



NEWSLETTER

Number: 2208 (145)

August 2022



From the chair



Dear Members and Friends,

In July we welcomed Professor Peter McNeil who took us into the surreal world of design through the works of Elsa Schiaparelli with a focus on the sophistication of Paris in the 1930s. I thought it had a certain poignancy – so much glamour, and yet we knew that the city was just about to head into war and occupation. It was a very successful day with the support of the Committee and the invaluable assistance of members who have volunteered to help. At this lecture, we greatly appreciated the support of Ray Herbert who set up our sound systems, Colin Howie being on a well-earned break.

Again, we welcomed new members and visitors. We greatly appreciate the fact that members have been inviting friends and family. We have always found that the best way of letting people know what ADFAS offers is 'word of mouth'. Please let the Committee members know if you need more information.

Our 2023 program is developing very well. I've been exchanging emails with the British lecturers and they all say how much they are looking forward to coming to Australia next year. We will have a lot more information about the program over the next few months.

This month we are presenting what I think is a first for ADFAS Camden. Our lecturer, **ROBERT KETTON**, will describe the life and times of the wonderful painter **JMW Turner** while at the same time his artist wife **CATHERINE** will take to her easel equipped with oil paints, brushes, scrapers and rags and at the end display her finished painting to the audience.

Can I use the word 'unprecedented'? No, I think you all say. Well, I'll just say it sounds intriguing!

I look forward to seeing you all there.

Linda

Linda Inglis, Chairman,



COMING PRESENTATIONS

LECTURE 6

EXPLORING TURNER

Presented by:

Robert & Catherine Ketton

Whilst Robert talks about the life and times of JMW Turner, Catherine will take to the easel with oil paint, rags, scrapers and brush to give us a glimpse of Turner's style and technique. At the end of the lecture Catherine will present the artwork to the society.

Turner lived at a time of great social change and scientific invention. More than anyone else he recorded, in thousands of works of art, the transition of Britain from a rural to an industrial society.

Saturday 27 August 2022

11.30 am for 12.00 Noon

Carrington Recreation Centre

Gate 2, 90 Werombi Road, Grasmere NSW 2570

For COVID and CATERING reasons BOOKINGS would be appreciated (See below for booking details)

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LECTURE 7

INSPIRED! Design across time and SMART WORKS

Presented by:

Dr Grace Cochrane, AM

Saturday 24 September 2022

11.30 am for 12.00 Noon

Carrington Recreation Centre

Gate 2, 90 Werombi Road, Grasmere NSW 2570

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For more information & bookings, contact:

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In this Edition

Gaylene Feld has once again compiled a trio of articles for our enjoyment.

The first (page 2) is about a young Mezzo soprano, Agnes Sarkis who is a Principal Artist with Opera Australia.

The second story on page 3 recalls another singer, the late Leonard Cohen and a brief history of his famous song Hallelujah and the path it took from obscurity to its present continuing success.

The third story (page 4) is a note on a local macrame artist, Denisse M Vera who has achieved fame through her involvement in the movie *Thor: Love and Thunder*.

And I have indulged myself again on page 5 in a not so brief discussion - *The Stonemason: Craftsman or Artist?*

Don't forget to drop in to the Alan Baker Art Gallery from time to time, and perhaps take advantage of some of the courses and programs they offer (page 7).

And please feel free to contact Gaylene or myself if you have the urge to put pen to paper yourself. I am sure our members would appreciate your contribution to our monthly newsletter.

Ed

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

A very warm welcome to new member:

LINDA LOVELY

We trust members will make her feel welcome at our future lectures and other events.

All members should receive a name tag and a membership card. Please let Susan and Pamela know at the front desk if you haven't received these. And we are always keen to hear if you know of people who should be receiving the newsletter and are not, or who you know would like to receive it.

Just a reminder, too, for members to log on to the ADFAS website from time to time and catch up on news and updates from the Association.

