hotel, hangs in the upstairs dining area. Previously she graced the public bar where soldiers paid their last respects before heading to war, some never to return, others coming back to honour promises to fallen comrades.

Of course, countless paintings of the female nude hang in galleries around the world.

Looking beyond antiquity and the early sacred Christian depictions of sinful Adam and Eve, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (c.1485) stands out as the major navigational point in the history of the female nude in art.

The Medici-commissioned *Birth of Venus*, recognised as the first major painting of a nude

woman without biblical connotations and as such a revolutionary celebration of the female form, found acceptance in the humanistic freedom of Renaissance Florence.

The mythological painting shows the Roman goddess, Venus (Aphrodite in Greek), arriving on shore after her birth at sea and clearly bears a resemblance to the *Aphrodite of Knidos* sculpture.

Botticelli's masterpiece, mostly forgotten for centuries, inspired Titian, the Pre-Raphaelites and Warhol to name a few, and re-imaginings still permeate popular culture in film, fashion and even cosmetics. Think Ursula Andress in the James Bond film *Dr No*. Think too of Beyoncé's pregnancy and maternity photos where she channels *Venus* but retains agency.

Birth of Venus, Botticelli, c.1485, Uffizi Gallery

Today though, the *Birth of Venus*, along with most examples of the female nude, draws criticism from proponents of male gaze theory.

The theory asserts that the objectification of women by men in these paintings is demeaning and detrimental to their empowerment in society. Advocates contend that redress of this age-old situation may be possible through changing cultural attitudes, promoting the representation of women in art galleries and introducing a female perspective to new works.

Galleries are listening. All-women shows now punctuate the art calendar more often both here and overseas, building on earlier decades.

The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston dusted off forgotten female paintings and sculptures from storage to stage an exhibition entitled *Women Take the Floor* (with the landscape section cleverly called *No Man's Land*) in 2021.

Exhibitions named *Art and the Feminist Revolution* in Los Angeles, *Women in Revolt* at the Tate and *Know my Name: Australian Women Artists* at Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery make a clear statement. So does the Finkelstein Gallery in Prahran that opened in 2019 as the only Australian enterprise for established and emerging female artists exclusively.

Momentum is gathering as *herstory* in the making breaches historical and institutional barriers.

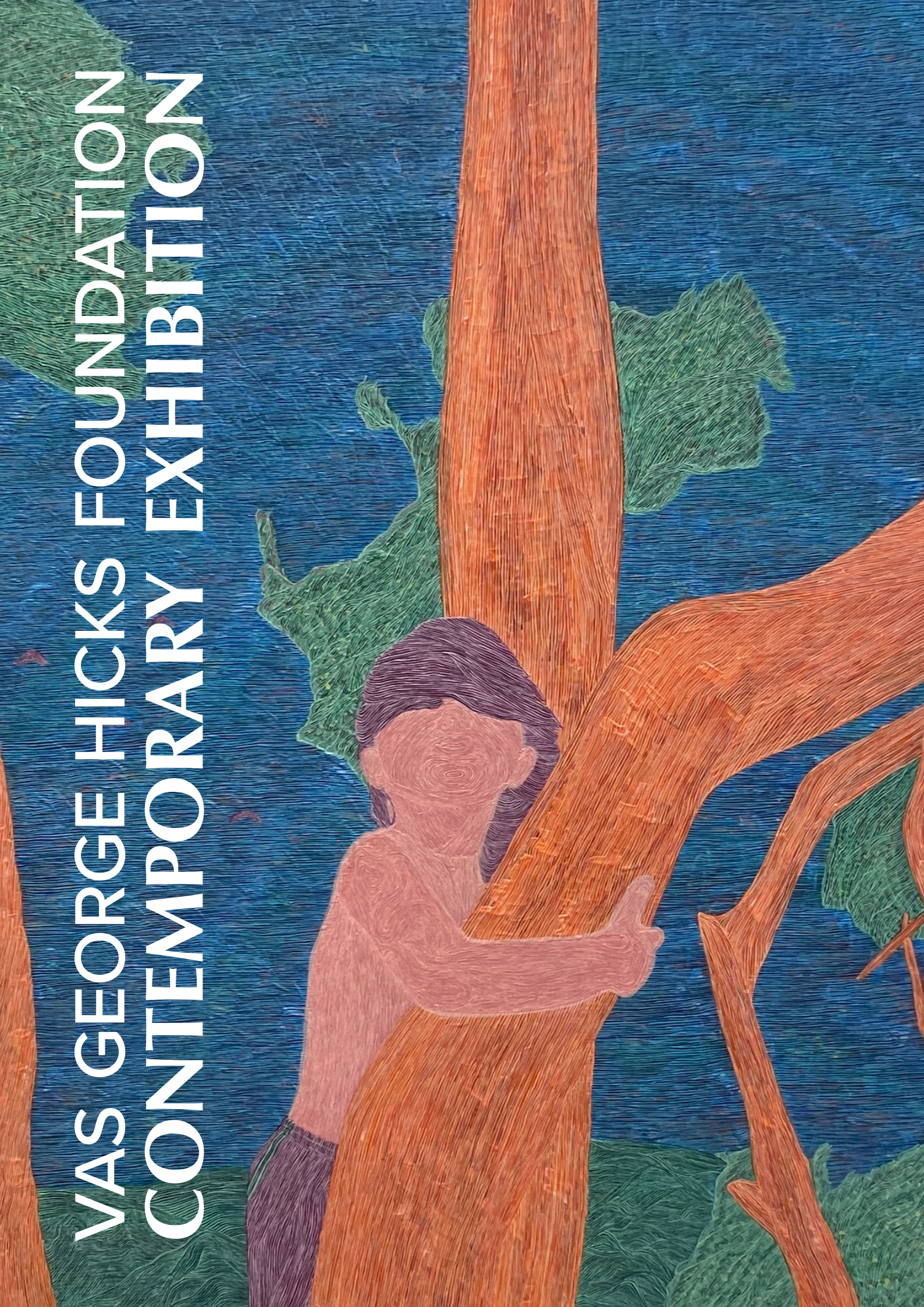
Meanwhile, back at Young & Jackson's, *Chloe*, living a life of her own, still passes the pub test!

Ian Hobbs



Beyoncé, Awol Erizku, photographer, 2017

VAS GEORGE HICKS FOUNDATION CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITION



On Sunday 10 March, the Victorian Artists Society President Mark Bagally officially opened the 2024 VAS George Hicks Foundation Contemporary Exhibition and with the Judge Loïs Lanoix, presented prizes to the winning VAS artists.

In this exhibition VAS artists were asked to explore subjects from a 21st century perspective, challenging themselves creatively. This Exhibition is sponsored by the George Hicks Foundation.

The Judge for the 2024 Contemporary Exhibition was Loïs Lanoix. Loïs is a French contemporary abstract painter and visual artist renowned for her avant-garde exploration.

George Hicks

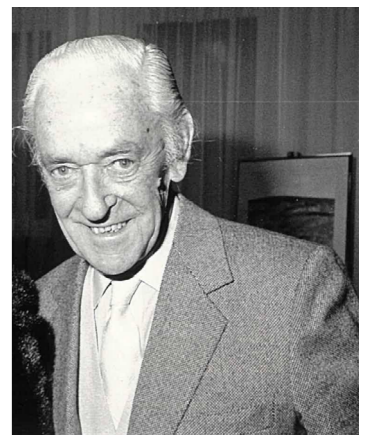
The VAS George Hicks Foundation Contemporary Exhibition total prize money is \$7,500 sponsored by the George Hicks Foundation.

The late George Hicks, VAS Member and exhibiting member, was awarded Life Membership of the Victorian Artists Society in 1979. Mr Hicks' name appears on the Victorian Artists Society Honours Board. Mr Hicks was a major sponsor to the Victorian Artists Society for the Applied Chemicals Award 1968–1988, the VAS Winter Exhibition 1968–1979, the VAS Spring Exhibition 1981–1987, and the VAS Collectors Exhibition in 1980.

