



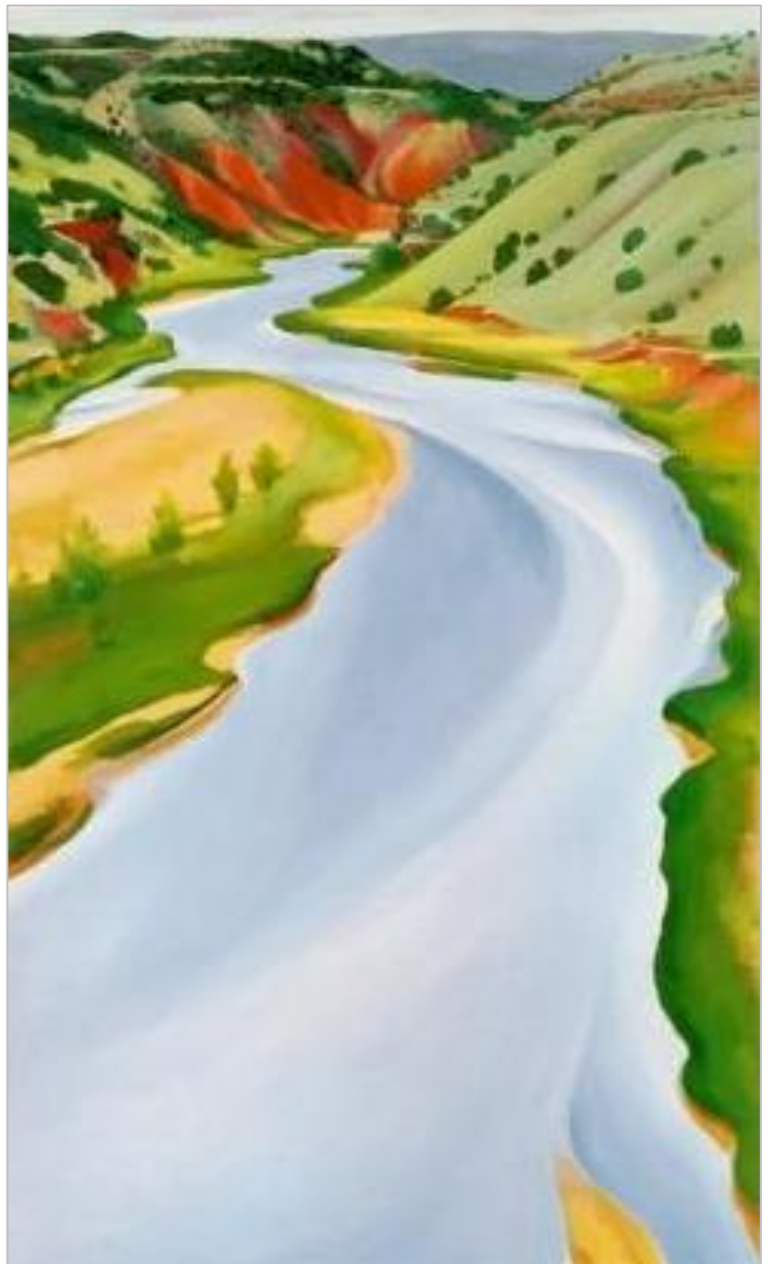
ARTSNATIONAL

northern rivers

Newsletter 25 ♦ November 2024

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'Chama River, Ghost Ranch', Georgia O'Keeffe, 1937

CONNECT ENRICH INSPIRE

From the Chair with Dianne Stuart

My Christmas message for 2024 is one of optimism, despite disturbing events on the broader global stage.

Within the Northern Rivers, there is evidence that your 2024 ArtsNational Northern Rivers membership lived up to expectations. Our monthly topics varied across the arts and your feedback indicates they "appealed to most of you most of the time!"

In recent weeks, your committee has turned its attention to 2025. While hard to believe possible, I am confident we have an equally, if not better, program in store for you in 2025. As I frequently remind, your committee welcomes all offers of assistance – in home hosting our presenters, Monday evening supper preparation, or spreading the benefits of membership.