The Association website address is:

www.adfas.org.au

And don't forget to invite friends or relatives, or both, to share our lectures and encourage them to join our Society.

Mezzo soprano

AGNES SARKIS

Agnes Sarkis was born in Iran to an Armenian family. At a young age in Iran, Agnes started playing the piano and also started having singing lessons. She watched videos of different classical choirs which inspired her to find out more about classical techniques. However as a woman in Iran she was unable to fulfil her ambition to become an opera singer so she moved to Tehran to study civil engineering.



After migrating to Australia she began to realise her dream, being able to continue her musical education at the Sydney Conservatorium from 2009. As a mezzo soprano she was part of Opera Australia Chorus for 4 years before becoming principal artist with Opera Australia. During this time she was rewarded with an Advanced Diploma of Opera at Sydney Conservatorium in 2011 and Graduate Diploma in Music (Opera) 2012. She was Highly Recommended for the Joan Garden Award, 2011 and was winner of the award in 2012. She was also a finalist in the 2013 Bel Canto Award and was the recipient of the Sydney Eisteddfod Opera Scholarship 2014. She also received the Italian Opera Foundation Scholarship in 2018.

With opera Australia, she has played roles in *Carmen*, *La Traviata*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Madama Butterfly*, *The Merry Widow* and *The Magic Flute*.

She had the starring role of *Flora* in *La Traviata* that recently opened at the Sydney Opera House for the July season.



La Traviata was written by Verdi, almost 170 years ago and still proves to be one of the most popular operas in the world. Agnes attributes its popularity "to the genius of Verdi, the beautiful details created in every phrase and the lovely libretto by Piave".

Agnes felt the main message of *La Traviata* is about 'sacrifice and true love'.

And from *Opera Australia*

'*La Traviata* tells the story about Violetta who wears velvet and lace and drinks only the finest champagne from crystal glasses. She is free and free spirited, living outside society's bounds and for the courtesan, it seems like the party will never end.

'*La Traviata* is so popular because it puts a life we can only dream of on stage, with its risqué glamor, joys and sorrows. Verdi's music sings of freedom with flying melodies, makes merry with rousing drinking songs and leaves us with passionate duets between breaking hearts'.



Resources

Aussietheatre.com
Gabi Bergman 5 July 2022
Opera Australia

LEONARD COHEN and the song HALLELUJAH

'Hallelujah', the song, was written by Canadian singer, Leonard Cohen and was released on his album *Various Positions* in 1984. The original version evoked both early rock and gospel music.

Interestingly, the song was first rejected by his label, Columbia Records and faded into obscurity until a new version was recorded by John Cale in 1991. This in turn inspired a recording of Cale's version by Jeff Buckley, 1994. Despite its rejection by Columbia, Cohen revised the song many times, gradually building public awareness thanks to Cale and Buckley.

The song became increasingly popular after being featured in the film, *Shrek*, in 2001. Many other arrangements have been performed by established and aspiring artists and the



Leonard Cohen late 2000's. Photographer unknown Credit Courtesy of the Cohen Estate

song has been used on a number of occasions in film and television soundtracks and televised talent contests.

Over the years, Cohen is reputed to have written around 80 to 180 draft verses for Hallelujah.

Cohen first recorded the song when he was 50 years of age. He said it came from 'a desire to affirm my faith in life, not in some formal religious way, but with enthusiasm, with emotion'.

The origins of Hallelujah and how it represented Cohen's life are shown in the documentary *Hallelujah: Leonard Cohen, A Journey into Song* which was recently premiered in New York and Los Angeles.

The idea behind the film began when a friend, writer David Thomson, suggested making a film based on *Hallelujah* and about Leonard Cohen. The filmmakers (Geller and Goldfine) came across, the music journalist, Alan Light's 2012 book, '*The Holy or the Broken: Leonard Cohen, Jeff Buckley and the Unlikely Ascent of Hallelujah*'. Approval for the film came from Cohen's lawyer. Negotiating with Sony Music, which controlled the rights to the singer's publishing, took two years due to an issue which was eventually resolved.