Ron Smith OAM Hon FVAS



Untitled by Lucy Wilde, Acrylic on Plywood, VAS Contemporary Exhibition Winner 2024

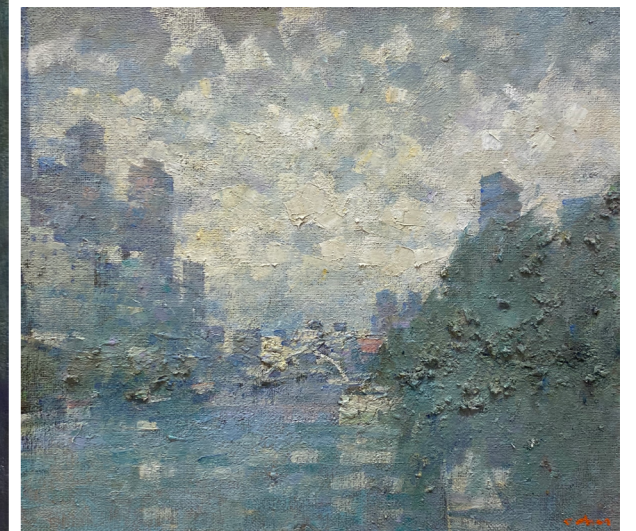
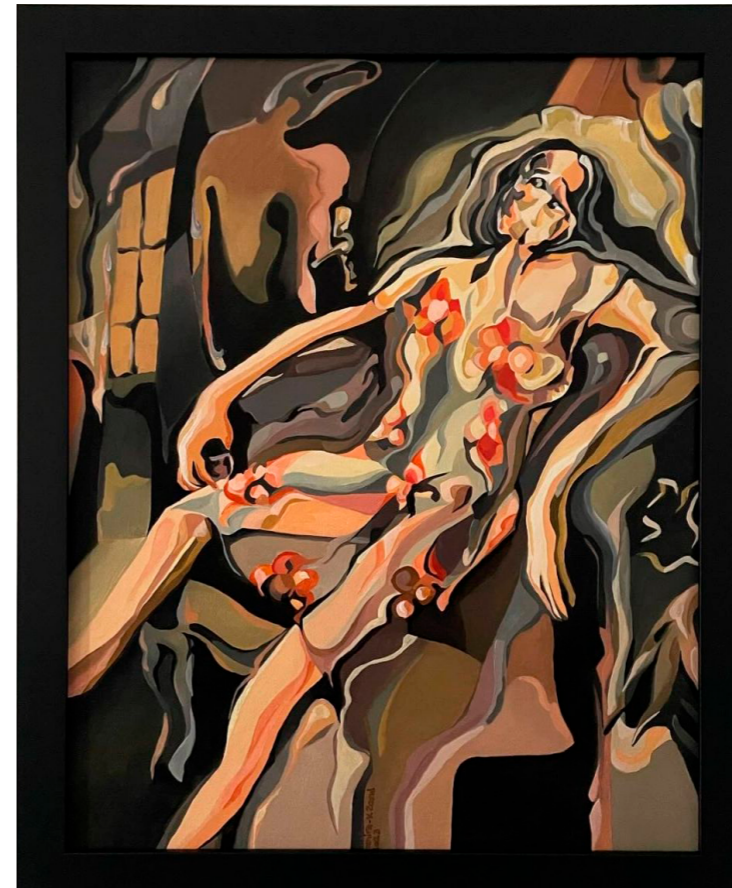


Top: The 2024 winners. From Left: Lucy Fekete; Melissa Fraser VAS; Nancy Davison; Maree Holt; Samira Khadivizand; Judge Loïs Lanoix; Jonathan Gerardo Mendez Baute; Lucy Wilde; Julian Bruere VAS FVAS; Zulu; David Chen; and Zoja Trofimiuk. Photography by Ron Smith OAM Hon FVAS. Centre: Artwork by Loïs Lanoix Above: George Hicks

AWARD WINNING ARTWORKS

Right: Bob Young—*Mother, Daughter and Child*, Lino cut, Curator's Choice 2024; Below Left: Julian Bruere—*Textural Landscape with a Man and a Dog*, Watercolour, Second Prize Winner 2024; Below Right: Nancye Davison—*Night Works at Western Tunnel Project*, Watercolour, Third Prize Winner 2024; Bottom Left: Jonathan Gerardo Mendez Baute—*Untitled*, Clay with Water Based Enamel, Sculpture First Prize Winner 2024; Bottom Centre: Karen Hopkins—*Getting out of a Rut*, Mixed Media, Sculpture Second Prize Winner 2024; Bottom Right: Zoja Trofimiuk—*Google Girl*, Cast Glass, Mixed Media, Sculpture Third Prize Winner 2024.

Page 11, Highly Commended Award Winners. Clockwise from Top Left: Samira Khadivizand—*The Unlocked Door*, Acrylic on Canvas; Zulu—*Treegrass*, French Acrylic on Canvas; Melissa Fraser—*If I had Words*, Oil on Canvas; Lucy Fekete—*My Loves*, Acrylic on Canvas; David Chen—*South Bank*, Oil on Hessian; Maree Holt—*Koi Trout*, Oil.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AT VAS

AI (Artificial Intelligence) is in some respects an unplanned child of the Information technology revolution. Even with a few legal hurdles ahead, it seems that it will grow and thrive. Journalists are grateful that it is not yet able to jump into a car and report from the scene of a crime. However, its ability to create answers to questions on any subject imaginable within seconds, or even draw pictures and paint paintings, is astounding. It can write articles and report, a fact which hasn't escaped the notice of

students and their hapless teachers. ChatGPT is the world's first major publicly available generative AI products. Microsoft's heavy investment in OpenAI, the software's inventor, has propelled it beyond Apple to become the world's most valuable company, with a market capitalisation of \$US3.08 trillion.

The VAS Magazine decided to have a bit of fun with it and asked ChatGPT to 'write a sonnet in the style of William Shakespeare about the Heidelberg School of Australian landscape painters'. ✍

*In Heidelberg's embrace, on distant shore,
Where eucalyptus whispers secrets deep,
A band of artists, bold, did once explore,
The Australian landscape, dreams to keep.*

*Their brushes danced upon the canvas wide,
As gum trees stretched towards the azure sky,
With ochre tones and greens, they did confide,
In nature's beauty, where their spirits fly.*

*In plein air they did capture scenes untamed,
From mountains grand to rivers softly flowing,
In every stroke, their love for land proclaimed,
Their art, a testament to nature's knowing.*

*Though distant in time and land, we still revere,
The Heidelberg School, whose legacy is clear.*

Chat GPT

DAD, ARE WE THERE YET?

Having not had a holiday or break out of Melbourne for a very long time, last year I decided to book one or two nights away during January this year and stay somewhere I had loved as a child, with pleasurable memories and within easy driving distance.

Our early family holidays consisted of two weeks away every January always somewhere within Victoria—to Phillip Island, Torquay, Anglesea or Sorrento.

So I decided to choose a favourite heritage hotel at one of these popular and much frequented locations.

As I paid my deposit online, I thought back to those holidays so many years before—those wonderful memories, so very fondly cherished now.

I recalled the childish excitement of the morning we finally headed off.

The car was packed (father's small blue proudly owned Anglia) and we quickly left Melbourne's eastern suburbs behind for what was, back then, the long drive out of the city towards Frankston and then to the peninsular beyond.

We were filled with excitement and anticipation.

From memory we had one stop only along the way, Dromana perhaps, to stretch our legs. There was always tea from the thermos as well as tomato sandwiches.

If it was not too windy, Dad would reach for his sketch book and a few tubes of paint, plus one large watercolour tube of white and work quickly in gouache.



The Continental, Sorrento

‘No Dad! let’s keep going!’ we children would chorus, as my father set up a stool and small easel.

But the view across the water was too tempting—

And artists will stop anywhere anytime to take advantage of an overcast sky or a disappearing dirt track.

There were tears of protest, quickly followed by threats of ‘turning the car round and going straight home again if we didn’t stop all that noise.’

