

Newsletter 26 ♦ May 2025



Country Road in Provence by Night, Vincent van Gogh, 1890

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From the Chair with Dianne Stuart

I'm pleased to advise our membership now stands at 91 – just one over our aspirational target of 90. There's no doubt many of you have helped spread the word and for that your committee is most grateful. Equally, I was delighted to see our new members and many of our guests made to feel so welcome.

Despite the rain, our re-scheduled new members' afternoon tea at Zentfelds Coffee Farm was most enjoyable. Our thanks to Rebecca Zentveld for her continued support of ArtsNational.

As a Not-For-Profit organisation, one of my responsibilities as Chair, is to ensure member contact details are accurately recorded and registered with the National Association. Consequently, members receive the Association's quarterly *Insights* newsletter which provides what its title suggests – an



Dianne Stuart

'insight' into the role of the Association and its 38 societies throughout the country in various philanthropic endeavours – especially in relation to Conservation, Support of Young Arts and Partnerships.

 Dianne Stuart

ArtsNational Affiliated Partnerships

As a national association dedicated to the arts, ArtsNational continues to build partnerships with organisations that share this passion. Members of ArtsNational Northern Rivers can take advantage of the special offers provided by these partnerships.

Art Gallery of NSW	10% off Inspire and Champion memberships for 2025. (code ARTSNAT10)
National Trust	National Trust membership just \$90 (reduced from \$130). Benefits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free entry to more than 100 places in Australia • Free entry to more than 1,000 heritage destinations around the world • Access to members-only events and tours • National Trust (NSW) Magazine three times a year • Special retail and promotional offers.
Australian Bridge Federation	A \$10 rebate on your ABF-affiliated Bridge Club membership fee
Brandenburg Orchestra	A 20% discount on A and B Reserve tickets for the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra's exquisite Baroque music performances. (code ARTSNAT25)
Musica Viva	A 10% discount on single tickets to Musica Viva Australia's 2025 Concert Season. (code VIVA25)
Opulent Journeys	Offering exciting tours for ArtsNational members and guests in 2025.
Queensland Symphony Orchestra	A 20% discount for individual concerts. (code ARTSNATIONAL)
TBIB Insurance	Australia and overseas travel insurance to age 90.

HOTA's Theatre Production of *RBG*

In April, Diana Harden, Erica Light and I enjoyed the Sydney Theatre Company's production of *RBG* (Ruth Bader Ginsburg) performed at the Gold Coast's Home of the Arts (HOTA). While there we bumped into ArtsNational member Sue Brennan, who was equally impressed with the play.

RBG is a one-woman show, brilliantly performed by Heather Mitchell and written by Australian playwright and lawyer Suzie Miller, who has written over 40 plays, including her award-winning *Prima Facie*, which was also staged in London's West End.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a trailblazer in the American legal system, and a fierce advocate for gender equality and reproductive rights. Tiny in stature, but with huge determination, she became just the second woman to be appointed to the US Supreme Court.



Diana Harden, Marion Pescud and Erica Light

she said she lived *in* grief. Always a champion of keeping politics and the judiciary apart, her only regret was that as a Democrat, she warned against voting for Donald Trump. She later apologised, not for what she said, but for giving her opinion on a political issue – something she had railed against her whole career.

Despite two bouts with cancer and several pleas to retire, she continued to serve as a Supreme Court judge until her death in 2020, aged 87. She fought valiantly to last until after the election in the hope that Hilary Clinton could select her replacement, however 39 days after her passing, Trump

Inset: Heather Mitchell as Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Above: Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Born in 1933 into a working-class Jewish family, she was the younger of two girls. Her sister Marilyn died of meningitis at the age of six, and her mother who had a profound effect on her ethics and emotional constraints, passed one day before she graduated from high school.

