

Yarra News

Spring 2021 Vol. 32 No. 3

From the Chair

In the first newsletter this year I wrote that we hoped for a better year in 2021 than 2020 and indeed I think that, overall, we have had a better year. Nevertheless, 2021 has not been without its challenges as we have had to move some lectures from a 'live' format onto an online one. The online lectures were excellent, and I hope you were able to see them. If you are having any difficulty accessing the online lectures please contact me and I will try to assist.

The move to the Glen Eira Town Hall auditorium has proven to be positive in terms of new IT facilities, social distancing and ease of getting a cup of coffee. Service of food that is not individually wrapped is still not allowed, however, we have substituted chocolates and biscuits in an attempt to make up for the loss of our signature chicken sandwiches.

A word about membership fees and renewal in 2022. Membership fees are normally \$175 per single member and \$320 for two people living at the same address. Due to the disruption in 2020 when we were able to have only one 'live' lecture in the year, we reduced fees to \$75 in 2021 to compensate. This year we have saved money on lecturer's accommodation expenses, transport and catering but it has cost more to have our Australian lecturers in the Glen Eira town hall auditorium. Most of our 2021 lecturers have come from Victoria keeping costs to a minimum while keeping standards high. For 2022 we will again reduce fees but to \$150 for a single member and \$290 for a couple in anticipation that we will return to international lecturers from May 2022 onwards. If this proves to be optimistic we will aim to keep the reduced membership fees into 2023.

We intend to produce a single card brochure for the first half of the 2022 programme, as we did this year, followed up with the remainder of the year in a brochure once the constraints under which the programme will operate becomes clearer. It is likely that international lecturers will again struggle to travel to Australia in 2022 and our programme will again be all Australian. I think you will agree that the standard of lectures in 2021 has been exceptionally high and I look forward to maintaining this standard in 2022 as we have such a wealth of excellent Australian lecturers.

Communication in a pandemic has proven to be challenging as we rely heavily on email in order to let you know of changes to lectures or venues. A big thank you to all those members who have read the emails. Please check that ADFAS Yarra emails are not going into your junk mail folders.

Our effort in relation to the support of Young Arts has continued apace despite the pandemic. We have made donations to ANAM for a music prize and to assist in their relocation costs, to University College to support a creative arts scholarship, to Craft Victoria, to RMIT for an arts prize, to FLOAT a project to support indigenous artists and the Patricia Robertson Fund to support art curatorship. There are several other worthwhile projects that we also hope to support later in the year. All of this is the result of members generous donations and their support of the special interest afternoons and excursions where all profits, and no losses, are devoted to Young Arts. A sincere thank you for this support.

Our special interest afternoon in June with Dr Christopher Marshall on the Great Collectors was well received. Another special interest afternoon is coming up in September with Sylvia Sagona talking on Desperate Housewives and The Belle Epoque that I am sure you will enjoy. The cost is \$45. In addition, a full day excursion to Gardens in the Dandenongs is planned for October 14th at a cost of \$100. We do hope that you can join us. Bookings for both events open on 20th of August through Trybooking.

Carol Johnston,
ADFAS Yarra Chair.

Excursion: The Gardens of Olinda and Wandin

Thursday October 14, 2021

8.00am for 8.15 prompt departure - 4.00pm approximate time

Cost: \$100 (includes coach travel, admissions and lunch)

What could be better on a beautiful spring day than a trip to the Dandenong Ranges? Join us on a visit to Cloudehill Gardens and Nursery in Olinda and the Coopersmith garden in Wandin North plus a picnic lunch in the George Tindale Memorial Garden in Sherbrooke.