So we children grumbled quietly at the side of the road, kicking sand dangerously in the direction of the portable easel. Mother sensibly remained in the car, but also took the opportunity to produce her sketch pad and her plain air Windsor & Newton black watercolour tin with its tiny pans of colour.

She used water from the thermos poured into an old enamel mug and also worked quickly, capturing the light on the water and the hazy beauty of the view looking back towards the city.

Eventually, everything was packed up and we were on our way again, happily playing ‘I spy’ from the back seat to make the time go more quickly.

Arriving just in time for lunch, we were welcomed by the owners of the imposing family Hotel which was to be our home away from home for the next fortnight.

Luggage was delivered to the old-fashioned reception desk and we were shown up the thickly carpeted staircase to our rooms.

Back then, there were no ‘Resorts’ as we know them now, just family Hotels or Guest Houses, run by families—for families.

Like the owners, the accommodation itself was respectable, gracious and welcoming.

We were treated to comfortable bedrooms with views of the water; well cleaned floral carpets and old mahogany wardrobes. The beds were narrow and a bit squeaky but topped with friendly pale pink or green candlewick bedspreads.

After a brief freshen up, we headed for the beautiful Dining Room with its heavy, frosted glass swinging doors and fine brass handles and its array of majestic sideboards and cedar serving trolleys.

We were shown to our table by the Lunchtime Manager—the table we would sit at for the duration of our stay.

A refined salad lunch known on the Menu as a ‘Cold Collation’ was promptly served.

Then there was exploring to be done, and it was down to the beach and into the water.

Mother stayed behind to unpack and set up the children’s room with netting and tubes of zinc cream beside each bed.

There were no fans or cooling systems, and often mosquitoes managed to squeeze in through badly installed flywire windows.

And of course there were no ensembles either—only shared bathroom arrangements at the end of every corridor.

But that didn’t matter, for as late afternoon arrived, flocks of families scurried along the carpeted hallways, dressing gowns tightly tied in front, holding wash bags and towels and pushing children forward to be first in the queue for the green tiled showering facilities.

Then it was back to the bedrooms as the ‘Dressing Bell’ sounded at 5:30pm followed 30 minutes later by the ‘Dinner Gong’.

Yes, families dressed for dinner.

Before heading downstairs to the Dining room, the grownups would assemble in the parent’s bedroom for a pre-dinner sherry or whisky, along with one or two other guests and any visiting friends.

One family who regularly visited us was fellow VAS artist and tutor Percy Gare and his wife Alice along with their young daughter.

They would drive over from the Rosebud area and join us for an evening drink on numerous occasions.

Perc was a fine painter, with a generous spirit and heart and a cheerful voice to match.

He would give a hearty handshake to everyone he was introduced to.

His wife was a petite brunette- an ever smiling and loving support always at his side.

After an evening meal of pickled pork or roast lamb and three vegetables followed by apple pie and custard, there would be smoking outside on the verandahs for some; organized games in the Games Room and if very warm, a walk down to the beach and a vanilla ice cream purchased in the main shopping strip on the way home.

The following day various families met up at the beach mid-morning, walked and swam- before returning to the Hotel for lunch served punctually in the Dining room and after that, an afternoon nap maybe, then a return to the beach.

Artist Percy joined my parents and the three took the opportunity of doing some painting on the foreshore—for they were never without their paints and brushes. We children stayed behind with Alice.

Sometimes during our times away, we would drive to another part of the Peninsular and meet up with the Purves family.

Anne and Tam Purves were the successful couple who founded and established the Australian Galleries in Melbourne, still running today under the Directorship of their elegant and erudite son Stuart. Anne was a VAS exhibitor and member at this time so there was much to discuss by both sets of parents as they sat side by side watching their young children at play.

As robust 11-year-olds, Stuart and I whooped and dived among the back beach sand dunes, acting out imaginary scenes from the radio serial ‘Superman’.

As I recall I was a rather plump, overactive Lois Lane. However even then, young Stuart was the very essence of a charismatic, personable Clark Kent.

By late afternoon, the families parted and we returned to our Hotel, sandy and sticky just in time for the Dressing Bell.

And so another evening would begin.

All sorts of events were organized and every so often there was a Fancy-Dress Night with prizes.

My father Laurie was a master of thinking up fancy dress ideas, which probably go back to his student days at the National Gallery where often his fellow comrades indulged in disguises, dress ups and other similar nonsense between classes.

So with a few roughly sourced props plus his painting kit—he was now able to create some wonderful costumes, assisted by young staff members—generally University and other tertiary students from Melbourne, earning cash serving in the dining room during their holiday vacations. A number were art and design students, naturally creative and drawn to hospitality as a means of

saving some money towards their studies. They too often joined in the Fancy Dress parades and the Charades evenings.

Those two holiday weeks each year were really something absolutely marvellous and very special.



But back to the present.

Having booked myself into the Hotel for a couple of nights—dreaming of summer holidays past and looking forward to reliving the magic—the confirmation email arrived just after Christmas.

However my nostalgic longings faded quickly as I read the following:

Dear Ms Scott Pendlebury,

We are delighted to confirm your booking, and you will be pleased to know that it has been upgraded.

... .. What?

You are now booked into one of our newest Suites—A Sunrise Suite with Luxury Balcony Complex.

... Oh for goodness sake

You will be pleased to know this new ultra-modern facility is well away from our main heritage building and we are doing everything we can to minimize the noise of the demolition of the original Dining room.

... .. Oh no!!

Your Suite overlooks our new 24-hour Swimming Pool, Outdoor Bar and Smoking Area.

... .. What

Your Luxury Room has an all-marble interior, with an outdoor personal Spa Bath situated on your own private deck.

... .. Help

Your exclusive Cocktail Bar will be re stocked twice a day.

What about an electric jug?

Your personal key card unlocks your own carport, interior doors/ all interior lights and A/C etc.

... I don't trust keycards

We know you will enjoy your stay, and please note an additional excess cost of ...

... .. OMG

My heart sank as did all my dreams and plans.

Everything I had looked forward to for months, swept away with a luxury upgrade I had no wish to receive.

Nothing of the past to see or enjoy.

What's more, I have an imagination which works overtime and within seconds of reading the email I imagined the worst.

1. Slipping on the all marble balcony, drink in hand, champagne glass shattered causing life threatening cuts;
2. Unable to climb in or out of the Spa bath on the balcony and an air-con system unable to be turned down thereby freezing to death;
3. Being poisoned from a Mini Bar stocked with totally unrecognizable bottles of liquor as well as strange tasting inedible Chocolate and not an electric jug or tea bag in sight.

Before further panic set in I phoned the Hotel and requested to be re booked into the room in the main house I had originally requested.

'Oh dear,' said Reception apologetically. 'I'm afraid we only have one room left now. It's our oldest, very small with a tiny balcony. No cooling system of course, but it does have a view of the water and you can see the ferry coming and going—and we offer tea making facilities only ...'

'It sounds perfect, just what I want, I'll take it,' I said quickly feeling hopeful once more.



Well I ended up having two pleasant days on the Peninsular—but what puzzles me is that nothing is exactly as I remembered it.

Nothing.

My original room turned out to be really quite luxurious after all—everything I had fondly remembered was now replaced by sleek in-built well concealed storage space plus cloud soft, marshmallow white bedding.

There was a digital television requiring a degree in electrical engineering to operate, but there was an electric jug plus a comforting supply of tea bags.

Surprisingly there also was also a generous balcony. This once heritage but now converted room offered a charming view of approaching ships.

(The rooms of decades ago never had balconies—so where did all this space come from?)

And the breakfasts—well they consisted of locally sourced produce and smart coffees— not a Weetbix in sight.

And what of the old Dining room with its double frosted glass doors and hushed tones?

Also gone.

It had been demolished as the email stated. In its place was simply a huge eating area full of metal and brass and noise

Regretfully, the days of quiet elegance and seaside fine dining appear to be over.

What's more, families no longer dress up for Dinner—they dress down.