She married Martin Ginsburg in 1954, had her first child a year later, and enrolled at Harvard University then following year. She transferred to Columbia Law School where she graduated joint first in her class. Through all off this, she suffered sexual discrimination. She kept her outrage under control, but determined to fight for the rights of women to be treated as equal to men. She became known for her skilled oral advocacy. President Clinton nominated Ginsburg as an associate justice of the Supreme Court in 1993, where she garnered attention for her passionate dissents based on her liberal perspectives.

On reflection of her life, Ginsburg claimed she grew up surrounded with grief following her sister's death, but after her husband and soul mate passed away in 2010,



Actor Heather Mitchell and playwright Suzie Miller with Erica Light

Heather Mitchell's portrayal of Ginsburg was superb. An incredible script to learn and to execute while jumping back and forth through time. As Ginsburg's character aged, Mitchell's physical demeanour adjusted to suit. This one-woman show had one minor intrusion – when a possum scampered across the stage!

appointed Amy Coney Barrett, who asserted she would not tamper with the Roe vs Wade judgement on pregnancy termination. It was a claim she later abandoned to have abortion made illegal under the Trump administration.

As RBG creator, Suzie Miller not only chronicled Ginsburg's life, but thoroughly researched her career – her judgements and dissents, her wins and her grit in overcoming prejudices she experienced. Miller presented an intelligent and insightful overview of Ginsburg, laced with humour and empathy.

✉ Marion Pescud



Northern Rivers Chair Dianne Stuart
with host, Rebecca Zentfeld

Welcome Afternoon Tea

On 24th April, new members of ArtsNational Northern Rivers enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea at Zentveld's Coffee Farm and Roastery in Newrybar. This was a rescheduled event – the first having to be cancelled because of Cyclone Alfred's pending arrival.

While the rain tumbled down, committee members and guests enjoyed the Zentfeld hospitality and views overlooking their beautiful plantation from the verandah.



April Presentation: Sisters of Tragedy: The Brontës and their Works

Susannah Fullerton began her presentation by reading a passage from Charlotte Brontë's *Jayne Eyre*. It was a fitting introduction to the wonderful works of the sisters who have so enriched the world of literature.

Their story began with their father Patrick Brunty, a Northern Irish poet who won a scholarship to Cambridge University and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts. He changed his name to Brontë, possibly because it was 'too Irish' or to distance himself from his brother who was a radical 'United Irishman'. He married Maria Branwell in 1812, who quickly gave birth to six children – Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Bramwell, Emily and Anne.



Susannah Fullerton

The family moved to the parsonage at Haworth, Yorkshire, where Patrick was appointed perpetual curate. His wife died in 1821, and although Patrick attempted to find another wife to care for his children, all his proposals were turned down. Eventually his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Bramwell arrived from Cornwall to take charge of the family and domestic responsibilities, although Patrick charged her board for the privilege of doing so. Aunt Bramwell was stern, while Patrick was generous, providing his children with an education and unconditional love.

The four older girls were sent to Cowan Bridge boarding school where they suffered from hunger, cold, and privation at the behest of the cruel headmaster. Maria died of tuberculosis, aged 11, and Elizabeth passed away just five weeks later, aged 10. Charlotte and Emily returned to be home-schooled, but later attended Roe Head school. Charlotte loved it, but Emily did not, so after three months Anne took her place.



The Brontë Sisters (Anne, Emily, and Charlotte) by Branwell Brontë, c.1834.

Bramwell had originally included himself, but Painted his image out, leaving a ghostly void.

The children did not mix with those of the village. They were insular, and amused themselves by creating the fantasy worlds of Glass Town, Angria and Gondal. They wrote poetry and stories, making tiny matchbook-sized books with covers stitched from sugar bags (to be read by **Bramwell's** tin soldiers). They were also quite proficient artists, and adored animals.

Charlotte and Anne became governesses, and Emily a teacher but they were unhappy. They were imaginative and entrepreneurial, and realised if anything happened to their father, they would be homeless, so they formed plans to support themselves without the drudgery of their current employment. Aunt Bramwell had died leaving them each a modest sum with which they decided to open a school at the Haworth parsonage. Charlotte and Emily determined that they needed more polish

so spent a year in Brussels, honing their etiquette and languages. They opened their school, but not one pupil enrolled. They next decided to self-publish their poems under the pseudonyms of Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily) and Acton (Anne) Bell. They sold two copies! All the while they were working on novels.

Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnes Grey* appeared in 1847 after rejections from many publishers. *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* drew critical acclaim for their originality, however there was controversy about the violence and immorality in *Wuthering Heights*. *Jane Eyre* became a best seller, although some claimed it was an affront to good morals.

Only Charlotte had time to enjoy her fame. Emily had been ill with tuberculosis for some time but refused to see a doctor or take any medication. She pushed herself until she was too weak to even brush her hair. She died in Haworth in 1848, aged 30. Bramwell had passed away just three months before. Sadly, he failed at all he attempted and developed an addiction to alcohol and laudanum.

Anne also had tuberculosis. In 1849, Charlotte took her to the seaside for a respite however she died in Scarborough aged 29, only six months after Emily's passing.

Before the publication of her third novel, Charlotte received a marriage proposal from her father's curate, Arthur Bell Nicholls, but her father objected because Arthur had no money. After encouragement from her friends, she finally accepted and they wed in 1854. She too suffered from tuberculosis, but when she became pregnant so severe was her morning sickness, she died from starvation and dehydration in 1855, just three weeks before what would have been her 39th birthday.



The Brontë Sisters



Haworth parsonage (now Brontë Parsonage Museum)

Patrick Brontë outlived his wife, and all six children. He had produced three geniuses who changed the Victorian literary scene with their novels and poetry. Charlotte, Emily and Anne were shy but determined girls – feminists who shocked the genteel society with their narratives, taken from their own experiences and woven with tremendous imagination.

Susannah Fullerton delivered her presentation with facts and lively anecdotes. The Brontë's story was tragic, their health was frail, their determination stoic. Though their lives were short, Charlotte, Emily and Anne succeeded in overcoming many challenges – including just being women!

✎ Marion Pescud

Susannah Fullerton, Author

Recognised as being one of Sydney's leading authorities on 19th and 20th century authors, plus a very popular Australian lecturer, Susannah Fullerton's presentation on the *Brontë Sisters* lived up to its promise to be as entertaining as her 2022 book, *Great Authors and the Cats who Owned them*. Her book reveals amongst a number of fascinating pet stories, that Charles Dickens had several pets during his lifetime, including a raven

called 'Grip' who found literary fame in the novel, *Barnaby Rudge*.



Susannah Fullerton

While there is no mention of significant pets or cats in the passionate novels of the Brontë sisters, Susannah spoke about the continuing speculation regarding the tragic early deaths of all three sisters. Was it TB, simply grief, or because they spent their short lives drinking water contaminated from the local graveyard? Or could a cat be involved?

Susannah has a free online monthly newsletter titled *Notes from a Book Addict*. It currently has over 5,000 subscribers, each discovering how they too can become book addicts! In 2017 Susannah was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her services to Literature.

 Wendy Edwards



April Raffle

Susannah Fullerton presented the winners with their raffle prizes.

Stephen Stocker received a boxset of seven books authored by the Brontë Sisters, and Elaine Oliver won a signed copy of Susannah Fullerton's book, *Brief Encounters*.



Post-Presentation Supper



Susannah Fullerton with her home host, Chris Chaseling



Presenter, Susannah Fullerton, happily joined members and guests for refreshments following her lecture on the Brontë Sisters.





Relocation to the A & I Hall

Attending the presentation was Cass Lloyd, the smart lady who proposed that lectures should be relocated from Byron Bay to the A & I Hall in Bangalow.

Shortly after the society was constituted 25 years ago, first chair Shirley Nelson, and secretary Nan Pulsford were concerned that the Society membership was dwindling, and because they wanted to provide the best experience possible, it was decided to relocate the lectures to the A & I Hall where there was easier parking, and they could serve alcohol.

