



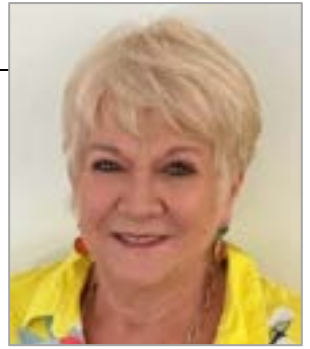
Newsletter 33 ♦ August 2026



Flight from Pompeii

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Cas Veriga

From the Chair with Cas Veriga

Here we are almost at the end of August with Spring well and truly on the way – my favourite time of the year.

We have another three presentations until the end of our year, and they are all very exciting:

- 14th September - The use of naturalism in the work of Faberge. Just his name evokes a huge amount of pleasure!
- 19th October - Opium: Seduction, Greed, Art. The title alone intrigues me.
- 16th November- a quick AGM and then something special from our committee followed by our Xmas party with raffles and yummy nibbles.

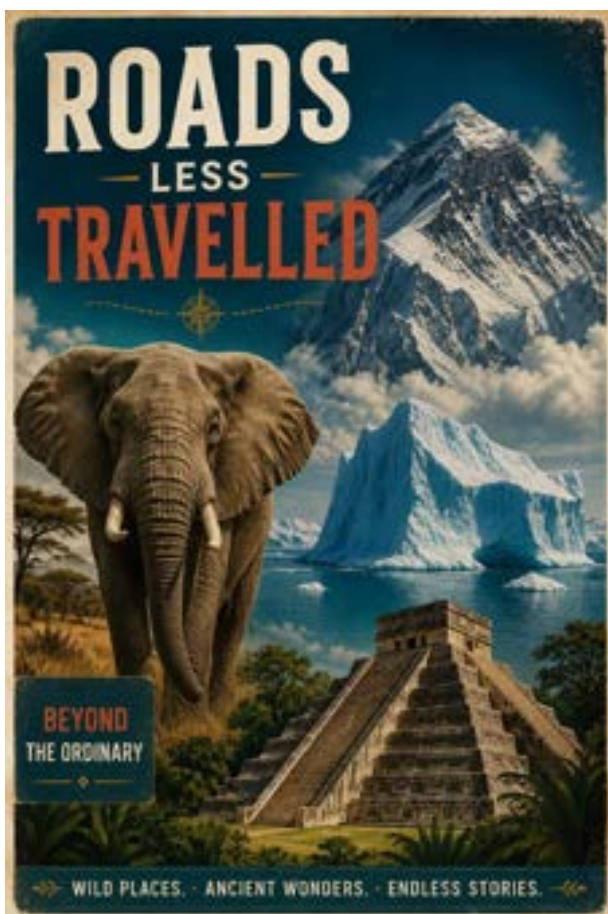
I'm sure you'll agree it's a year packed full of intriguing and varied topics and they were all not to be missed.

I'm just back from Sydney, and viewed the Archibald Exhibition while there. This year has many fantastic and talented entries and it's better than ever. I also love the young Archies and was astounded at how talented our young artists are – brilliant. Catch it when the exhibition is touring; it's well worth it.

I trust you'll enjoy this information packed newsletter, created by our clever Marion, and look forward to seeing you at our remaining 2026 functions.

Warm regards,

Cas Veriga



Roads Less Travelled

We know our members are a well-travelled lot, many adventurously veering away from the popular tourist spots to explore the lesser-known places of our beautiful world.

Following our AGM and prior to our special end-of-year supper on 16 November, the committee has decided to share a few of its own bold journeys and unique experiences.

Their travel exploits range from the sublime and the ridiculous, the frightening, magnificent and simply beautiful. Stories will be accompanied with a photographic slide show.

Please join us for an evening of merriment and delicious fare as we engage in stories sure to pique memories of your own travel experiences.

Adding to the cheer will be bumper Christmas raffles.