Leonard Cohen performs in a scene from the documentary *Hallelujah: Leonard Cohen, a Journey, a Song*. Leonardo Cohen Family Trust/ Sony Picture Classics

During the process of accumulating material for the documentary Leonard Cohen passed away. However access to

Leonard's journals and notebooks, photographs and concert recordings was obtained, enabling the project to proceed.

Even after Cohen's death the popularity of Hallelujah seems to have remained unabated

Goldfine said of the film, "It's the story of this man's spiritual journey, and Leonard was a man who never stopped working himself..."

Canadian singer k.d.lang said in an interview shortly after Cohen's death that she considered the song to be about 'the struggle between having human desire and searching for spiritual wisdom. It's being caught between those two places'.

Resources

Forbes forbes.com David Chiu July 8 2022

Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org

The Sydney Morning Herald smh.com.au

Rolling Stone rollingstone.com

Camden Fibre Artist: Denisse M Vera

If you and your children or even your grandchildren are fans of the Marvel series of movies, this local success story recently featured in the Camden Narellan Advertiser would be of interest to you.

Denisse M Vera, who is a Camden fashion designer, was delighted and proud to have four of her macrame designs featured in the film **Thor: Love and Thunder**. This film is in cinemas at present.



Denisse M Vera with her designs worn by the goddesses in Thor: Love and Thunder

Denisse comments that:

'The Denisse M. Vera ethos is based on bringing designs to life which inspire the wearer to feel elevated and empowered,'

...which seems entirely appropriate for a film about the Norse god, Thor, the Greek god Zeus and sundry Greek goddesses.

The Greek goddesses dressed in Denisse M Vera's designs flank Zeus played by Russell Crowe, in Omnipotence City.



Zeus played by Russell Crowe is flanked by goddesses.
Picture: Disney

The assistant costume designer on the film contacted Ms Vera and asked her if she would design a costume for one of the gods in the Omnipotence City. The original request was for one of Ms Vera's macrame designs for a character who was eventually written out of the script. However, the costume department contacted her again in regard to new characters and she received an order for four costumes. These were created to measure and were collected from the Camden studio.

"To have contributed creations for a blockbuster film like Thor is an achievement beyond belief" Ms Vera said.

Ms Vera was born and raised in Campbelltown and is of Chilean heritage and Mapuche blood.

A little about Denisse M Vera

'From a young age I always loved to craft and was drawn to artisan-made jewellery. I travelled to Chile in 2012 and began to feel drawn to macrame jewellery sold by artisans in markets and parks. I became friends with a Chilean Macrame artisan, Oliver, in San Pedro de Atacama. He taught me a few knots and soon I was making macrame rings, bracelets and necklaces.

When I returned to Australia I experimented with knots directly onto the mannequin for my graduation collection. My entire collection featured macrame.

I am deeply grateful to Oliver for entrusting me with his craft.

I feel a strong Ancestral energy while I am creating.



Resources

Camden Narellan Advertiser, Jess Layt, 20 July 2022
Modern macrame modernmacrame.com March 23 2021

The STONEMASON

Craftsman or artist?

Peter Claxton

In the two weeks I took to fly to London on my first overseas trip in 1966 I managed rather fleeting visits to a number of historic sites in several countries. Amongst these were the ruins of Neolithic buildings at Byblos and Roman temples at Baalbek, both in Lebanon, Old Damascus in Syria, the Pyramids at Giza in Egypt, the Acropolis and other ancient ruins in Athens and surrounds, and of course Rome and its many remnants of the Roman period.