Local Regional Art Galleries

With a wealth of local talent and some fabulous regional galleries, we have a treasure trove of art to appreciate. This month I'm visiting the Tweed Regional Gallery in its beautiful rural setting in Murwillumbah, and the Northern Rivers Community Gallery, housed in historic buildings in central Ballina.

Tweed Regional Gallery

2 Mistral Road, Cnr Tweed Valley Way,
Murwillumbah South



Tweed Regional Gallery

The Tweed Regional Gallery was relocated from a restored Federation-style family home on the bank of the Tweed River to its current site in 2004. It occupies a modern, architecturally award-winning building which allows magnificent views from every window. It was extended in 2006 to provide additional exhibition space to showcase the Gallery's collection of Australian portraits and landscapes.

The Gallery has seven exhibition spaces, and is proud of its exclusive exhibitions featuring the work of regional and national artists. It presents a dynamic program of touring exhibitions ranging from the historical to contemporary. The permanent collection houses an array of portraits representing Australia's diverse community.



Left: Margaret Olley in her home studio

Within the Tweed Regional Gallery is the Margaret Olley Arts Centre, a multi-million-dollar extension built to honour the artist and her legacy. Officially opened in 2014, the Centre features many of Margaret Olley's paintings and a faithful and fascinating recreation of some of the rooms from her home studio in Paddington, Sydney, photographed on the morning she died by photographer Greg Weight. Featuring original architectural elements and filled with fabulous clutter, including over 20,000 items she collected over many years, the rooms reflect the eclectic character of the artist.

Adjacent to the Margaret Olley Art Centre is the Nancy Fairfax Artist in Residence studio, a live-in studio available to visual artists living and working in Australia.

The gallery shop presents an extensive range of quality gifts and handcrafted items by nationally local artists and designers, and merchandise reflecting the collection and visiting exhibitions. You can experience the breathtaking panoramic view of the Tweed River and Wollumbin (Mt. Warning) from the café - Apex Dining, which offers a combination of rustic French patisserie and modern cafe plates. The opening hours are 10am - 4pm Wednesday to Friday, and 9am - 4pm on weekends. Reservations are recommended.

The Tweed Regional Gallery has approximately 70,000 visitors per annum who not only enjoy the quality exhibitions, but can partake in a range of complementary public programs and workshops available for all ages and abilities. The Gallery is open from 10 am – 4 pm, Wednesday to Sunday, and caters for those requiring wheelchairs.

Exhibitions at the Tweed Regional Gallery in May and June

Until 26 October 2025

Sharing the National Collection: Monet, Olley and Morandi

The Sharing the National Collection initiative will see major works of art from the National Gallery of Australia's collection exhibited across regional and suburban communities.

The Comfort of Home

Works from the Tweed Regional Gallery collection that explores home and connection to place as a sanctuary.

Until 22 June 2025

Finding Harmony in Hope | Minghua Xiang

By transcending the confines of traditional Eastern and Western aesthetics, Xiang looks to extend beyond the canvas and offer a glimpse into a future guided by cooperation and inclusivity.

Until 3 August 2025

Spiders of Paradise | Maria Fernanda Cardoso

An ongoing photographic series featuring the tiny Australian *Maratus* spider. It includes acclaimed video work *On the Origins of Art I-II* (2016), bringing together science, art and nature.

Until 10 August 2025

Gunimaa-Source | Debbie Taylor-Worley and Sophie Taylor

This joint exhibition by mother and daughter artists from matriarchal Gamilaraay/European heritage, visually expresses the source of their feminine power which they explore through a cultural lens.

Key Rhythm | Tamara Mendels

Working within her own processes and self imposed boundaries, the Northern Rivers artist uses painting and sculpture to explore gesture, line and surface.



Birrahgnooloo,
Debbie Taylor-Worley, 2025



Wildflowers and pears, Margaret Olley c. 1973

Until 31 August 2025

Painting Life: Margaret Olley and Works from the Collection

Celebrating vibrant still life paintings by Margaret Olley (1923–2011) in the Tweed Regional Gallery collection, together with contemporary responses to Olley's home studio re-creation.