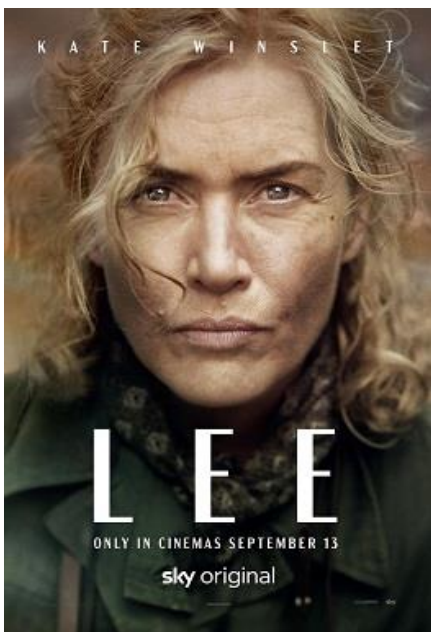
Remember - 5.30pm Monday 18 November for our AGM, followed at 6pm by our end of year Christmas celebration with the screening of director Mike Leigh's highly acclaimed film - *Mr Turner* - the untold story of the great painter JMW Turner.

Meanwhile on behalf of your committee, best wishes for a safe and peaceful Christmas. Having each of you as a member of our 2025 Arts National Northern Rivers community, would be one of the best Christmas presents ever.

 Dianne Stuart



Dianne Stuart



Kate Winslet as Lee Miller

Lee Miller Biographical Drama

Many of you may remember the excellent lecture we presented some years ago about the WW11 photo journalist Lee Miller delivered by her son Antony Penrose.

Kate Winslet stars in the biographical drama *Lee*, adapted from Penrose's book, *The Lives of Lee Miller*, published in 1985. The film was plagued by financial trouble and took eight years to make.

Miller was a stunning New York model whose career was abruptly cut short by a mis-queued advertising campaign. She then became a WW11 photographer, recording the devastation of war-torn cities and the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dachau. She moved in aristocratic and bohemian circles, and for a while was Man Ray's lover.

After the War, Miller suffered from severe clinical depression and alcoholism. She died of lung cancer in 1977, aged 70.

On average the film scored just over 70% of viewer approval. Our own brilliant film critic, Erica Light, said that she was a little disappointed with the production. While acknowledging the constraints creators encounter when converting books into film storylines, she believes that more of Miller's extraordinary life could have been included.

 Marion Pescud

October Lecture: Georgia O'Keeffe's Ground-breaking Vision

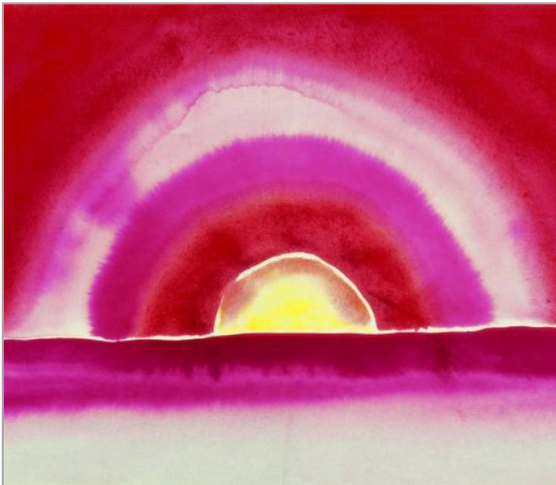
Presented by international lecturer, Dr Deborah Jenner

Deborah Jenner is enthralled with the work of Georgia O'Keeffe, and her October lecture was delivered with passion about the artist and her unique way of depicting the landscape.

O'Keeffe, the second of seven children was born in 1887 on the Wisconsin prairies. She grew up on a dairy farm, so traipsing the countryside was a long-time pastime. The family later moved to Virginia where O'Keeffe graduated from high school. From 1912 to 1914, she taught art in the public schools in Amarillo in the Texas Panhandle, where she explored the desert landscape and canyons, seeking a fresh approach of representation in her art. She was also enthralled with sunrises and sunsets, and she practised, without any preliminary sketches, to convey her feelings in watercolour.



Dr Deborah Jenner



Sunrise, Georgia O'Keeffe, 1916

O'Keeffe developed a fondness for intense, clean colours, and would not mix her pigments. She did not use detectable brushstrokes, rather providing depth to her work via colour gradations. She did not create shadows, instead respected the flatness of the paper. Her work was glowing, backlit similar to the paintings by former artists of the Luminist Movement.

