

Yarra News

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From the Chair

The year began with a change of lecturer as the first lecturer for the year was unable to come. I was relieved and grateful to Associate Professor Christopher Marshal who stepped into the breach with a wonderful lecture on Florence and its Museums. Kenneth Park followed with the lecture on the Victoria and Albert collection and a special interest afternoon focussing on three fabulous cities, St Petersburg, Moscow and Istanbul. It is worth noting that we no longer have to register attendance at lectures. As a member you can come without notifying anyone unless you are bringing a guest. While masks are no longer a requirement, I encourage you to continue to wear them as a precaution.

Jan Bennelick and I attended the National ADFAS conference in Sydney in late March. This conference draws together all the chairs and vice chairs from each society in Australia to learn of new initiatives and to swap ideas. This year's conference proved both useful and friendly, particularly in relation to establishing sound links with the other Victorian societies, and we look forward to further strengthening these links in the future.

A highlight from the conference was the announcement of the Pauline Hopkins cup winner. This cup is awarded to an outstanding Young Arts programme in Australia. ADFAS Yarra won the cup for its 2021 programme and is the only society to ever win the cup twice. We won in 2019 as well. It was a surprise to win and I am grateful to Suzanne Katz, our Young Arts Coordinator, for all the work that she puts in to find worthwhile young and emerging arts projects for our support. While the amount of money for each project is not great, I believe the projects have a big impact on individual artists and groups who receive ADFAS Yarra funds, and I sincerely appreciate those members who have contributed to this programme.

Bookings through Trybooking for the Special Interest Afternoon on August 3rd with Jolyon Warwick A Silver Study and Identification Day will open on June 23rd. This afternoon provides an opportunity for you to bring that piece of silver that has sat in the back of the cupboard for years and to have it discussed and possibly identified.

The excursion to the Dandenongs in April was well subscribed. 'Marvellous Mt Macedon' is the next excursion planned for October 13th. Bookings for this will open on Monday September 5th through Trybooking.

We are now planning for the 2023 lecture programme and have a wonderful line-up of UK and Australian lecturers tentatively scheduled. It will be great to welcome back our UK lecturers in 2023 but I think that you will agree that our Australian lecturers have admirably filled the gap caused by the pandemic. I am confident that you will enjoy the lecture programme for the remainder of 2022.

Some of Christopher Marshall's favourite places to visit in Florence

Members who attended Christopher Marshall's February lecture on *Florence, the Medici and the Birth of the Museum* will remember that, as well as city's major galleries and museums such as the Accademia, Uffizi, Bargello and the Palazzo Pitti, he also discussed several that are lesser known. Christopher has kindly provided the following details of these:

Museo Stefano Bardini

This was the Florentine palace cum show-room of one of the major antiquarian/art dealers of the turn of the century. Stefano Bardini (1854-1922) enjoyed a long and prosperous career selling paintings, church fittings, architectural salvage of various kinds and other items to private and public collectors around the world, including many of the major British, French and American museums. The palace preserves a series of lavishly furnished late nineteenth century gallery interiors replete with decorative and fine art masterpieces from the Medieval to Baroque periods, including the original version of the famous Porcellino fountain in the Mercato Nuovo.



Museo di San Marco

The former Florentine monastery of the Dominican order that has been converted into a museum housing the world's largest collection of the works of the renowned Dominican Renaissance painter Fra Angelico (ca. 1395-1455). In addition to a newly restored gallery of Fra Angelico's altarpieces, the museum houses a series of priceless frescoes painted by Fra Angelico and his workshop for the individual cells of the Dominican priests and brothers living at San Marco.

Museo Frederick Stibbert

This late nineteenth century suburban villa was the residence of one of Florence's wealthiest and most cultivated expatriate collector/financiers. Now it is a perfectly preserved Neo-Gothic fantasy filled to the brim with paintings, decorative arts and one of the world's most significant collections of arms and armour.

Orsanmichele

This was the old grain hall of the city subsequently converted into a major church with a miracle working Madonna by Bernardo Daddi inside and exquisite monumental sculptures by the leading artists of the city in the tabernacles outside. These landmark monuments of Florentine Renaissance sculpture were subsequently removed for conservation but have more recently been reinstalled in an airy gallery on the top floor of the church which affords magnificent views over the city.

Casa Buonarroti

This is the world's oldest dedicated artist museum created in honour of the legacy of the great Tuscan Renaissance artist Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) by his grand-nephew Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger (1568-1646). The museum contains original masterpieces by Michelangelo together with a seventeenth century gallery dedicated to Michelangelo's legacy.