Until 28 September 2025

Breast Plates | Luther Cora

A personal photographic series by Bundjalung and Yugambah Nation artist Luther Cora that delves into the intricate layers of history, culture, and colonisation impacting Australian Aboriginal peoples.

27 June 2025 - 9 November 2025

Worlds Around Us | Sammy Hawker

Employing a range of image-making techniques this work explores interspecies dialogue, material presence and how a practice of curiosity cultivates empathy and care.

Northern Rivers Community Gallery

44 Cherry Street, Ballina

Established by the Ballina Shire Council in 2007, the historic former Ballina Municipal Council Chambers now houses the Northern Rivers Community Gallery (NRCG). The gallery has four exhibition spaces to accommodate in-house curated programs and touring exhibitions, which showcase various styles of art and are generally rotated every eight weeks.



Northern Rivers Community Gallery

The Gallery has a range of cultural programs with diverse events, public programs and residencies.

There is a café, and a gallery shop featuring locally handcrafted jewellery, giftware and greeting cards. All purchases from the shop supports local artists and crafts people.

Affiliated with the NRCG is *Ignite Studios*, a community-engaged facility housed in the near-by former Ballina Fire Station. It provides multidisciplinary creative workshop spaces, and hosts community events from pop up exhibitions to film screenings. Also resides within the complex is *Ignite Ceramics*, a six-wheel throwing studio and kiln firing facility launched in 2023.

The aim of the NRCG and Ignite creative hub is to promote critical thinking, artistic exploration and social cohesion within the Northern Rivers community. It provides artists, makers and audiences with creative opportunities, and allows them to exhibit and sell their work. This is done via subsidised arrangements – a unique scheme to the region.

The NRCG is wheelchair accessible, and is open Wednesday, Thursday, Friday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 9.30 am to 1.00 pm. It caters for community and school groups, but bookings must be made in advance.

Exhibitions at the NRCG in May and June

1 May - 22 June 2025

Den Inception | Immortal Soil

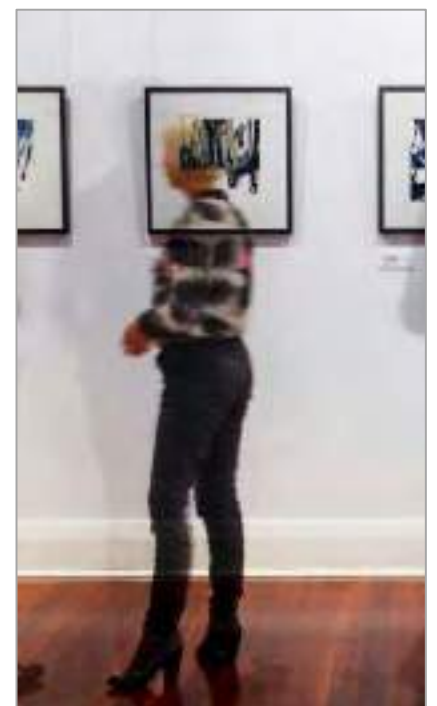
This exhibition creates a home within the gallery using botanical elements and soundscape to bring the outside in and give the viewer a sense of wild nature, recharge, reverence, and retreat.

Distant Friends | Peter McLean

Distant Friends encompasses relief printed portraits based on social media photos of the artist's friends as a basis to create a series of highly pixelated and innovative abstract portraits.

I hope this helps | Liv Enqvist

This is a series of textile meditations where you can stop, pause and take a deep breath. This exhibition offers a soft, embroidered space inspired by mindfulness and the art of being present.





I will not regret hope, Belinda Smith

Leaf and Flower | Robyn Barron

Leaf and Flower showcases a selection of the artist's recent photographs alongside some of her award-winning work.

Exhibitions 26 June - 17 August 2025

I will not regret hope | Belinda Smith

This exhibition presents a series of small slip cast female busts, glazed and patterned to express **Brenda Smith's** personal and hopeful optimism.