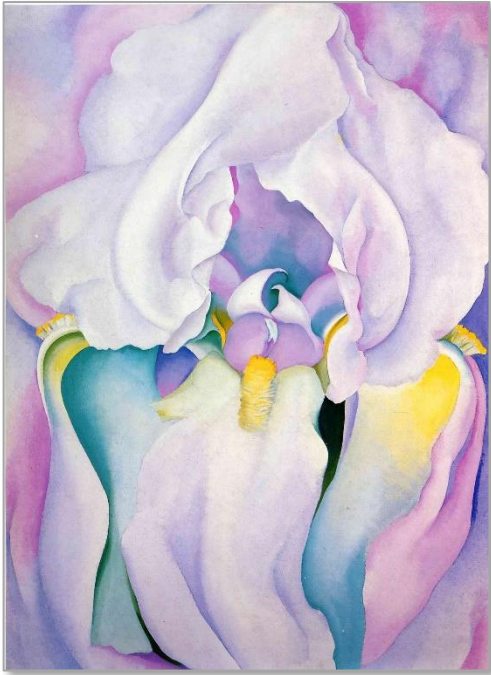
A fan of all things Japanese (she frequently wore kimonos), O'Keeffe particularly admired their compositions and use of 'empty space'. She wanted to experience art in an abstract way, so strived to suggest rather than represent a subject. She was fascinated with spaces, slits and 'nothingness', and this influenced all her artworks. She sought to divide spaces with a balance between emptiness and fullness.

In 1918, O'Keeffe moved to New York when photographer and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz offered her an exhibition and financial support, and place for her to paint. Their personal relationship flourished, and they later married. He convinced her to paint in oils as they would sell for a higher price. She did so, but diluted the paint so much with linseed oil, that she could manipulate it as she did the watercolours.

O'Keeffe created simplified images of natural things, such as leaves, flowers, and rocks. She continued using vibrant colours, but now lit her flowers from within, radiating a glow from the centre.



Georgia O'Keeffe



Light Iris, Georgia O'Keeffe, 1924

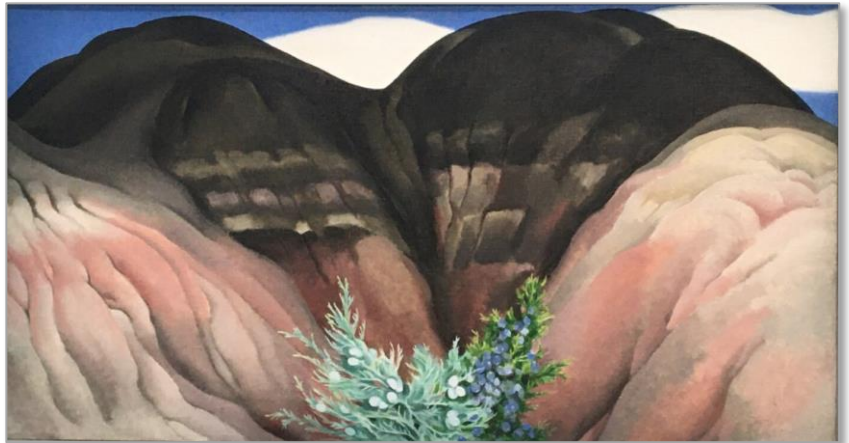
O'Keeffe liked to paint themed series. She created an extensive series of the 'Black Place', sited about 240 km distant, and a series of the 'White Place', a white rock formation located nearer to her Abiquiú house. While in Hawaii, she also painted a series of 20 sensual works based on flowers, landscapes, and traditional Hawaiian fishhooks

They were huge canvases that allowed the viewer to have a 'bumble bee' perspective. In all her work she began using shapes and colours as metaphors for the female body. It doesn't take much imagination to find a vagina in a flower, or breasts in a mountain range.

She also captured the New York cityscape, rendering her work compositionally similar to her canyon paintings. Again, there is the division of spaces – skyscrapers split by the void of roads below, a balance of substance and nothing.

In 1929, O'Keeffe traveled to New Mexico and explored the rugged mountains and deserts. She collected rocks and bones, and in her work juxtaposed them with the region's distinctive landscape architectural elements.