July Presentation: Who's Afraid of Ai Weiwei: Repression and resistance in recent Chinese Art

Our international speaker, Barry Venning introduced Ai Weiwei as an extraordinary man from an extraordinary culture. As one of China's most famous conceptual artists, he is a beacon for democracy and human rights. Through his political sculptures, photographs, and public works, he has become a commentator on Chinese repression.



Barry Venning

Born in 1957, Ai Weiwei grew up in a harsh environment in northern China due to his father being exiled for his poetry criticising the government. After 16 years and following the death of Mao



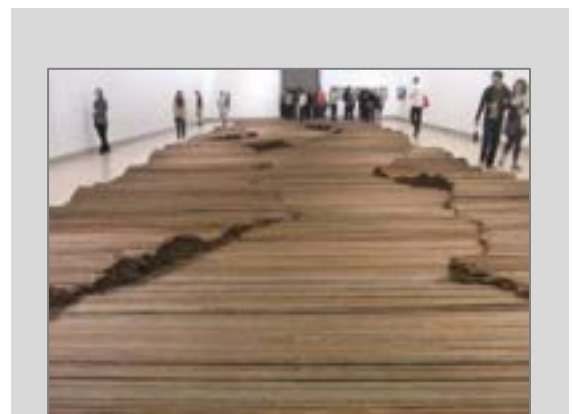
Ai Weiwei

Zedong, the family returned to Beijing where he studied film animation. He was one of the founders 'the Stars' an early avant garde art group who opposed the authority-approved images of Chinese Socialist Realism. The cohort of young men used provocative humour and pop art to oppose the government's rigid control on the country's culture. They were under constant suspicion of treason and were forcibly disbanded in 1983.

Some of the artists moved to Beijing East Village, a place of poverty and squalor. They engaged in 'performance art' to demonstrate the suffering of those living under the regime rules, but after five years the government closed and destroyed the Village.

Ai lived in New York for much of 1990s where anti-authoritarian and oppositional art flourished. On his return to China, he refused to conform and risked everything to defend freedom of expression. The police have beaten him, kept him under house arrest, bulldozed his newly-built studio and subjected him to surveillance because of his threat to their 'harmonious society'. In addition to his dissenting art works, he investigated government corruption and cover-ups, particularly the school collapse during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

In 2005 Ai started to communicate via a blog, which generated 100,000 view a day, but the Chinese government shut it down in 2009. He turned to Twitter, but it too was banned in 2011 and shortly after he was detained without charge for 81 days following his arrest at Beijing airport for 'economic crimes'.



*'Straight', Ai Weiwei, 2008-2012
Both a stylized representation of
An earthquake and an image of
its effects, this a statement
about governmental corruption
and negligence.*



ARTSNATIONAL
Northern Rivers



*'Study of Perspective Tiananmen Square', Ai Weiwei, 1995
Ai sticks his middle finger up at Tiananmen Square Gate,
the site of the brutal student massacre in 1989.*

The 'Free Ai Weiwei' street art campaign was organised by Hong Kong artists and supporters. Slogans such as 'Who's afraid of Ai Weiwei' and 'Free Ai Weiwei' were stuck on pavements, pedestrian overpasses, and buildings all over Hong Kong. There was even a mobile 'post-it note protest' which popped up in new locations each time the police destroyed the current mass. Ai was eventually released because of the global outrage and diplomatic pressure from democratic countries.

Ai Weiwei is an inspirational figure to people both in the West and in China. His struggle for freedom of

expression is led by his idea that art can have the power to highlight poor practice and change society. He now resides in Berlin and continues to exhibit all around the world.

✉ Marion Pescud



Opulent
JOURNEYS

Journeys that Take
You to Far Horizons

Sicily and Sardinia

Hidden Gardens, Classical Ruins and Vibrant Culture

2nd-13th
May 2027



ArtsNational
Members receive
\$200
discount

Designed by renowned Sardinian-born landscape designer Carlo Gabriele, this tour includes access to private estates, engagement with local designers and residents, sumptuous Italian fare, and shopping hotspots. We'll be immersed in the history and culture of Sicily and Sardinia through their most beautiful gardens, parks and historical sites.