It is after all a lot easier—the fewer clothes the better.

Fortunately the building itself is still Heritage listed—a precious icon retaining the classic 1872 façade as well as its lovely timber and limestone features.

The original tower continues to dominate the view as one drives into the township, and the Hotel's private pathway running down to the foreshore has not changed over the decades.

Yes, the sky was as lovely as ever, but maybe not quite as cobalt blue as I remembered it, and the sandy beach was still soft underfoot, but again was it ever really that brilliant yellow I'm sure I remembered from years past.?



So now as I think over my recent break by the sea, I somehow feel it's definitely better to enjoy and appreciate the present as we find it today and not strive to relive the past.

On deep reflection I firmly believe that it is much better to allow nostalgic childhood memories to remain just that—

Childhood memories.



Anne Scott Pendlebury

The Hansen Little Foundation, represented by Jane Hansen, has a long and generous history of supporting the VAS with this program being the most valuable and exciting to date. For many years the Foundation was the sponsor of our flagship VAS Artist of the Year Award. In 2024, the Foundation will fund, to the value of \$10,000, five early to mid-career artists to actively participate in a variety of VAS programs and cultivate their own artistic journey and place at VAS. In order to be eligible for this program, the chosen artists undertook a rigorous selection process. They have displayed technical proficiency in their chosen media as well as creative expression. Each has participated in up to five solo exhibitions and ten group exhibitions.

The benefits to the artists are many, including a year's membership of the Society, waived entry fees for Select Exhibitions, free access to VAS life drawing and portrait sessions, \$500 worth of art supplies from Senior's Art Supplies and a showcase exhibition in the VAS Gallery during the year. Towards the end of the year, a Hansen Little Coterie Featured Artist Award will be announced, with the prize being a two-week solo exhibition in the VAS Cato Gallery.

Throughout the year, the artists will be mentored by VAS artist and tutor, Gregory Smith, and supported by Councillor Rosemary Noble, who will also liaise with the Hansen Little Foundation to keep them abreast of events and progress.

Throughout 2024, the VAS Magazine will continue to inform you of the progress of the Program. In the meantime, let's introduce our five coterie artists. We asked each of them for a brief statement of what their expectations were at this stage and what aspects of their techniques they wished to develop.

Rosemary Noble & Editor

HANSEN LITTLE
FOUNDATION

LIZ GRIDLEY

Liz is a 'traditional skills' artist and has worked in art retail for over 10 years. She has taught at the VAS Art School and presented demonstrations in public.

'I was excited to apply to the VAS Inaugural Coterie program to support my return to full time arts practice since welcoming my daughter (officially 2 years ago). My practice has regularly included Life Drawing sessions to keep me active in developing composition and faster focus when painting from life. I hope the support of the Coterie access to sessions and mentorship will assist me in creating more cohesion between my work from life and my work from reference photography when oil painting.

'I've already jumped into participating in Nathalie Anne's Friday portrait session and find the VAS studio very inspiring to work in.'



GENNY GADD-CAROLAN

Genny has studied at some prestigious Art Schools including the Julian Ashton School and the VAS Art School. She has exhibited in Melbourne Galleries since 2015.

'I am positive being in the Coterie will increase my growth as an artist in many ways, not only in terms of the financial benefits, but also in the mentorship and community. It can be very daunting trying to forge one's path as an artist alone, so having people around who are on the same journey will be a huge help and comfort.

As for areas I'd like to develop, I am really focussed this year on getting that balance in my work between reflecting reality in a way that's true to how I see, while also employing painterly techniques as the great Masters did. I don't want my work to look like a photograph, I want it to look like a painting.'



An exciting new initiative this year at the VAS

Left: *Clear Skies*, Liz Gridley
Above: *Studio Study*, Genny Gadd-Carolan

NATASHA BER

Natasha is a self-taught painter with a Bachelor of Arts from Deakin University. She is a three time finalist in the Doug Moran Portrait Prize.

‘I am very grateful to be a part of the first ever Coterie at VAS and I am hoping to advance my painting skills since the program provides various painting and drawing classes.

Being a self-taught painter means spending a lot of time on your own, so having a support group of like-minded people helps to get out of your own head and provides much needed socialising.’



RHI EDWARDS

Rhi works in a variety of media and has a Degree in Illustration from Melbourne Polytechnic (2013) and extensive experience in Theatre production.

‘As a painter dedicated to working on technique and deepening my fundamentals of oils, I am thrilled to be given the opportunity to further my studies through the Hansen Little Coterie program.

‘I expect I’ll be able to learn from my fellow Coterie members and mentors, being able to have the facilities to practise my craft with access to studio, resources and materials.

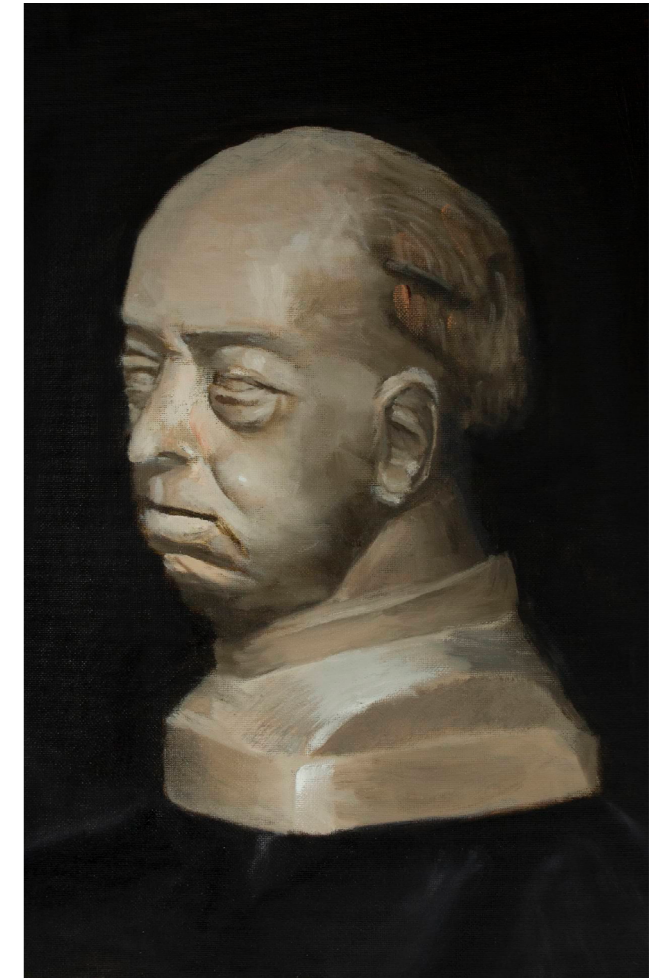
‘I hope to advance my observation skills, tonal realism and artistic voice that I may be able to combine a strong method of painting, with storytelling and fantasy style’



MICHAEL SMITH

Michael has studied at the Greg Smith School of Painting and participated in VAS Workshops. He studied Design (Communication Design) at Swinburne University, graduating in 2021 with First Class Honours.

‘I’m an oil painter, communication designer and photographer. I look forward to gaining inspiration and a source for technical development working alongside other creatives with diverse sets of skills and styles. With a communication designer philosophy, I also hope to hone a purpose-driven style that focuses on heightened expression of ideas.’