Wagtail at the Picture Palace | Robin Saunders

An exhibition of relief monoprints on Japanese Kozo paper where regional artist **Robin Saunders**, imagines a wagtail's nostalgic flight through the colours and patterns of an art deco picture palace.

✂ Marion Pescud

May Presentation: Whodunnit? Agatha Christie's Life and Crimes in London

Simon Whitehouse gave a fabulous and entertaining lecture on the life of Agatha Christie and her work, with a focus on her time in London. Truly an expert on the subject, Simon delved into the little-known aspects of the **author's** life, and the inspiration behind her stories and characters.

He began the presentation in the voice of Hercule Poirot with an excellent delivery in the famous Belgian **detective's** accent, challenging the audience to follow the forthcoming clues to discover the real Agatha Christie.



Simon Whitehouse



Portrait of Christie. 'Lost in Reverie', by Douglas John Connah, 1894

Agatha Christie (née Miller) was born in Torquay, Devon in 1890, the third child of a wealthy upper-middle-class family. Her mother thought girls should not learn to read before the age of eight, so the governess duly apologised, saying "I'm sorry Ma'am, Miss Agatha has taught herself to read!"

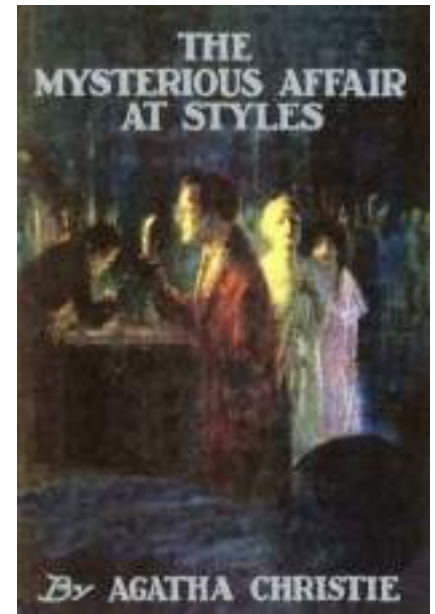
Agatha married Archibald Christie in 1914 and had one daughter. During the war while Archie was serving in France, she joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment working as a nurses' aid. She later studies pharmacy at London's Worshipful Company of Apothecaries. During both World Wars, she served in hospital dispensaries, acquiring a thorough knowledge of the poisons that featured in much of her work.

Christie had six consecutive rejections, before her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, featuring detective Hercule Poirot was published in 1920. She became a prolific writer, leaving a legacy

of 66 detective novels, 14 short story collections, poetry and plays, including the world's longest-running production, *The Mousetrap*, which has been performed in London's West End since 1952. She also wrote six novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott.

Christie's mother died in April 1926, causing Agatha to spiral into a deep depression. In August that same year, she was devastated when Archie **confessed that he'd fallen in love with** his golfing partner, Nancy Neele, and after a heated argument with Archie in December, Christie disappeared!

Her car was discovered above a chalk quarry with an expired driving licence and clothes inside. Eleven days later, she was found at a hotel in Harrogate, Yorkshire. What had happened? Was it a publicity stunt; an attempt at revenge by framing her errant husband for murder; or had she suffered a nervous breakdown? Afterward, she refused to comment and the event remains an unsolved mystery.



Christie and Archie were divorced in 1928, and on a trip to Iraq in 1930, she met her second husband, archaeologist Max Mallowan, 13 years her junior. She accompanied Mallowan on his expeditions, and her travels inspired several of her novels.

Christie's books not only provided her readers with a snapshot of social history recorded over half a century, but also created two hero sleuths, Private Detective Hercule Poirot, and village spinster sage, Miss Jane Marple. Poirot has been the only literary character ever to receive an obituary in *The New York Times*.

In 1971, Christie was made a Dame by Queen Elizabeth II for her contributions to literature. She also established charities to assist 'old people' and children.