Casa Martelli

This was the long-time Florentine residence of one of Tuscany's oldest families that was given over to the state in 1986. It is now a perfectly preserved time-capsule of 18th century urban palace collecting and display with beautiful frescoes and domestically scaled interiors.

It is all in the details ...



The NGV's exhibition *Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion Manifesto* December 2021 - April 2022 was certainly worth seeing. It was curated by the Palais Galliera, Paris, with works provided by the Patrimoine de CHANEL, NGV and other public museums and private collections around the world. It featured more than 100 fashion works, as well as jewellery and perfumes, representing the designer's career evolution.

There is nothing like the refined grace, restraint, luxury and sophistication which is what the elegance of Chanel represents to me. Perhaps not as exciting as the Jean Paul Gaultier exhibition, or as sumptuous as the House of Dior, the beauty of the Chanel exhibition, particularly her 1920-30 period, is all in the details.

My favourite item is a printed and appliquéd silk chiffon dress from Spring-Summer 1930 (Palais Galliera, Paris, gift of Mrs Bertin). The cut of the silk chiffon uses a unique technique, created to enhance the floating three-dimensional character of the flowers. Motifs have been cut and inlaid, with the leaves and petals accentuated, although they barely touch the fabric. It creates the effect of flowers caught lightly in a breeze.

Another evening dress 1929-31 (Patrimoine de CHANEL, Paris), in delicate hues of soft reds, blues and lilac, features a floral arrangement printed on silk lace with gold coloured thread, lamé, silk crêpe and lace. What makes it visually stunning is the added detail of the gold lamé cascading tie at the front of the dress.



In day wear, the stunning detail of the wheat sheaf, symbolic of abundance and wealth, on this dress from spring-summer 1960 (Palais Galliera, Paris, gift of CHANEL) is exquisite. The dress is made from embroidered cotton tulle, lamé, organdie and silk crêpe.



The cotton chiffon, broderie anglaise dress (Palais Galliera, gift of Mrs Bertin) is made special by its focussed centred gathered point. Spring -Summer 1930.



CHANEL's allure is all the details. So how very disappointing was it then to have black on black as part of the presentation and staging. Black exquisitely beaded gowns with black surrounds and black artwork labels at the base. Visitors (glasses on!) were left pressed against the glass craning to see the intricate beauty. It did not do justice to the atelier's extraordinary talent.

Finally, the important missing details. The Exhibition Description follows Chanel's life and career.

We come to 1939 *'When France declares war, the House of Chanel closes its doors. The Tissus Chanel factory is forced to close when its textile weavers are conscripted, but the boutique selling perfumes and accessories (31 Rue Cambon) remains open throughout the war.'* In 1944 *'Gabrielle Chanel is arrested at the Hôtel Ritz by the French Forces of the Interior because of her relationship with a German officer, Baron Hans Gunther von Dincklage. She is released after a brief interrogation. For the next ten years, Chanel lives away from the world of fashion, dividing her time between Lausanne (Switzerland), Paris and La Pausa (her villa on the French Riviera), with trips to Italy and the US.'* 1953 *'The couture house reopens after fourteen years.'*

This airbrushed chapter in Chanel's life is disappointing. Chanel has been accused of being an informant, a collaborator, and a spy. She was definitely Abwehr Agent Number F-7124, with a code name 'Westminster' (after her former lover). She travelled with her lover von Dincklage to meet an SS intelligence chief and is accused of making other missions for the Nazis. As an Aryan businesswoman she was able to take control of Chanel No. 5 from her Jewish investor Pierre Wertheimer. Throughout the war and after the war, Chanel lived in luxury at the Ritz. She was never arrested as a collaborator. I think visitors to the exhibition were due at least these few details.

For the full exploration read *SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY Coco Chanel's Secret War* by Hal Vaughan. (Knopf 2011).

Heather Marmur ADFAS Yarra Secretary

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Forthcoming Lectures

Lecture 4

Thursday 16 June 2022

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

Lady Franklin: Fame, Death and Commemoration

Dr. Alison Inglis

Alison Inglis is an Associate Professor in Art History at the University of Melbourne. She has co-ordinated the Master of Art Curatorship program since 1995. Her primary research area is nineteenth-century British art, but she has a strong interest in art collecting and patronage in Australia. She is particularly engaged by the role of art museums in Australian society, an interest that has been strengthened by her involvement as a Board Member with several of Victoria's cultural institutions including Heide Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Victoria and the National Gallery of Victoria (of which she is an Emeritus Trustee).