Left, Top: *Untitled*, Natasha Ber
Left, Bottom: *Self Portrait*, Rhi Edwards

Cast study, Michael Smith

THE QUIZ



1.
The Buxton Contemporary Art Museum is in which Australian city?

2.
Art that 'surpasses realism' is otherwise known as?

3.
Surrealist painter Rene Magritte was born in which country?

4.
What is the shape of anelli pasta?

5.
Colours on the opposite sides of the colour wheel are called?

6.
The relative lightness or darkness of a colour is referred to as its?

7.
A watercolour technique that releases a shower of fine droplets onto a painting is called?

8.
What animal often symbolizes peace in art?

9.
What is the optical illusion whereby objects appear to diminish in size as they recede into the distance?

10.
Name the term to describe a figure that stands with one leg holding its full weight and the other leg relaxed

11.
Les Nabis, a late 19th century French art movement is generally accepted as having been initiated by whom?

12.
The format of a painting or drawing which is wider than it is tall is called?

13.
What was the subject of the earliest known paintings?

14.
Who was the creator of the famous sculptures *The Thinker* and *The Kiss*?

15.
In which Melbourne cemetery is Fredrick McCubbin buried?

16.
Dante Gabriel Rossetti was a poet and artist who co-founded which late 19th century art movement?

17.
What is the highest amount paid for a painting by an Australian female artist?

18.
What is the technical term a surface used for a painting or drawing: canvas, board, paper, etc.?

19.
Derived from the Italian word meaning 'to scratch' what is the decorative technique that involves cutting away parts of a surface layer (such as clay or paint) to reveal a different coloured ground?

20.
Known for its rock art and bark painting Oenpelli is an indigenous art centre in which State or Territory?

21.
The McClelland Gallery is in which Australian State or Territory?

22.
What did the late Chinese American Architect IM Pei (Designer of Collins Place, Melbourne) design outside the Louvre in Paris?

Across

1. American painter, 1834–1903, known for the painting of his mother (8)

4. Charles _____, 1868–1909, impressionist with Roberts, Streeton and McCubbin (6)

7. Most famous Indigenous painter, 1902–1959, to work in European style (9)

9. Australian impressionist movement, Heidelberg _____ (6)

10. Gallery for exhibitions, as in Paris _____ (5)

12. Sistine Chapel is located in this capital. Italian spelling (4)

14. (Pierre) Auguste Renoir, 1841–1919 (init) (2)

15. European dot painting, Seurat and Signac were leading exponents (10)

16. Matisse Museum is located in this French Riviera town (4)

17. Agnes Goodsir, 1864-1939, Australian painter, lived Paris (init) (2)

18. Shirley Purdie, painter in the East Kimberley (init) (2)

20. The least transparent, as in a colour that lets little light through to the canvas (8)

21. Functional part of a pen (3)

23. Edward Heffernan, 1912–1992, past president of VAS (init) (2)

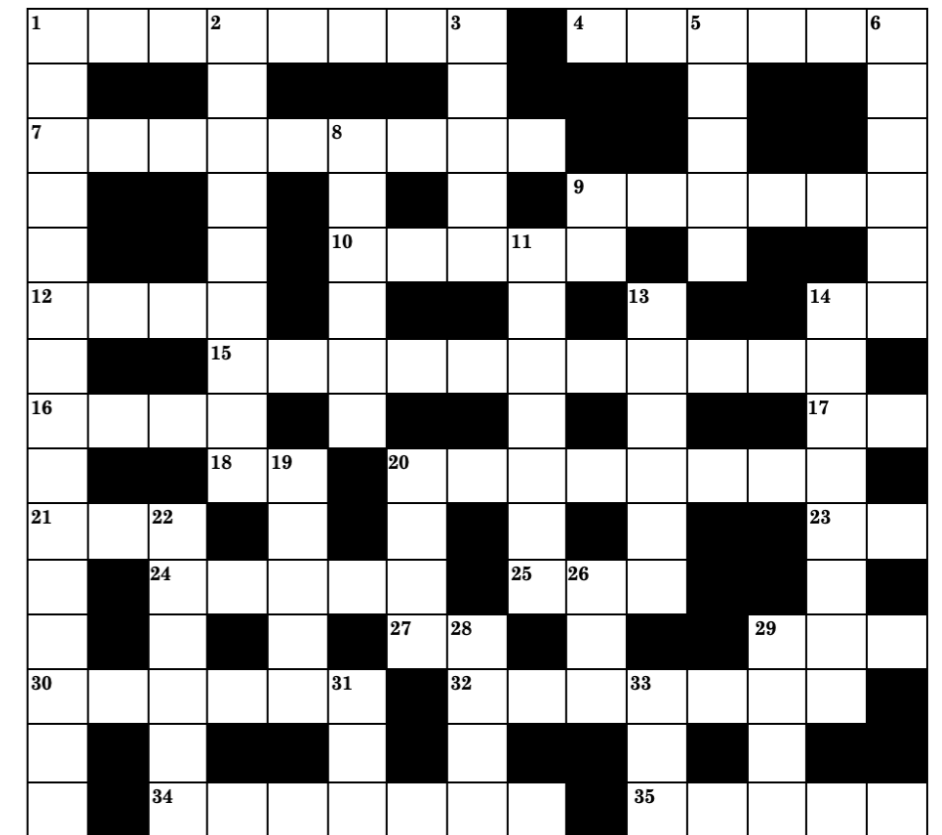
24. Wooden structure to support a canvas while painting (5)

25. John Peter Russell lived on Belle ____, off Brittany (3)

27. Simeon Nelson, sculptor (init) (2)

29. Oils take longer to ____ than acrylics (3)

30. Fashionable, all the rage, like abstract wall art (6)



32. A painter's body of work, plural (7)

34. Dame Nellie Melba was heard _____ from the VAS balcony (7)

35. Sidney _____, 1917–1992, painted the Ned Kelly series (5)

Down

1. Popular artists' paint tube brand (6,3,6)

2. Depictions of the coastline (9)

3. Of the country, like Hans Heysen scenes (5)

5. Van Gogh's famous painting *The Starry _____* (5)

6. A tool that applies paint from a moving fluffy cylinder (6)

8. Australian printmaker, _____ Traill, 1881–1967 (6)

9. Sidney Nolan (init) (2)

11. Japanese folding of paper into sculptured figures (7)

13. French impressionist, _____ Monet, 1840–1926 (6)

14. Opposite of professionals (8)

19. Assumed a position for a portrait (5)

20. Pastels, acrylics & _____ (4)

22. Round, flat, soft hats favoured by French artists (6)

26. Buvelot's first name (abbrev) (3)

28. Streeton's landscape *The purple _____*'s transparent might (4)

29. If an exhibition took only 15% commission, that would be a good ____ (4)

31. Yokohama Art Society (init) (3)

33. Eugene _____ Guerard, 1811-1901, Austrian-born colonial painter (3)

Answers Page 34

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

Solution Page 34

CONSTANCE STOKES

(1906–1991)

VAS recently published *Celebrating 150 Years* to recognise our sesquicentenary (1870–2020). Not surprisingly, many eminent female artists appear among our celebrated luminaries. It might be appropriate to append one busy mother and artist, Constance Stokes, who was a member of VAS from a young age and resides in the canon of most distinguished Australian artists.

Born in 1906 into a Cornish family who farmed near Kaniva in the Wimmera, Connie's family relocated to Kew in Melbourne where Connie for a short time attended Genazzano College. At the age of 19 years, she entered the Gallery School where her story mirrors many renowned local artists. Connie won many prizes and eventually the Gallery School Travelling Scholarship. She trained in London at the Royal Academy School and with the Cubist Andre Lhote in Paris. In 1933 she returned to Melbourne where her talent and achievements met with critical acclaim.

The newly appointed Professor of Fine Arts, Joseph Buke in 1947 identified Connie Stokes as one of the six most interesting artists in Australia, along with Dobell, Nolan, Boyd, Fairweather and Drysdale. In 1948 Sir Kenneth Clark visited Australia and described Connie as 'one of the finest draftsmen in the world today'. In 1953 Connie was included in *Twelve Australian Artists* an exhibition at Burlington House to celebrate the coronation of QE2. Her 'Girl in Red Tights' met with critical acclaim as the stellar image of the collection. So, we can confidently say Constance Stokes was recognized as being at the pinnacle of Australian art. How could she ever have been lost?

A major retrospective at the Mornington Gallery in 2015 and the biography 'Constance Stokes. Art and Life' by her daughter Lucilla d'Abrera, revisited the life of Constance Stokes. Anne Summers (2024) made the observation, 'Connie Stokes has

the habit of getting lost'. She likens the repeated restoration of Connie and some other women artists to archaeological rediscovery. She asks why an artist with the profile of Constance Stokes should ever sink out of sight? Connie Stokes herself provides some of the answer. To quote from her diary,

'creative work is a difficult life for a woman if she is a wife and mother'.