Price per person (land only)

\$12,985 per person, twin share (land content only). Single supplement is \$1,595 per person. A deposit of \$1,000 per person is required.

Please contact Opulent Journeys for full itineraries and to make bookings: <https://opulentjourneys.com.au/>

July Raffle

There were three winners in our July raffle. Coincidentally, friends seated together Barb Troy and Marion Andrew won first and second prizes – Barb delighted to receive a book authored by Ai Weiwei, and Marion a book on NASA's Space Shuttle Program which was the subject of last month's presentation.



Barb Troy and Marion Andrew



Dorothy-May Power

Our third winner was Dorothy-May Power who received a Monet 3D jigsaw donated by Dianne and James Stuart.

July Home-Hosts



Cas Veriga, Barry Venning and Stephen Tongue

International lecturer Barry Venning was the guest of Cas Veriga and her husband Stephen Tongue at their home in Clunes.

While staying with Cas and Stephen, Barry was enthralled with our region's stunning vistas and was thrilled to see the whale migration.

Barry travels widely throughout Britain and gave his hosts an enlightening perspective of the UK art scene. He also co-presents lectures with his cartoonist brother Harry who was a guest speaker at Northern Rivers last year.

Cas says that hosting is a terrific way to share knowledge and enjoy the company of a lecturer in an easy and relaxed way. She highly recommends it and urges members to 'give it a try'.





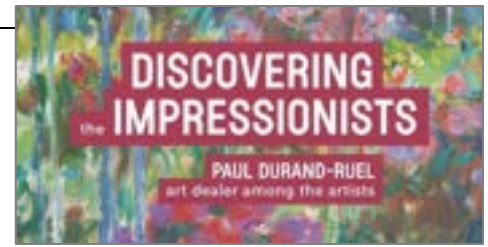
July Post-Presentation Supper



Those attending Barry Venning's presentation, gathered afterward to enjoy refreshments and a chat.



Geelong Regional Gallery: Celebrating its 130th Year with a Landmark Impressionist Exhibition



Discovering the Impressionists: Paul Durand-Ruel, Art Dealer Among the Artists is the most ambitious international exhibition in the Gallery's history. It has partnered with various organisations and businesses to create a 'Geelong Experience'. This begins with a curated stay and events at Crowne Plaza Geelong, the region's newest premium hotel ideally located on the waterfront.

Other collaborative events include progressive dinners at several local restaurants, wine masterclasses, a sensory masterclass combining French wine and art with Graham Sutherland, an artwork and fragrance pairing immersive workshop with Geelong perfumer Aysha Hansen, plus a fragrance creation masterclass by Aysha Hansen Fine Fragrances where participants create their own 30ml custom fragrance. All of the above include entry into the Gallery exhibition.

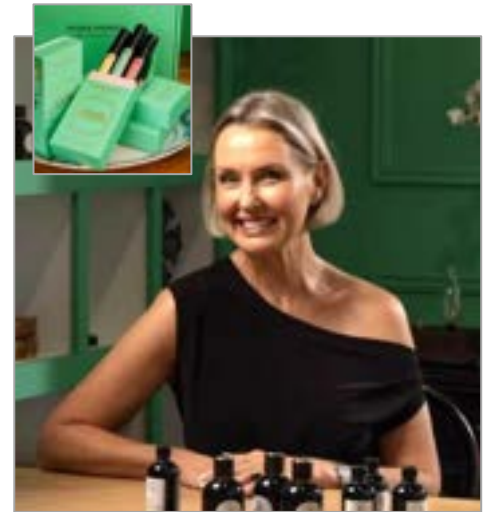
Dr Ted Gott, Senior Curator of International Art at the National Gallery of Victoria, will present a lecture on the work of impressionist artists Berthe Morisot. A conversation with exhibition designers Peter King and Simone LeAmon will reveal the ideas behind their designs, and formative moments from their curatorial and design careers. There are also some French Language tours,

The exhibition itself incorporates five gallery spaces and presents more than 70 paintings from across two generations of Impressionist artists. There are works by

Monet, Renoir, Morisot, Pissarro André, Moret d'Espagnat, Loiseau, and Maufra. The majority are sourced from private collections in France.