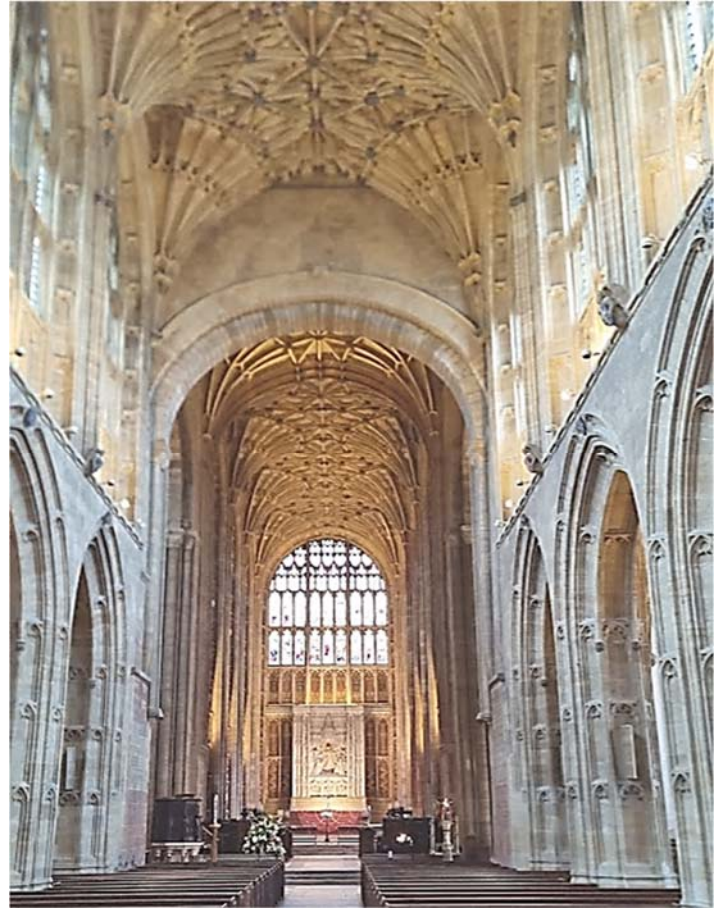


Neolithic ruins at Byblos, Lebanon

These ancient buildings were invariably stone structures and it began to dawn on me how skilful the original stoneworkers must have been, to be able to work the blocks with quite primitive tools so that they would fit together almost perfectly in the finished structure – demonstrated by how much of some of these structures still remains standing after the passage of hundreds or thousands of years.

And not only could they dress the surfaces with remarkable precision, they then began to introduce simple and then more complicated and sophisticated embellishments to certain features such as windows, doorways lintels etc.

And as that first trip in 1966 required me to spend a year studying in London, I took the opportunity, via the purchase of an old Vauxhall sedan, to do quite a bit of sightseeing in the UK. Donning my 'tourist' cap I managed the regulation number of castles but was quite taken with the architecture, and particularly the stonework, plain and embellished, of the old monasteries, cathedrals and churches. I found some of these, particularly Ely Cathedral and Sherborne Abbey in England, and on a later trip, Notre Dame in Paris, to be absolutely awe inspiring. One has to be impressed not only with the precision of the stonework in the structure but also with the sometimes extremely intricate and delicate stone carving particularly evident in the tracery in the stained glass windows, but also elsewhere in these majestic buildings.



Magnificent stonework in Sherborne Abbey, Dorset, UK

Which brings me to the question in the title: who or what is the stonemason?

Wikipedia, that source of all knowledge and wisdom, describes stonemasonry or stonecraft as **'the creation of buildings, structures and sculpture using stone as the primary material'**.

So when did it all begin?

As I mentioned earlier, quite serendipitously my travels took me to see the ruins of Neolithic buildings at Byblos and it is during the Neolithic Revolution around 10,000 BC that mankind not only began to domesticate animals and farm the land but also settle in static communities.