Drusilla Modjeska addresses the syndrome of creativity and the busy mother in Stravinsky's *Lunch* (1999). In artist Stella Bowen she identifies, 'the truth of her life was the clash of those great ideals of love and art'. Connie found herself torn between art and the social and domestic responsibilities of motherhood. The consequence was a rather restricted output and a serious brake on the creative reflection which was a necessary prelude to creative output. Added to this was the premature death of her husband which left her in financial difficulties and with serious depression. Connie had difficulty finding models and in the 1960s regularly attended VAS Saturday afternoon life classes.

On the artistic front her style evolved from art school classicism to a colourful Modernism which has been likened to Picasso and Matisse. Joseph Burke said she breathed life into the Modernist movement in Australia. Her oeuvre was predominantly portraits and figures, variously described as having colourful abstraction, deep sensibility and the wisdom of motherhood. Let us once again celebrate a VAS member whose painting is an aesthetic joy and raises our spirits. ✍️

JD Park

References

d'Abrera, L 2015, *Constance Stokes Art and Life*, Hill House
 Modjeska, D 1999, *Stravinsky's Lunch*, Picador
 Noble, R (ed.) 2020, *Victorian Artists Society 1870–2020 Celebrating 150 Years*, Bamba Press



The Village, 1935

Book Review

THE LOST MOTHER

A STORY OF ART AND LOVE

by Anne Summers

Melbourne University Press 2009, Hardback, 354 Pages. Dimensions: 20 x 13cm

Used Hardcover available from Grants Bookshop, Cheltenham Vic \$27. Also through abebooks.com

Anne Summers is a well known Australian author, publisher and feminist. Her published work includes such titles as *Damned whores and God's Police* and *The Misogyny Factor*. But, hey chaps, don't let that put you off, this one's personal.

Following the death of her mother in 2005 she found herself the owner of a portrait of her mother as a child that she had long admired painted by a little known artist at the beginning of her career—Constance Stokes (nee Parkin). Although titled on the painting *Portrait of a Child* the painting was known variously within the family as *Girl in Red Beret*.

'The golden yellow of the background emphasises the tones of the young girl's skin, while the duck-egg blue of her eyes picks up the colour of her jumper. The soft, rich red of the beret is enhanced by the paler red of the cover of the book'

The book is an illustrated copy of *Alice and the White Rabbit* hence the portrait's adopted title *Alice*.

Summers soon learns that a second portrait of her mother not in the family's possession was painted by the same artist, one done as the Madonna complete with veil over the head and shoulders. And so begins the search for a lost painting. From the beginning mystery surrounds the provenance of these works and the story of the person who commissioned them—the mysterious Russian émigré Mrs Mortill.

The journey starts with an intimate literary portrait of the artist. Along the way Summers describes the controlling influence of her mother. The popularity of this book has been credited with the revival of

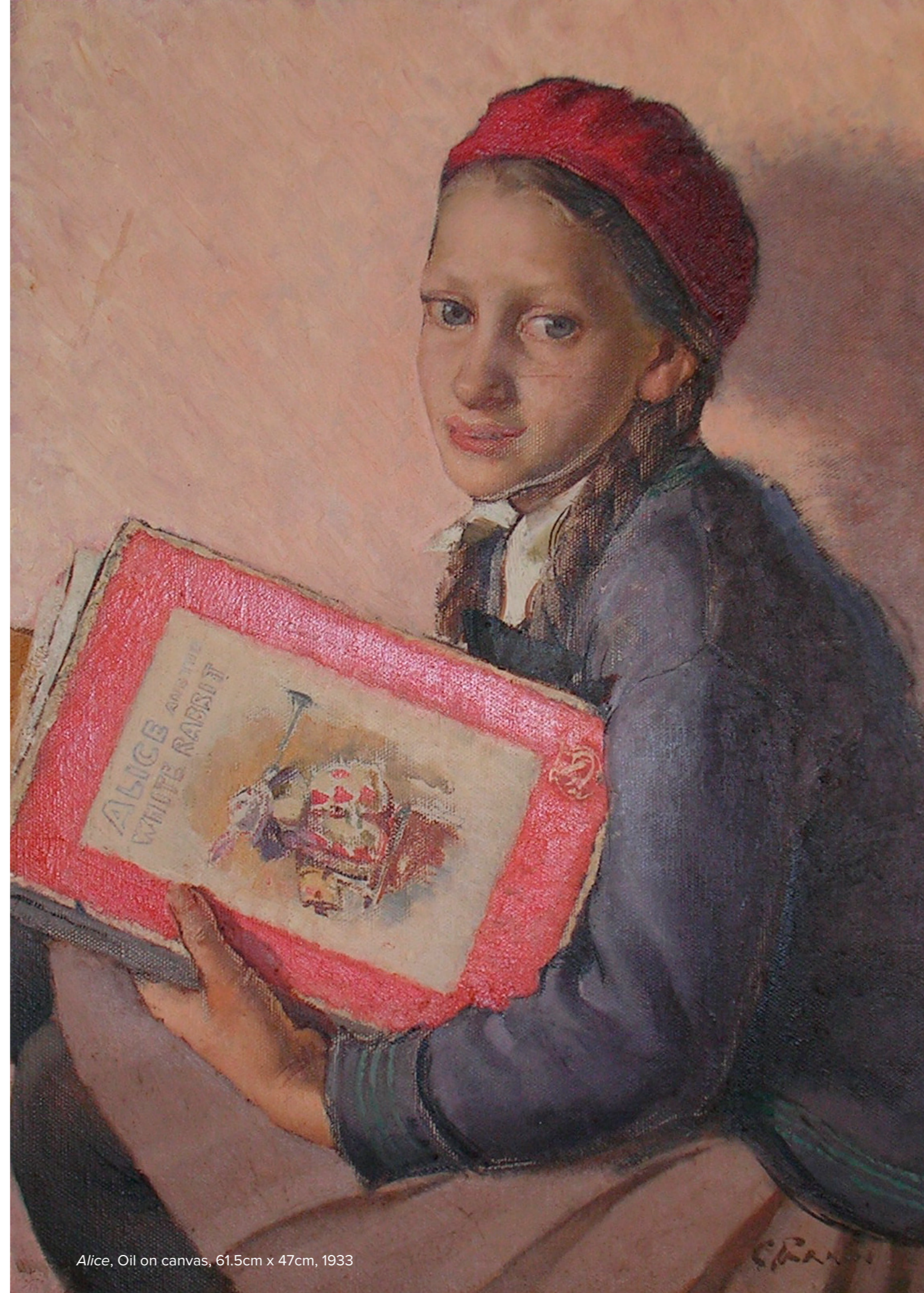
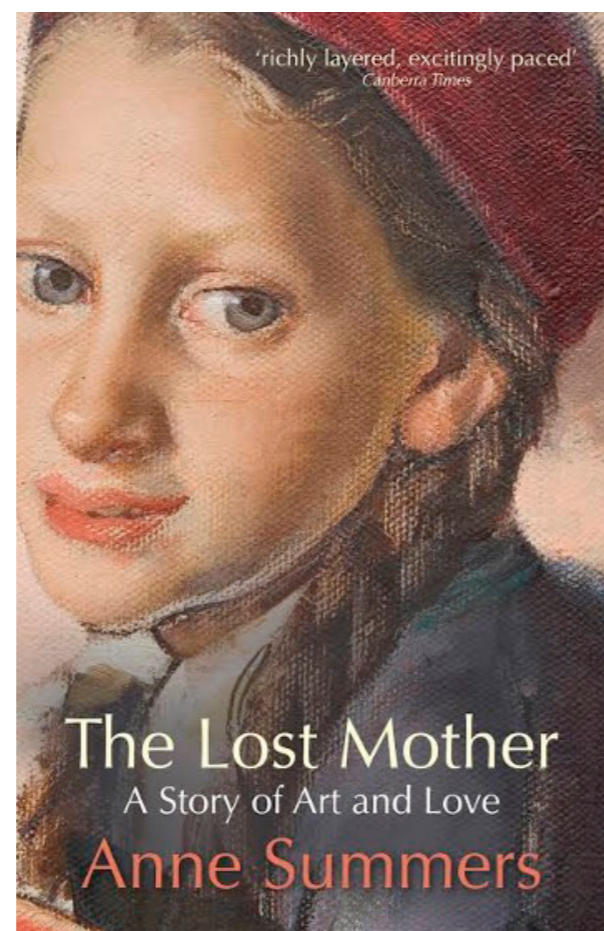
interest in Constance (Connie) Stokes. Stokes stood alongside her contemporaries Russell Drysdale, Sali Herman, Arthur Boyd, et al, as leading figures in the modernist movement in Australia in the 1930s.