Left: Georges d'Espagnat



Geelong Perfumer, Aysha Hansen



Wine guru, Graham Sutherland

The Exhibition runs until Sunday 11 October. Gallery Tickets are \$29, with a concession price of \$25 available on Tuesdays. Members pay \$22 and children \$15. To avoid disappointment, it is recommended to purchase tickets online via: trybooking.com/DJDMG.

 Marion Pescud

Kunsthaus Art Museum, Zürich

Zürich's Kunsthaus is Switzerland's largest art museum, holding incredible collections from medieval masterpieces to cutting-edge contemporary installations. It is a showcase of Swiss artist's creative output, but also contains extraordinary international works.



The Kunsthaus Moser Building



The Kunsthaus 'Extension'

The Kunsthaus resides in two buildings facing each other across Heimplatz square – the original 1910 neoclassical 'Moser' building on one side, and the huge modern stand-alone 'extension' of glass and naked concrete on the other which was completed in 2021. Entry is via the 'Extension' building, and the original site is accessed by a connecting tunnel running beneath the square.

The 'Extension' consists of vast exhibition spaces plus smaller more intimate rooms. The size of the new building allows an indulgence to hang works sparsely, thus magnifying their presence and importance. By contrast, the Moser Building which houses the older collections is a warren of richly filled rooms.

The Kunsthaus is not without controversy. On loan are artworks from WW11 arms dealer Emil Bührle, who supplied both Allied and Axis powers, and illegally sold arms to Pakistan and other countries after the war.

The main criticism arises from concerns that the artworks were stolen or obtained under duress by the Nazis from Jewish collectors. In 2023, a panel of impartial academics were engaged to research the Nazi-era provenances, however they resigned in protest over the way the history was presented.

Like all large galleries, the Kunsthaus requires time – possibly days – to view all the collections. My time was limited, but I certainly gained a better insight and appreciation for Swiss artists.

 Marion Pescud



Marion Pescud in the Kunsthaus 'Extension'
Sculpture by Italian artist Giuseppe Penone



Paintings by Swiss artist Henry Fuseli, 1793-1794

August Presentation

Pompeii and Herculaneum: Reconstructing the final day

International guest speaker James Renshaw presented an outstanding lecture on the ancient Italian cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum and their demise beneath the fury of Mt Vesuvius in the year 79 AD.



James Renshaw

James' incredible knowledge of the history, culture, geology of the area, the archaeological sites and the processes of their restoration was impressive. He divided the talk into five parts, beginning with the life and activities of those living around the bay of Naples at that time.



Mt Vesuvius and Pompeii excavation site

Port Julius at Misenum was one of the two main bases Roman naval bases. It housed the western fleet commanded by Pliny the Elder (AD c.23 - 79), who perished in the disaster. Baiae was a holiday resort town favoured by the upper classes, and Capri was the acting seat of Government when the temperament in Rome became unpalatable. Pompeii was a city of trade with a population of between 10,000 and 12,000 inhabitants, while the smaller Herculaneum was the closest to Mt Vesuvius and had a population of 4,000 to 5,000.

After 700 years of pent-up fury, Vesuvius's eruption began with a whimper. People had time to escape, and many did, however for most it just piqued their curiosity. Pliny the Younger (AD 61 – c.113), the elder Pliny's nephew, wrote:

'In the early afternoon, my mother pointed out a cloud with an odd size and appearance that had just formed ... Watching from that distance it was not clear from which mountain the cloud was rising, although it was understood afterwards to be Vesuvius. The cloud could best be described as more like an umbrella pine than any other tree, because it rose high up in a kind of trunk and then divided into branches. I imagine that this was because it was thrust up by the initial blast until its power weakened and it was left unsupported and spread out sideways under its own weight.'