Cloudehill Gardens and Nursery are set on 5 acres of historic woodland gardens. The gardens were originally a flower farm created in the 1920's for the cut flower market and florist trade by Jim Woolrich. The farm continued until the 1960's when it ceased operating, largely because of the 1962 bushfires that swept through the Dandenong Ranges. The farm languished for the next 20 years until in 1992 it was taken over by Jeremy Francis. Jeremy began developing Cloudehill designing a new garden around the long-established plants - rows of beech trees, hedges of rhododendrons, plantations of deciduous azaleas and bulb meadows from bulbs imported from the Netherlands by Jim Woolrich in the 1930's. Cloudehill's design derives from Italian renaissance gardens, English Arts and Crafts and contemporary meadow gardening. It is divided into a number of 'rooms' by stone walls and hedges. The gardens include a spring shrub walk, bluebell woodlands and extensive bulb meadows.

The Coopersmith garden is situated on 10 acres which until 25 years ago was swampland. The then owners built 4 one-acre lakes to catch the water and divert it back into Little Stringy Bark Creek which runs along the back of the property. The lakes gave the water clear passage to the creek, and this in turn produced areas of dry land. In the 1990's the property changed hands. The new owners were passionate gardeners, and travelled around Australia collecting the trees, plants and seeds they needed to create their garden. In 2008 Brett and Kat Coopersmith became the new owners. With their young family, they were excited to expand on the amazing work of the previous owners and make the changes needed to fit with their lifestyle and their own vision for the garden. Today we see a garden with a bit of everything for all to enjoy including a cactus garden, maples, crepe myrtles, native bush, swamp cypress and water lilies.



Cloudehill



Jeremy Francis, Cloudehill



Coopersmith Garden

Our coach will leave from Central Pak, Malvern East (opposite 9 Kingston Street) at 8.15am sharp. There is ample all-day parking in the surrounding streets.

Bookings open on Trybooking at 10.00am Friday 20 August 2021. If you have Trybooking issues text Carol Johnston on 0409 861 254.



Tapestry 1. Panoramique polyphonique

When designing a tour for practitioners of this wonderful art I was delighted to be able to select the most acclaimed suites of tapestries in Europe to view and savor, but I always knew that the sojourn must finish in Aubusson, a small town in the heart of France in the Creuse district. Here tapestry has been practiced over the centuries to become synonymous with a way of life. Skills passed from the hands of one generation to another, tapestry weaving had been like breathing or eating - it had sustained the very fabric of existence.

Before my first tour in 2011, I wrote for information to Susanne Bouret, a renowned conservator of textiles and Aubusson resident, as I had not been there for over 30 years. She wrote back: "The poor economic climate and a lack of promotion of the art of tapestry in general over the last twenty odd years have led to a decline of Aubusson/Felletin tapestry. As a result, there are few weavers/weaving workshops left in Aubusson/Felletin. Many other weavers have reached retirement age and due to a lack of orders/interest in the weaving of tapestries, a younger generation has not followed in their footsteps. Gone are the days of the manufacturers/workshops that employ a team of weavers".

As the sons and daughters of weavers grew up they had moved away from the town to seek training and employment in industries that would earn them a living. But things were about to change, and I have had the privilege, over the past ten years, of witnessing the regeneration of the tapestry industry in Aubusson.

In 2009 Aubusson and Felletin (another small weaving town located a ten-minute drive away from Aubusson) tapestry received the title of Intangible Cultural Heritage from the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO. With funds raised by the community, the Cité Internationale de la tapisserie et de l'art tissé was created. It was a local and national effort to try and save this art form, which for too long had been neglected by local authorities and to some extent by the weavers themselves.

The Cité appointed a Director, Emmanuel Gérard, and a curator, Bruno Ythier. A new training course for weavers was launched in November 2010 (the former having been closed down due to lack of funds and interest) for which 10 students were accepted and, most importantly, an international prize competition was established for artists to create design cartoons for tapestries to be woven by the local ateliers. Once woven, they became part of the contemporary collection of the Cité and a showcase for encouraging designers and architects to place orders for Aubusson tapestry. Now in its tenth year, it has revitalised both the industry and the community.

The former art school building has been transformed into an innovative, dynamic gallery space that shows the Cité collection from Mediaeval to Modern and breathes new life into the work by displaying it in a way that contextualises and celebrates tapestry through the ages. As well, it is home to the now growing collection generated by the design competition, a group of daring works that stretch the imagination and reflect the talent of the weavers.