Christie said of herself – "My chief dislikes are crowds, loud noises, gramophones and cinemas. I dislike the taste of alcohol and do not like smoking. I do like sun, sea, flowers, travelling, strange foods, sports, concerts, theatres, pianos, and doing embroidery." **She** died from natural causes in January 1976, aged 85, and was buried in the nearby churchyard of St Mary's, Cholsey, Oxfordshire.

Agatha Christie has been acknowledged as the best-selling fiction writer of all-time, her novels having sold more than two billion copies world-wide. An interesting postscript is that since 2020, reissues of Christie's Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot novels by Harper Collins have removed passages containing descriptions, insults or references to ethnicity.

Simon's lecture ended with a lively set of questions and answers from an appreciative audience – all answered in full and without hesitation. Well done Simon, on such an engaging presentation.

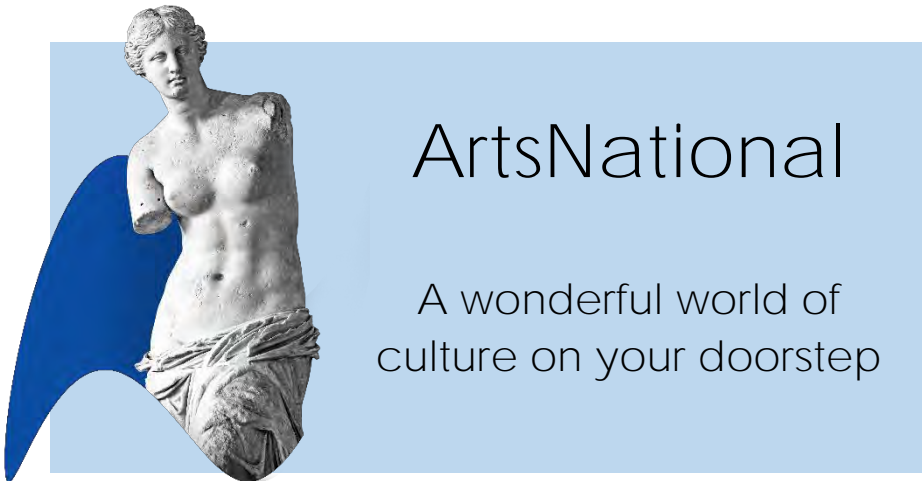
Post-Presentation Supper

Members and guests enjoyed their post-presentation supper and a good chat following Simon Whitehouse's lecture.



Simon Whitehouse with home-hosts, Diana and Peter Harden





Wendy Edwards

Sneak Peek at our June Presentation

For a considerable time, Japan was a 'closed country' resulting in its garden design developing as a unique art form that now contributes significantly to attracting millions of tourists.

The autumn colours are spectacular, and in springtime Japanese people to carry out the centuries old practice of Hanami: Flower Viewing by holding picnics and parties under the beautiful cherry blossoms inside both parks and gardens.

Hanami is about enjoying the transient beauty of flowers (Wabi-Sabi) and is believed to have started during the Nara period (710-794) and was originally limited to the elite of the Imperial court. The practice then spread to the samurai before finally becoming part of the lives of the general population.

The Blossom Forecast, announced each year by the Japanese Meteorological Agency, forecast is watched carefully because the flowers only last a week or two.



However, because of climate change in both 2024 and 2025, the cherry blossoms arrived earlier than usual. Experts are concerned that climate change may contribute to the threatened extinction of a popular variety of cherry tree in some parts of the country. The 2024 autumn colours also arrived much later than normal, and for the first time in 150 years the summit of Mount Fuji was still without snow early in November.

As an expert on the Art of the Japanese Garden, Arts National's June lecturer Kathleen Olive, will investigate the unique historical roots and philosophies that make Japanese gardens such a unique art form and an ongoing drawcard for so many visitors. Kathleen is one of Australia's best known cultural tour leaders and also holds a PhD in Italian studies.

 Wendy Edwards

Vincent Van Gogh: A Genius Almost Lost

The world can applaud Johanna Van Gogh for the legacy of extraordinary artworks left by her troubled brother-in-law, Vincent.