A Plinian eruption (Alaska in 1990)

The Vesuvius eruption was not a lava flow, but an outpouring of pyroclastic materials – the type since labelled a ‘Plinian eruption’. They eject columns of volcanic hot gases and debris such as pumice. Pompeii was in line with the prevailing wind, and during the initial 18 hours, the ash reached a level of 2.8 metres. Pumice reached final depths of over four meters.



Plaster casts of victims buried beneath the ash of Pompeii

Pompeii

Archaeology has revealed that Pompeii was a busy agricultural and trading hub. The city also hosted artisans, taverns, bathhouses, and brothels, reflecting a bustling urban life. Preserved household items provide insight into social structures, commerce, and daily routines, including bakeries with loaves still in ovens at the time of the eruption.

Exquisite fresco and mosaic murals depict the dress, habits and social hierarchy, while painted walls are adorned with advertisements, election propaganda and graffiti. The wit and irreverence in the graffiti are amusing, and it's satisfying to know that the larrikin mindset has not altered too much over the centuries.

Herculaneum

Herculaneum was still under reconstruction from a major earthquake when Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, burying it under pyroclastic flows up to 25 metres deep. Unlike Pompeii, the volcanic outpour carbonised organic materials,

Those who left it too late to escape would have died from the gases before they were buried. To date, about 1,150 bodies have been found - 394 in the pumice level and 653 in the ash level. There is about another 100 undocumented.

Herculaneum was a different story. It was closer and in direct line of several pyroclastic surges and flows which rapidly smothered everything. Most of the people escaped, but several thought they could seek shelter with the warehouses along the sea front. About 350 bodies have been found so far, all but 32 in the beach area.

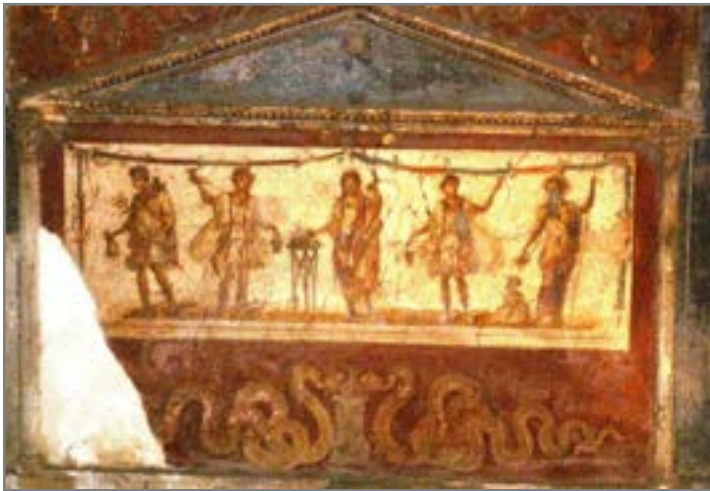


An example of Pompeii's political graffiti



'The Lady of the Rings' Tests reveal this was a woman, probably from a wealthy Herculaneum family

preserving almost everything to provide an exceptional archaeological record. The advanced society even had a septic drainage/refuse system. Herculaneum seemed to be a more genteel city than Pompeii and the inhabitants perhaps more affluent.



Magnificent frescoes with the colours still intact

Both Pompeii and Herculaneum became central to the development of modern archaeology. They are now UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Both are still being excavated with new discoveries a regular occurrence. Scientists are currently using AI to decipher some recently-found scrolls.

Pompeii covers 157 acres, with only 65% currently excavated. It was rediscovered in 1748. Slow archaeological progress is due to a tight rein on Government funding.

Herculaneum was rediscovered in 1709 during the digging of a well, with systematic excavations beginning in 1738. It extends over 50 acres, but only 25% has been excavated because the modern-day area of Ercolano sits above it.

The tragedy of Pompeii and Herculaneum has left a treasure trove of art, information and understanding. The audience greatly enjoyed the lecture, were impressed with James Renshaw's knowledge, and appreciative of his professional and often witty delivery.