The journey involves many 'rabbit holes' and includes colourful stopovers in the UK, New York and, most interestingly and surprisingly the horrors of pre World War 2 Latvia.

The author has fortunately put her politics to one side throughout the narrative allowing the intrigue and drama of the events to unfold.

'But Alice is with me. I can look at her—and I do—every day, each time struck once again by the remarkable chronicle of circumstance and serendipity that brought these women together.' ✍

Bruce Baldey VAS



Alice, Oil on canvas, 61.5cm x 47cm, 1933

FROM THE VAS COLLECTION



Artist: Constance Stokes (1906–1991)

Title: *Erny at Vics, the Monitor*

Date: c 1965

Medium: Graphite on paper

Size: 27cm W x 70cm H

We are fortunate to have this sample of the work of Constance (Connie) Stokes at the VAS, a portrait of the Life Class Monitor at the VAS drawn during one of these sessions with her usual economy of means. Her signature style is brisk and direct with crisp and assured linework but unfailingly accurate in the rendering of body position and facial expression.

The NGV has the largest collection of her work among all the public institutions in Australia. They hold 13 works in all including her renowned *The Baptism* (1952), *Woman Drying Her Hair* (1946), and *The Village* (1935) (See page 25). *The Village* is frequently loaned out for exhibition. In 1949 Sir Kenneth Clark visited the NGV and singled out *The Village* as a work that especially impressed him. *The Village* was included in the first exhibition of Australian painting to be shown at the MOMA New York. Stokes' work was there in the company of eleven other leading artists including William Dobell, Russell Drysdale, Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd, Lloyd Rees, and Donald Friend. Significantly only one other woman, Jean Bellette made up the company of artists. A pamphlet for the NGV Constance Stokes Exhibition in 1993 described her as 'a leading figure in the modernist movement in Melbourne in the 1930s' and '... best known for her open line drawings'.

Stokes was a star pupil at the NGV School in the 1920s. Drawing with pencil and pen was not permitted during the early stages of an NGV School education such that Stokes heavy charcoal studies bear little resemblance to her typical swift, clear execution.

She joined the VAS in 1928 and exhibited a landscape entitled *Sunflecked Sea* at the Autumn Exhibition on April 30 1928.



Self Portrait, Graphite on paper 1930
Portrait of George Bell

From the 1960s onwards she resumed weekly life drawing at the VAS where 'she would refine even more her draughtsmanship and her capacity for the fine line and volume, and for an understanding of human anatomy and form'¹. In 1978 Connie Stokes wrote,

'Drawing to me, is an understanding of the object not its surface or contours—but its shape through and around its weight and volume. The way it functions so that the movements are absolutely understood'.

Stokes enjoyed the patronage of Sir Keith Murdoch who wrote to her once saying;

'I believe that pictures fail unless they give out some ennobling emotions. I am not fond of the documentary picture, however deep and clever it may be.'

'Your pictures stir my mind and senses...'



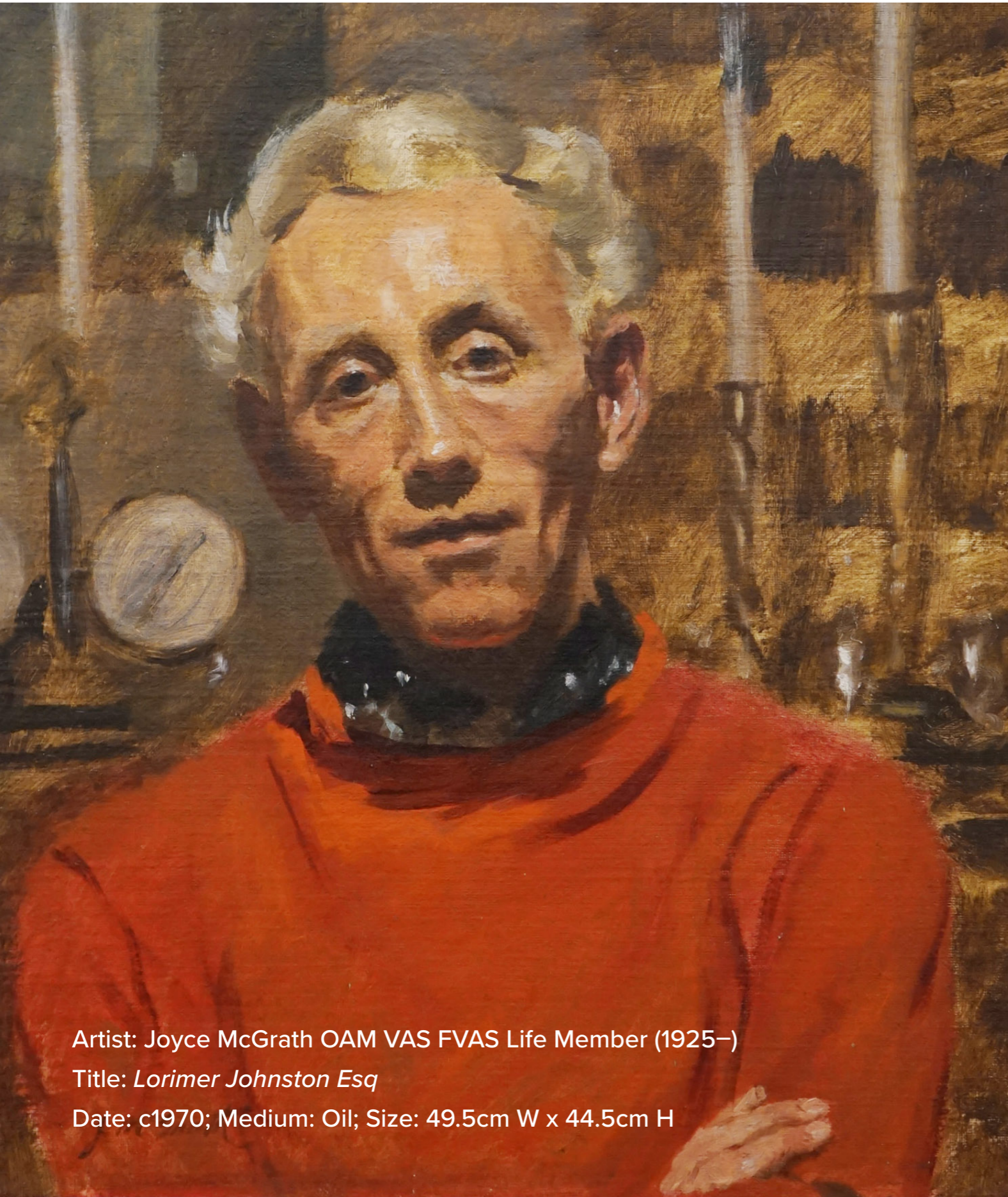
Bruce Baldey VAS

References

1: d'Abrera, L 2015, *Constance Stokes Art and Life*, Hill House

FROM THE VAS COLLECTION

Joyce McGrath OAM VAS FVAS Life Member (1925–)



Artist: Joyce McGrath OAM VAS FVAS Life Member (1925–)
Title: *Lorimer Johnston Esq*
Date: c1970; Medium: Oil; Size: 49.5cm W x 44.5cm H

Joyce was the first Arts Historian at the State Library of Victoria to receive a Churchill Fellowship to travel the world and to investigate the Art Collections.