She has completed a doctoral thesis on the work of the English artist Sir Edward Poynter and has co-curated several exhibitions including one with Ann Galbally on the foundation collections of Melbourne's Public Library and National Gallery in the 1850s and 1860s (1992). Her contributions to Australian art have focused on exhibitions, collecting and patronage, and include: a chapter on colonial art in the Cambridge Companion to Australian Art (2011); *Aestheticism and Empire: the Grosvenor Gallery Intercolonial Art Exhibition (2008)*; *The Gift of John Connell to the National Gallery of Victoria (2006)*; *The allure of Albion: collecting British Art in Adelaide (2005)*; *"Desirable Things": The Private Collection of Alfred Felton with John Poynter (2004)*.

In this lecture Alison will examine the remarkable career of Jane, Lady Franklin, wife of one of Tasmania's early Governors, the arctic explorer, Sir John Franklin. The first part of the lecture will investigate the couple's activities as leading colonial patrons of the arts. The second part will focus on Lady Franklin's remarkable efforts to suitably commemorate her husband's tragic death in the Canadian Arctic, through a series of monuments asserting his right to be considered the discoverer of the fabled 'North-West Passage'.

Lecture 5

Thursday 7 July 2022

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

White Gums and Ramoxes: The Ceramics of Merric and Arthur Boyd

Grace Cochrane AM

Now an independent curator and writer, until 2005 Grace Cochrane was a senior curator of Australian decorative arts and design at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. She is the author of *The Crafts Movement in Australia: a History* (NSW University Press, 1992), and for over 45 years has spoken about crafts and design, written for a range of publications, been a board member of a number of professional organisations and spoken at many conferences. Within the Powerhouse Museum she was co-ordinating curator for the collection-based gallery, *Inspired! Design across time* (2005); and external curator for *Smart works: design and the handmade* (2007). Later exhibitions include, among others, *White gums and ramoxes: ceramics by Merric and Arthur Boyd from the Bundanon Trust Collection* (2009-2012); *Potters Cottage: a tribute*, Manningham Art Gallery, 2012 and *The Fuping Group, sharing the experience*, Sturt gallery, 2013.

Born in New Zealand, she has a BFA, MFA (1984, 1986) and PhD (1999) from the University of Tasmania and, in 2007, was awarded a Doctor of Literature by the University of New South Wales. In 2010 she was appointed an Adjunct Professor at the Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga and has taught in a range of other contexts. She received the Australia Council's VACB Emeritus medal in 2001 and was awarded an AM in 2013.

In this lecture Grace tells the story of the development and curation of the touring 2009 exhibition, *White gums and ramoxes*, from the Bundanon Trust Collection, the property which Arthur and Yvonne Boyd gifted to the people of Australia in 1993. The exhibition takes its title from two characteristic motifs in the ceramic work of Arthur Boyd (1920-1999) and his father Merric Boyd (1888-1959).

The lecture discusses the curation of the exhibition: considering the collection, deciding on a theme, discovering related paintings, drawings and prints, and deciding that the exhibition was about the relationship between Arthur and his father, through their work. It also gives insights into the work behind the scenes, the fascinating mysteries that were unravelled and what the exhibition looked like in a range of different venues.

Lecture 6

Thursday 4 August 2022

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

What Can We Learn about Silver from Paintings, Engravings and Illuminated Manuscripts **Joylon Warwick James**

Joylon Warwick James is a professional consultant on antique silver, based in Sydney. Educated at London University he has acted as a lecturer, valuer/appraiser, and adviser on English, European, Colonial and other silver with museums, auction houses, government bodies, collectors, and educational organisations within Australia and overseas. He has published widely on international silver collections and practices, including a reference manual on Australian gold and silver hallmarks.

This lecture is in the form of a series of illustrated 'short stories' of depictions of silver objects. Each is developed from a particular painting, engraving, or illuminated manuscript which is presented as the starting point. Together, they permit us to consider why so few silver objects exist from earlier times and what happened to them. What survives today may not give a very accurate overall picture of what was originally made. It also looks at earlier social habits, customs, and behaviour, as evidenced in silverware. The lecture points out the possible dangers of relying too heavily on paintings, engravings and illuminated manuscripts as a source of accurate information on the function and importance of silverware

Guests are most welcome to attend lectures. Prior booking for guests is essential and a \$25 fee applies.

Special Interest Event

Wednesday 3 August 2022

1.30 pm

Glen Eira Town Hall Caulfield Cup Room

Cost: \$45

A Silver Study (and Identification) Day

Joylon Warwick James

This event is an 'item lead' discovery day where learning about silver (marks, styles, history etc.) and distinguishing from non-silver items (Electro Plated Nickel Silver, Sheffield Plate etc.) is based on discussion of individual items brought in by the audience.

As there is the opportunity to handle the items, members are encouraged to bring a magnifying glass and any hallmarking reference books you may have.

Bookings open on Trybooking from 10am Thursday 23 June or call Carol Johnston on 0409 871 254.