She moved to New Mexico in 1934, after recuperating in Bermuda following a nervous breakdown. The varicoloured cliffs surrounding the ranch where she lived, inspired some of her most famous landscapes. She later purchased an abandoned hacienda in Abiquiú, which she renovated into a home and studio.



Example of Georgia O'Keeffe's sensual desert landscapes



By 1972, O'Keeffe had stopped painting because of her deteriorating eyesight due to macular degeneration. The following year she hired a man named John Hamilton as a live-in assistant and caretaker. He was a potter and taught her to work with clay, and helped her write her autobiography. He also encouraged her to take up watercolour painting again, and pencil and charcoal drawings.

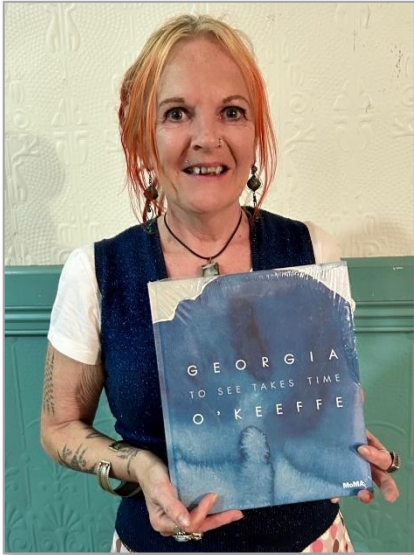
O'Keeffe died in 1986, at the age of 98. She was considered a loner with a prickly personality, however her art was recognised and applauded around the world. She has been labelled the 'Mother of American Modernism' whose work remained largely independent of major art movements.

✎ Marion Pescud

Left: Visions of Hawai'i', Georgia O'Keeffe, 1939

October Raffle

Kitty Lobert was delighted with her raffle prize of the beautiful hardcover book, *To See Takes Time*, featuring Georgia O'Keeffe's stunning watercolours.



Raffle winner, Kitty Lobert

Post Lecture Supper

Our last lecture of the year was very well patronised with about 80 attendees – 30 of them guests. Everyone enjoyed pre-presentation drinks and the light supper afterward.





Home Hosting



Chris Chaseling

Our Home Host Coordinator, Chris Chaseling is always keen to have members and friends on her books to host our presenters.

This entails collecting and dropping off the guest, occasionally with their partner, from the Byron Bay bus stop, hosting them in your home for two days and providing meals. You will also need to ferry them to and from the Monday evening lecture. Although requiring 'down time' to rest and organise their affairs, the visitors are usually quite enthusiastic to see and learn about our local area.



Sheryl Wright with international lecturer, Deborah Jenner

Sheryl Wright who provided accommodation for Deborah Jenner, enjoys the hosting engagement. She says, "it provides a chance to meet very interesting people. Conversation is always stimulating, and you get an insight into their lives and experiences that you would otherwise miss."

Sheryl claims that showing the guests around our beautiful region provides a buzz. "You get to view our locality with fresh eyes. The overseas lecturers particularly, are impressed with our way of life – our beaches, mountains and forests, our easy-going attitude, and of course, our fabulous weather!" Deborah loved the shopping.

If you would like to host a visiting lecturer next year, please email (chrischase106@gmail.com) or have a chat with Chris. You don't have to be a member of ArtsNational Northern Rivers to do so. Chris will provide you with all the hosting details and answer any questions you may have.

We urge you to volunteer for this rewarding opportunity. It's a win/win/win situation. The host benefits from the stimulating company, the lecturer enjoys a friendly stay and opportunity to learn more about our local area, and ArtsNational Northern Rivers' reputation as a warm and welcoming community continues.

Lucca: Tuscany's Renaissance Gem

Still buoyed by my recent visit to Italy, I thought I'd write one last article about Lucca's 'old town', a fabulous weave of alleyways connecting a patchwork of piazza's, palaces, churches, museums and towers, all within intact fortress walls. Jostling for space, there is also delightful restaurants, galleries, and up-market retail shops.

Originally settled by the Etruscans, Lucca became a Roman colony in 180 BCE. Since then, it has been plundered, sold, and besieged on several occasions. It has been ruled by the church and powerful families, converted into a monarchy by Napoleon, who installed his sister Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi as 'Princess of Lucca', and for time enjoyed being an independent republic. It finally became part of the Italian State in 1861.