*Mosaics. Alexander the Great (Herculaneum)
and Neptune and Amphitrite (Pompeii)*

August Home-Host



Jane and Tony Butler with James Renshaw (centre)

Jane and Tony Butler hosted our August lecturer James Renshaw, both enjoying his company immensely. "He was great fun", claimed Jane, "and we had so much to talk about".

James is a huge nature fan, and staying at Jane and Tony's lovely country property near Clunes was such a good fit. They took him to see the whale migration from both Lennox Head and Byron Bay, and he was also thrilled to see a wallaby up close on a cliff track.

Jane and Tony provided the quintessential Northern Rivers experience, and James couldn't have been happier.

August Raffle

The evening's lecturer James Renshaw, presented Stephen Stocker with the raffle prize book, *Escape from Pompeii*, by Steven Tuck.

The tome is an excellent follow on from the lecture on the eruption of Mt Vesuvius, in which James gave us an insight into the life, culture and human foibles of the people who were caught in the disaster of 79 AD.



James Renshaw with raffle winner, Stephen Stocker



Timeliness

Please note that once the lecture begins, we must close the doors. If you arrive late, it is probable that you won't be able to gain entry. We sincerely hope this does not occur, so please ensure you are in the A&I Hall before the 6.30 commencement. Better still, arrive at 6.00 to enjoy a chat and welcome drink.

August Post-Presentation Gathering



As always, members and guests gathered for refreshments and conversation following the lecture.



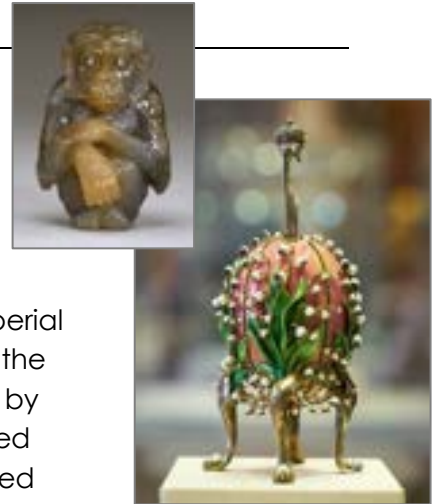
Save the Dates!

Monday 14 September – Presentation by Clare Blatherwick

The Use of Naturalism in the work of Fabergé

Ah Fabergé! The name conjures up images of fabulous jewellery, Imperial Easter Eggs and 'objects deluxe'. It was the 'objects deluxe', often in the form of carved animals, that were commissioned by royalty, admired by collectors and often exchanged as intimate gifts. The numerous carved animals and flora were admired and sought after by a world fascinated by naturalism, Eastern aesthetics and luxurious materiality. It was realism meets fantasy. Carved from semiprecious stones the works combined extraordinary craftsmanship and amazing realism. They were more than decorative curiosities, and are today held in museums around the world and in the private collections of royal families.

September's Arts National lecture by Clare Blatherwick will focus on these lesser-known Fabergé experiments. Clare Blatherwick calls Scotland home and is an expert jeweller with over 25 years of experience in all aspects of the jewellery industry.



Monday 19 October – Presentation by Amanda Herries

Opium: Seduction, greed and art



Used to quieten and calm agitated minds, the addictive drug opium would appear to have little in common with the beautiful red poppy flowers that come from the same plant. Yet artists and writers have long been attracted not just to beauty, but also to mind altering substances that influence or enhance their art.

In the early 1900s Picasso and his circle indulged in 'opium nights' and a decade later the Parisian avant guard were indulging in the practise. The elaborate opium smoking ritual was part of the fascination that Picasso and his contemporaries had with the foreign and exotic. By the 1920s the Surrealists were using drugs to experiment with free-form expressionism while. This became one of the foundations of the Surrealist movement.

October's Art National lecturer, Amanda Herries will look at the influence opium has had on the creation of great art, and the negative side effects the drug may have had. Having lived in both the UK and Japan, Amanda was a curator at the Museum of London from 1978-1988, specialising in the decorative arts from 1714 until the present. She also has a special interest in Oriental/Western cross-cultural and artistic influences.