This was indeed a revolutionary time as fire was tamed and became useful not only for cooking and warmth but also in the creation of materials that could be used for building purposes – quicklime, plaster and mortar. And with the move away from a hunter gatherer lifestyle, houses began to be constructed - from mud and straw ... and stone. As a result, the discipline we know today as stonemasonry was born as one of the earliest trades in the history of civilisation.

Over the next few thousand years the stonemason grew in importance as ancient civilisations required more and more of their skilled services in the construction of the many impressive and enduring cultural buildings and monuments, whose remnants and standing remains can be viewed today by the tourist or are now being revealed by archaeologists.

We only have to look at the pyramids in Egypt, the Persian palaces, the wonderful temples and civic buildings of ancient Greece and the Roman world ... and the step pyramids and other building in Central America to appreciate the skills of these earlier workers in stone.

However, in Western Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the stonemason's importance declined over a few centuries as timber construction began to replace building in dressed stone. Their prospects began to improve again in the 9th and 10th centuries with the development of a penchant for constructing stone castles and other defensive stone buildings. By the 12th century a widespread upsurge of religious fervour saw an incredible wave of construction of very impressive stone churches and cathedrals across Western Europe.



Ely Cathedral. Cambridgeshire. UK

The Medieval stonemason was now in high demand and the increasing growth and importance of the craft led to the formation in countries such as Scotland, England and France of 'Guilds' to regulate the training, practice, skills and activities of stonemasons. Members of the Guild were ranked on the basis of their experience and knowledge, giving rise to three classes of stonemason: Apprentices, Journeymen and Master Masons.

Apprentices were entry level stonemasons, indentured for up to seven years to their Masters in return for keep, training and education. At the successful completion of their indenture, apprentices were promoted to **Journeymen** who were skilled workmen and were actually paid for their work. They could also travel to assist their Master. The highest honour for a journeyman was to receive the title of **Master Mason**, which was recognition of the highest level of skill and trustworthiness. They were now considered to be free men, able to travel as they wished to work for their patrons.

The Renaissance, spanning the 14th to 17th centuries, was a period when the craft and art of the stonemason regained the prominence and sophistication it had achieved during the Classical age (8th century BC to 4th century AD). Throughout Western Europe the desire increased to create marvellous works of art, no more so than in Italy. City-states competed with one another with perhaps Florence being the stand-out with great structures such as the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore and the Laurentian Library, which was planned and

built by that most famous of all Renaissance stonemasons, **Michelangelo Buonarroti**.

In the centuries after 1492 when Columbus 'sailed the oceans blue', European settlers spread to other continents, taking with them the skills and techniques of the stonemasons of their homelands. Over time these European techniques became adapted to the 'new' architectural styles that developed in these colonised countries.

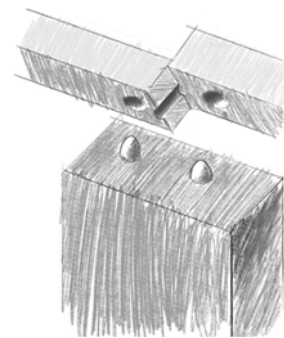
Until the early years of the 20th century and the development of the internal combustion engine, there had been little change in the tools used by stonemasons at least since the classical period. The materials from which they were made may have changed but stonemasons still used a variety of sizes and shapes of chisel, mallets, hammers and trowels, and most are still used today. However today, many of the heavy tasks once performed by horse power are now undertaken by trains, trucks, forklifts etc., and the hand splitting of stones has been replaced by the use of electric saws.

We might be forgiven for thinking that the stonemason's craft or art reached its pinnacle during the Renaissance, but in a recent (March 2020) article in the BBC History Magazine, English stonemason and author, Andrew Ziminski was asked 'Which era's capabilities with stone do you find the most astounding, considering the tools they were working with?'