Marion Pescud in Lucca



Bike riding atop Lucca's walls

The well-preserved historic centre is compact and one can easily explore it on foot in a day. Its cobbled laneways hold a wealth of historic, architectural and cultural treasures. I'll mention just a few of what I found the most fascinating.

The walls of Lucca are among the best preserved Renaissance fortifications in Europe, replacing the original medieval and Roman fortifications. There are four gates (portes) leading into the city. In the 1820s, the top of the walls was converted into a pedestrian promenade and public park, and is popular today for recreational activities. Each of the four sides has an avenue planted with a different species of tree.



The ambiance of Lucca's piazzas



Above and right: Craig Snyder, Palazzo Mansi National Museum

The Clock Tower (Torre delle Ore) is the tallest of all Lucca's towers, and was originally used for protection. It was acquired by the government and became a clock tower in 1390.



The Guinigi Tower

The wonderful Romanesque-Gothic Guinigi Tower has 233 steps to the top from where oak trees grow!

There are many medieval churches in Lucca, some dating back to the eighth century. The foremost is St Martin's Cathedral (Duomo di San Martino) which began construct in 1063. The chapel was built in 1484. The cathedral houses such art treasures as Federico Zuccari's *Adoration of the Magi*, Jacopo Tintoretto's *Last Supper*, and Fra Bartolomeo's *Madonna and Child* (1509). Outside, each column of the façade is uniquely different.

San Michele in Foro is built over the ancient Roman forum. It was rebuilt after 1070, being dedicated to Archangel Michael who is honoured with a 4 m-tall statue flanked by two other angels.

All of the Piazzas have a wonderful atmosphere – the perfect places to relax with a gelato and limoncello. The largest is Piazza dell'Anfiteatro, built on the site of the ancient Roman amphitheatre.

Palazzo Pfanner, erected in 1667, is now a museum showcasing art, Baroque furniture and decorative items, and antique medical instruments and texts. It has a small, but lovely garden. It is still owned and occupied by the Pfanner family.

Palazzo Mansi National Museum is another Baroque palace dating from the late 16th century. The austere exterior contrasts magnificently with the interior's original luxe furnishings, artworks, frescoes and tapestries.





Basilica di San Frediano

The Basilica di San Frediano's front façade features a huge golden 13th century mosaic representing *The Ascension of Christ the Saviour* with the apostles below. Inside is a 12th-century Romanesque baptismal font of white marble. The basin is decorated with *The Story of Moses* while the tempietto was has representations of the months of the year and the apostles.

For those planning a trip to Italy, I recommend staying in Lucca for several days. On a tiny footprint, it gives you art, architecture, history, great shopping and fabulous dining all wrapped in a wonderful ambience.

Lucca is not only a grand place to lose yourself in Medieval splendour, it's the perfect jumping point to explore the beautiful Tuscan villages and countryside. Pisa is just 20 minutes away by train, and Florence one and a half hours away.

 Marion Pescud



Enjoy ArtsNational
wherever you are



Member Bill Scholtz waiting for his
ArtsNational zoom lecture
in the Lismore Hospital

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Invitation

Following our Annual General Meeting
there will be a screening of the film Mr Turner.

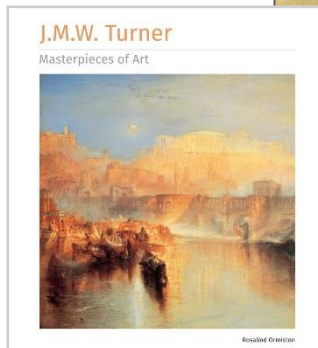
Monday 18th November 2024

- 5.30pm Annual General Meeting
(Members only)
- 6.00pm Welcome drinks
(Members and Guests)
- 6.30pm 'Mr Turner' Part 1
Interval refreshments
Raffle draw
'Mr Turner' Part 2



Raffle Prizes

This book features over 100 paintings and highlights the techniques used by Turner whose powerful sweeping strokes prepared the way for Impressionism,
plus
The Mr Turner DVD and an ArtsNational canvas tote bag.



This critically acclaimed film depicts the last quarter-century of the British painter J.M.W. Turner's life. Turner was a popular if anarchic member of Britain's Royal Academy of Arts, and was both celebrated and reviled by the public and the aristocracy.



Wishing our members
and friends a happy and
safe holiday season

