



Winter, 2026


ARTSNATIONAL
Blue Mountains
Connect, Enrich, Inspire

Newsletter

Lectures 2026



Di Bentley, Chair

Last month, the ArtsNational Association held its annual face-to-face conference in Sydney.

The Association is the Sydney-based central hub that supports the work of ArtsNational societies across Australia.

The conference's purpose is business reporting and, importantly, the exchange of ideas and learning from ArtsNational societies countrywide.

It also celebrates community programs such as Young Arts, and awards are presented for the most innovative and successful programs funded by ArtsNational societies.

Young Arts in the Blue Mountains is funded by our raffles, and for the second consecutive year, the excellent work of Katoomba Public School was recognised.

In 2025, its Indigenous dance program was awarded first place nationally, and this year its participation in the Kids with Cancer "Write a Book in a Day" project was highly commended.

This program involved two groups, one of nine and one of seven children, each working to write and illustrate an original story in just one day.

Not only did they learn about co-operative effort, but proceeds from their participation went to Kids with Cancer. Congratulations, Katoomba Public School!

An interesting feature of the Conference was the keynote address by ArtsNational patron Julian Bickersteth AO, a well-known and respected art conservator.

Julian spoke about 'Slow Looking', which means intentionally spending meaningful time with one artwork.

Amazingly, museum surveys have shown that the average time a viewer spends at one painting is eight seconds!

As Julian said, never before have we had so much access and so much distraction.

He suggests we need to relearn symbolic literacy and discover how elements such as light, texture and shadows reveal themselves in a painting.

This learning is said to enhance aesthetic appreciation, reduce stress and create stillness, clarity and joy.

Meaning takes time; culture creates value – 'Slow Looking' builds both.

Di Bentley
Chair

AGM and Christmas Party
Fairways, Leura
04 December, 2026

5 June 2026

Steven Miller

Dogs in Art - 'tails' of how dogs have changed the course of Australian art

This lecture will explore how dogs have truly been the best friends to artists, not only as subjects, but also as companions and champions.

3 July 2026

Marty Sharp

Is this the real life? How writers and artists have challenged our perceptions of reality

From Plato onwards, artists have been inspired to create other worlds that inspire our imagination. This lecture will explore how art tells us more about how we view ourselves and what we really want.

7 August 2026

Mark Cottle

Masonry, Manuscripts and Music: An Inspirational Journey Through Medieval England

This lecture will explore the architecture, manuscript illumination and music of medieval England, showing how they are among the greatest achievements of any period of English cultural history.

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Seeking Expressions of Interest

Have you wondered how ArtsNational lecturers are chosen, or who selects their topics?

Have you noticed that we have six UK lecturers and three from within Australia each year?

How does that work? Where do the UK lecturers stay while they are on tour?

Do they do any sightseeing around the Blue Mountains while they are here?

How is the catering after the lecture arranged, and who looks after the Facebook page, updates the music and PowerPoint display before each lecture, or puts together the Newsletter?

Who selects the raffle prizes, and who creates badges for new members?

Who handles the accounts and maintains the membership list?

If you are new to ArtsNational (or maybe not so new), these questions and others may have crossed your mind.

The answers, and any other queries you may have, will be revealed if you join the committee.

The Blue Mountains society is in a sound financial position, and



the committee members are hardworking and experienced in their roles.

Over the years that ArtsNational has operated in the upper mountains, connections have been made, proformas established, operating procedures honed, and processes streamlined.

The committee meets before each lecture to ensure everything is in place so the next lecture runs as smoothly as possible.

The committee meets nine times a year, with each meeting lasting approximately two to three hours, followed by the

AGM, always held in December, which then doubles as an end-of-year celebration.

Several members have been on the committee for well over a decade; it's time for renewal and refreshment.

If you enjoy ArtsNational and think this is something you may like to explore, to meet fellow members and spend more time with lecturers (particularly if you have a home with a spare bedroom and a guest ensuite), please email our Chair, Di Bentley, at bentley.di@gmail.com to let her know of your interest.

Sharryn Ryan



ARTSNATIONAL
Blue Mountains

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Wentworth Falls School of Arts

For more information: adfas.org.au or find us