Johanna was 27 when she married Vincent's brother and art dealer, Theo. High hopes of marital bliss were short-lived because Theo was suffering from terminal syphilis and died just six months after Vincent took his own life in 1890.



Johanna Van Gogh

She was left with a baby and over 400 of Vincent's artworks. To that time, he had only sold three paintings. Almost an unknown in the artworld, he was considered a failure – an opinion to which Johanna refused to subscribe.



Johanna with her son, 1980

She sold her Paris apartment and relocated to Bussum, a small village near Amsterdam in the Netherlands, where she operated a boarding house to support herself and young son, Vincent Willem. She was determined to preserve Vincent's paintings and gain recognition for his talent and unique vision. She began organising small exhibitions and released the contents of correspondence between Theo and Vincent. The letters revealed the brother's very close relationship, but also exposed the passion and emotional turmoil of Vincent's life. They showed the struggle and the complexities of his character and the mental anguish he endured. While she strived to have Vincent's work appreciated, she also wanted to demonstrate the support and encouragement he received from his younger brother, Theo.

In 1905, Johanna organised a major retrospective of Van Gogh's work in Paris. It was a resounding success, and garnered the attention of art critics, museums and collectors. Accolades echoed around the world, the legend of Vincent was born, and his work finally viewed as genius.

Johanna remarried, but her new husband was a 'depressive', so her life still contained challenges. She remained close to the Van Gogh family, particularly to her ex-sister-in-law Wil, who sadly, was diagnosed with mental illness and spent the last years of her life institutionalised.

By 1912, Johanna was a widow again. She became involved in feminist causes, and was one of the founding members of a women's socialist movement, the Amsterdam Social-Democratic Women's Propaganda Club, an organisation which aimed to improve working-class education and women's working conditions.



Theo and Vincent, both painted by Vincent van Gogh, 1887

Although ill with Parkinson's disease, she continued right up to her death to manage the sales of Vincent's works. She died aged 62, in 1925 in her country home the Netherlands.

Today, Vincent Van Gogh stands as one of the most influential figures in art history, and his paintings are among the most valuable and admired. All thanks to Johanna, who fought tirelessly – sometimes against grating opposition – to ensure the artist received the recognition he deserved, and the world was aware of his genius.

Right: Wheatfield with Cypresses, Vincent Van Gogh 1889



The Van Gogh brother's graves

In 1914, as a final tribute Vincent and Theo, and the strong and lasting bond between them, Johanna moved Theo's remains from Utrecht to Auvers-sur-Oise, interring them next to Vincent's grave with matching tombstones. The graves are now a pilgrimage site.

 Marion Pescud

Prepare yourselves for one of the most anticipated presentations of the year – a riveting lecture by Professor Maria Chester on 14 July.

Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera

Colour, passion, lust, tragedy . . .

Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera had all these things, and they combined to leave a unique artistic legacy that still reverberates today.

Inspired by nature and Mexican folk art, Frida Kahlo produced some of the most recognisable and sometimes disturbing artwork of the 20th century. Married twice to the prominent Mexican artist Diego Rivera, theirs was a tumultuous artistic relationship. On the occasion of their second marriage, Frida was purported to have said that **she would only agree to marry him if they didn't have sex!**

In 1922, Diego participated in the founding of the Revolutionary Union of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors, and later that year he joined the Communist Party. His murals reflect his political leanings by way of a unique style based on large, simplified figures and bold colours.



Kahlo and Rivera wedding portrait, by Victor Reyes, 1929



Meanwhile, despite living with significant pain, Frida is remembered for approximately 200 bold, vibrant paintings, primarily self-portraits (featuring her distinctive monobrow), depicting pain and passion. The private and artistic lives of these two artists are both complex and compelling.

July's ArtsNational lecture by Maria Chester promises to be one of our most popular. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and having lived in Venezuela for 20 years before relocating to the Scottish Borders, Maria Chester is well-placed as an art historian to explain the fascinating, but volatile relationship between Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera.

 Wendy Edwards

Left: Portrait, Diego and Frida, by Lois Rivera