His reply takes us not to the Renaissance or the Classical period but back again to the Neolithic age:

'The finishing of the stonework at Stonehenge is not just mind-boggling, it's a Gordian knot of bogglingness. It's absolutely insane how the Neolithic builders managed to finish the upright stones, never mind transport them. There's one stone in particular, stone 56, which has an extraordinarily flat plane across its face. To think that was created just using mauls – basically big circular stones, some the size of cricket balls, others the size of medicine balls – is absolutely extraordinary.

'...there's nothing else from that time that's been designed with architecture in mind. Stonehenge was built with details such as mortise and tenon joints just to hold it all together. It's supremely sophisticated – and it actually fits! The lintels are tongue and grooved at each end to hold them in place. That's an unnecessary extra piece of work to my mind because these things weigh 20 tons each and they're not going to fall off lightly. What's interesting is that mortise and tenon joints and tongue and grooved joints are carpentry joints, aren't they? So there was clearly a carpenter's ethic at work at Stonehenge'.



Sketch of the tongue and groove and mortise and tenon joints used in the outer Sarsen circle

The stonemason today

Much has changed in the last century, certainly in the last half century. Not only has mechanisation changed the way in which stone is prepared and handled but the use of stone as a building material has also changed from being the 'building block' to a cladding material in many modern structures. The modern craft which is probably best described today as an industry includes six categories:

Quarrymen, who split and extract rock from the ground;

Sawyers, who cut the rough blocks to size, using diamond tipped saws;

Banker Masons, who specialise in working the stones into the required shapes, using templates and a bed mould. Their output ranges from simple chamfered edges to delicate tracery for windows and detailed classical architectural features;

Carvers, who have crossed the line from craft to art, carving stone into designs such as foliage, figures or abstract designs;

Fixer masons, who specialise in fixing stone onto buildings using lifting tackle, and traditional lime mortars and grouts;

Monumental masons who specialise in carved grave-stones and inscriptions.

I wonder how we would categorise today that most famous of all Renaissance stonemasons, Michelangelo Buonarroti.

He spent the first ten years of his life living at Settignano with a quarryman / stone cutter and his wife who had been his wet nurse. Here stone cutting was not simply a livelihood, it was a way of life and Michelangelo absorbed it all, drawing it all in as he once said 'with my nurse's milk'.

At the age of ten he returned to his father's house in Florence and began his formal education. He developed a passion for drawing and an ambition to become an artist. In 1488 at the age of 13 he was bound to brothers Domenico and David de



Michelangelo's *Madonna of the Stairs*,
1492

Tommaso di Currado 'to learn the art of painting, and to practice the same and to be at the orders of the above named...'. From there he moved to the school for sculptors set up by Lorenzo de Medici and here carved his first works in stone, the *Madonna of the Stairs* before his 17th birthday, followed by *Battle of the Centaurs* a year later, both in relief.

And the rest, as they say, is history as he went on through his long life, demonstrating his many skills as artist, sculptor, architect and builder.

In today's parlance of the mason, Michelangelo would be best described as a carver, one who has crossed the line from craft to art – but a brilliant exponent of his art. In the parlance of the Guilds he would be best described as a Master Mason – but again he was much more than that due to his exceptional building and architectural skills, coupled with his brilliance as an artist.

So perhaps the question should be 'When does a craftsman become an artist?'

Art has been described as 'the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power'.

Some see beauty and emotional power in an edifice such as Stonehenge or the remarkable stonework at Machu Pichu in Peru, whereas others see it in works of sculpture such as Michelangelo's *David*.

So perhaps there is no clear distinction, and beauty (art) is truly 'in the eye of the beholder'.

Resources

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stonemasonry>

Robert Coughlan. *The World of Michelangelo*,
Time Life Library of Art, 1972

www.nswmma.com.au/history-of-stonemasonry.html

Ellie Cawthorne interview of Andrew Ziminski,
BBC History Magazine, March 2020

Andrew Ziminski, *The Stonemason: A History of Building Britain*.