As a child Joyce spent many years in hospital where she learnt her skills for art and her sense of colour and light.

She was a very active member of the Victorian Artists Society and served on the VAS Council for many years.

Joyce was a long standing member of the Friday Painters and was often one of the demonstrating artists in the annual People Painting People to help raise funds for the upkeep of the Society.

Joyce held many solo exhibitions at the VAS and other galleries around Melbourne.

In her later years she generously donated her personal collection of paintings to the Mildura Art Gallery.


Among the Collection were works from the tonal period of the school which Max Meldrum started in 1917 to the 1950s.

Artists of that School included Max and A. Douglas, Archie and Amelia Colquhoun, Alan Martin, Ray Hewitt, Ron Crawford, Dorothy Whitehead, Peter Glass, Judith Wills, Percy Leason and Harley Griffiths.

Joyce was also a Member of the Melbourne Society for Women Painters and of the International Society of miniature portraits.

She was also a VAS Historian and documented much of our past history.

Just a couple of years ago Joyce helped negotiate with the Eye and Ear Hospital to build an access for the Persons with Disabilities along the side of our building.

Thankyou, Joyce for your wonderful contribution to the Victorian Artists Society. 

Meg Davoren-Honey OAM FVAS VAS



Joyce (seated, with Meg Davoren-Honey (Left) and former VAS President Eileen Mackley AM FVAS VAS (Right)) is in her 99th year and is still interested in all things in Art.





Luminous: A Festival of Watercolour

The Watercolour Society of Victoria celebrates 50 years
17 to 27 May 2024

Established in 1974, the Watercolour Society of Victoria (WSV) will celebrate its milestone 50-year anniversary of fostering artistic development and creative excellence in Melbourne on 17–27 May, 2024 with an exciting program of events entitled Luminous: A Festival of Watercolour.

To acknowledge its 50-year legacy and its international reputation, WSV will stage a compelling public exhibition bringing past and present members together in a curated display of respected local and international artists at the Victorian Arts Society building in East Melbourne.

The exhibition will be accompanied by the publication of a commemorative illustrated catalogue illuminating the connection between past and present. During the ten days, there will be weekend artist demonstrations and workshops including the internationally celebrated French artist Marc Folly, and artists' walks and talks for the general public.

Established as an offshoot of the UK's Old Watercolour Society Club, WSV has garnered global recognition with its exceptional line up of members, (currently 286) who continue to create awe-inspiring watercolour paintings that reflect their brilliance and prowess.

According to Ev Hales, President of WSV, It's easy to see the richness of talent the WSV has attracted and still accesses today when you see 'Luminous: a Festival of Watercolour' exhibition which highlights the outstanding talent within the WSV including early members John Borrack, Kath

Ballard, Kenneth Jack, Robert Wade OAM, as well as Amanda Hyatt, Ross Patterson Herman Pikel, David Taylor, Lisa Wang and Joseph Zbukvic. Alongside will sit art from international watercolour masters, Alvaro Casagnet, Eudes Correia, Marc Folly, Thomas Schaller, Tony Smibert and Chein Chung Wei who have all had close connections to our group.

About Watercolour Society of Victoria: The Watercolour Society of Victoria (WSV) is an internationally renowned organization based in Melbourne, Australia, dedicated to fostering the study, appreciation, and understanding of watercolour painting. Formed in 1974, the WSV is committed to promoting high standards of watercolour painting, offering inspiration, fellowship, and support to all members and artists globally. For more information, please visit Watercolour Society of Victoria.

During the exhibition there will be free weekend artist demonstrations from 1-3pm where you can see the following artists at work:

Saturday 18th May: It Hao Pheh

Sunday 19th May: Amanda Hyatt

Saturday 25 May: Julian Bruere

Sunday 26th May: David Taylor

Artists' walks and talks at 11am Tuesday 21 May and Thursday 23 May

For further information release please contact Julie Morgan on 0418 529 904.



Top: *Barristas*, by Lisa Wang

Bottom: *End of the day Williamstown*, by Joseph Zbukvic

ANSWERS

Quiz

1. Melbourne
2. Surrealism
3. Belgium
4. Ring
5. Complementary
6. Tone
7. Spattering
8. Dove
9. Perspective
10. Contrapposto
11. Paul Gauguin
12. Landscape
13. Animals
14. Auguste Rodin
15. Brighton General Cemetery
(Plot Catholic D, 246)
16. Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
M\$2.1 (*Earth's Creation* by Emily Kane Kngwarreye 2017)
18. Support
19. Sgraffito
20. (aka Gunbalanya) Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
21. Victoria (390 McClelland Drive, Langwarrin)
22. Pyramid

Crossword

W	H	I	S	T	L	E	R		C	O	N	D	O	R	
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Louvre Pyramid, Paris: I.M Pei Architect



UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS



VAS SILENT AUCTION

TUESDAY 2 APRIL 6:30PM

This event is a fundraiser for the 2024 VAS Programme.

On offer will be artworks by top Victorian artists, artisan materials and a few surprises.

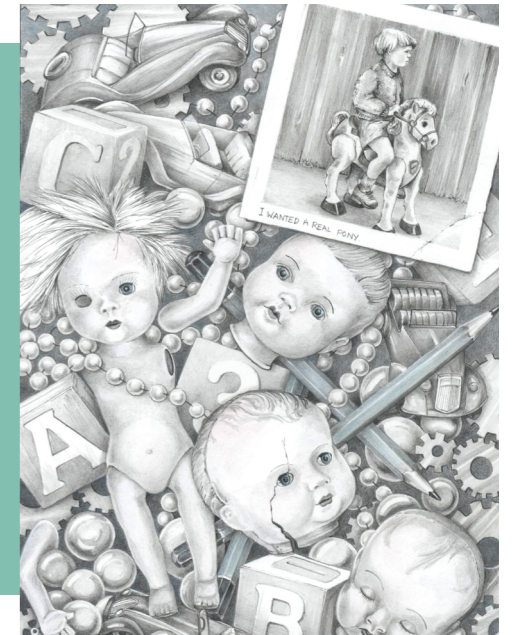
Please join us for a social evening featuring performances by guest artists.

RSVP to info@vasgallery.org.au

AUTUMN SELECT EXHIBITION

12-29 APRIL

The first of three Select Exhibitions, our prestige showcases for members. Peer votes are used to determine candidates for the Artist of the Year.



PORTRAIT EXHIBITION

5-15 JULY

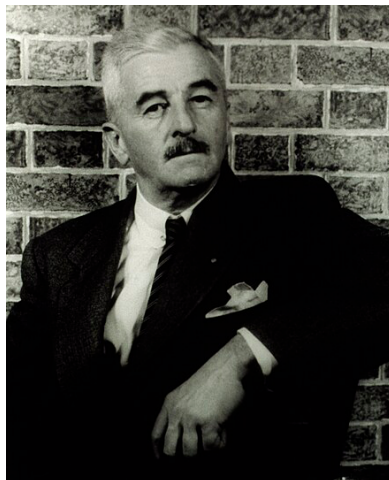
This exhibition celebrates portraiture in all genres. Our Portrait Painters in Action Open Day is a highlight of the VAS calendar not to be missed.

MARCH QUOTE

'The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life.'

William Faulkner (1897-1962)

William Cuthbert Faulkner was an American novelist and short story writer and Nobel laureate (1949) at a time when the Nobel prize for Literature meant something. Probably his most famous work is *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) praised for its further development of the stream of consciousness technique evident in the work of his English contemporary Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) and before then George Eliot (1819-1880).



CONTACT

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VAS Gallery
430 Albert St
East Melbourne 3002

Standard Opening Hours

10am – 4pm Weekdays
11am – 4pm Weekends

Website

vasgallery.org.au

Transport

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

OUR SUPPORTERS

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