John Murray, 336 pp, 2020



ALAN BAKER
ART GALLERY

DRAWING SKILLS

Develop your drawing skills by exploring a range of drawing materials and subjects to help improve all areas of your art practice in this 10-week course. All skill levels welcome.

When: Every Thursday from 21 July to 22 September, 10am-12pm

Cost: \$200 per term. [Limited spaces remaining](#)

HERITAGE DRAWING

Join Alan Baker Art Gallery on the grounds of the historic Macaria to learn how to create architectural drawings of heritage buildings and the urban environment using ink and wash techniques. All skill levels welcome.

When: Saturday 27 August, 10am-1pm (break included)

Cost: \$20 per session

WHAT'S ON AT OTHER SOCIETIES?

ADFAS Blue Mountains:

Next lecture: Friday 23 September at 2.00 pm, Wentworth Falls School of Arts, Great Western Highway, Wentworth Falls.

Geoffrey Edwards will present '*The problematic statue—a brief history of debunking and desecrating public monuments*'.

(Contact: bluemountains@adfas.org.au)

ADFAS Bowral & District:

Next lecture: Wednesday 31 August at 5.00 pm Bradman Museum 7 Cricket Hall of Fame, St Jude St, Bowral.

Claudia Chan Shaw will present '*East meets West in Dress*'

(Contact: secretary@adfasbowral.com)

ADFAS Canberra:

Next lecture: Monday 12 September at 6.00 pm at The National Library of Australia.

Dr Grace Cochrane AM will present '*40 Years On: Australiana in a changing context*'.

(Contact: adfasmembershipcanberra@gmail.com)

ADFAS Ku-ring-gai:

Next lecture: Wednesday 21 September at 10.30 am and at 6.00 pm at Zenith Theatre, Chatswood.

Dr Grace Cochrane AM will present '*Contemporary Australian Metalwork*'.

(Contact: kuringgai@adfas.org.au)

ADFAS Molonglo Plains:

Next lecture: Thursday 15 September at 2.00 pm at the Queanbeyan Bicentennial Hall, 253 Crawford St. Queanbeyan.

Dr Grace Cochrane AM will present '*White Gums and Ramoxes: The ceramics of Merric and Arthur Boyd*'.

(Contact: adfasmembershipmolonglo@gmail.com)

ADFAS Newcastle:

Next lecture: Monday 29 August, at 6.30 pm at the Hunter Theatre, School of Performing Arts, Lambton Rd, Broadmeadow

Claudia Chan Shaw will present '*Beyond the Little Black Dress-Chanel plus Florence Broadhurst-Design Legend*'

(Contact: Secretary@adfasnewcastle.org.au)

ADFAS Pokolbin:

Next lecture: Monday 5 September at 6.45 pm in Cessnock Performing Arts Centre, corner of Vincent St & Aberdare Rd, Cessnock.

Dr Alastair Blanchard will present '*The Tale of Two Cities - Moscow and St Petersburg*'.

(Contact: secretary@adfaspokolbin.org.au)

ADFAS Scone

Next lecture: Friday 6 September at 6.30 pm at venue TBA.

Dr Alastair Blanchard will present '*The Tale of Two Cities - Moscow and St Petersburg*'.

(Contact: scone@adfas.org.au)

ADFAS Shoalhaven

Next lecture: Thursday 1 September at 7.30 pm at the Uniting Church Hall, 71-77 Alfred St, Berry.

Claudia Chan Shaw will present '*Art Deco of New York*'.

(Contact: shoalhaven@adfas.org.au)

ADFAS Sydney

Next lecture: Thursday 15 September at 7.30 pm at the Paddington Woollahra RSL Club.

Sasha Grishin will present '*Art and Revolution: Russian Art of the Revolutionary Period*'.

(Contact: David Andrews 0413 554 024)

Programmes & contact details for ALL Societies are available on the ADFAS website: www.adfas.org.au

At Peter McNeil's lecture on 30 July



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