Traditionally, tapestry development in France has relied on organised, commercial studio activity, where the weaver is in service to the designer or painter of an artwork. Tapestries are woven on horizontal, or basse lisse (low warp looms). So, it's not surprising that some of the current breakthroughs in contemporary tapestry have been made through this formalised process rather than just through the work of individual artists who weave their own work.

Tapestry 2. Tapis Porte



The images show a few of these innovative works selected by the Cité as prizewinners in their international competition and woven in the ateliers in Aubusson.

Tapestry Panoramique Polyphonique, Atelier A2, weavers France-Odile Crinière and Martine Stamm, designer Cécile de Talec, 1st prize 2011.

Cécile de Talec has designed a light and sound environment in the form of a circular tent. This architectural design presented huge challenges for the weavers because of its sheer size and the requirement for it to be double sided. Light reflective yarns were used, so that the viewer enters a shimmering blue universe within which the sounds of nature can be heard on entry.

Tapestry 2. Tapis Porte - Detail



Tapestry 3 Nouvelles Verdures d'Aubusson

Tapestry Tapis-Porte, Atelier Catherine Bernet, designers Vincent Bécheau and Marie Laure Bourgeois, 3rd prize 2012.

This three-dimensional tapestry doorway (8m. long x 2 m. wide, with a door height of 2.80 m.) was woven in one continuous piece with slits left in its formation to allow the door to be raised vertically from the horizontal floor path. The imagery is comprised of a complex calligraphic collage of all the languages of the world, symbolising the search for unity and peace amongst nations through constructive dialogue. This feat of weaving took over two years to complete.

Tapestries Nouvelles Verdures d'Aubusson, Weaver Nadia Petkovic, Atelier de la Lune, designers Goliath Dyèvre and Quentin Vaulot, 1st prize 2013. This exquisitely woven suite of five tapestries measuring 180 x 72 cm each, is a commentary on genetic modification, and reflects an environment that is mutating. Each plant selected corresponds to five 'greening protocols' that enable them to be more resistant to climate change. Genetic manipulation is highlighted by the use of ceramic forms that overlay the tapestries and imply disruption to the intrinsic serenity of the 'verdure', questioning our contemporary relationship to nature.



Tapestry 3 Nouvelles Verdures d'Aubusson - Detail

Send contributions by email to: **Editor:** Jan Bennelick, jangeo@bigpond.net.au
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Forthcoming Lectures

Lecture 7

Thursday 26 August 2021

Glen Eira Town Hall Auditorium

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

From Birrarung to Yarra and back again

Alisa Bunbury

Alisa is the Grimwade Collection Curator at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne. From 2002-2017 she was Curator of Prints and Drawings at the NGV and prior to that was Associate Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs at the Art Gallery of South Australia. In 1998 after completing a Master's degree and Postgraduate Diploma in Art Curatorial Studies, both at the University of Melbourne, Alisa was the Harold Wright Scholar at the British Museum. Alisa has researched and curated exhibitions on numerous topics and now specialises in Australian colonial art.

In this lecture Alisa will explore the changing visual representations of, and attitudes to, the Yarra River in Melbourne's first century. Melbourne was established at the waterfall that separated freshwater from salt, an important cultural site and crossing point for members of the Kulin nation. The river, named the Yarra by settlers, immediately became a feature in depictions of the developing city.

Lecture 8

Thursday 30 September 2021

Glen Eira Town Hall Auditorium

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

Madame de Pompadour and the politics of porcelain **Sylvia Sagona BA (Hons), M-ès-Lettres, Dip Ed**

Sylvia's fascination with the Fine Arts led her to abandon her undergraduate medical studies and enrol in Honours Classics and French at the University of Melbourne. The French Government awarded her a three-year scholarship for post-graduate work in Aix-en-Provence where she gained her Maitrise-ès-Lettres in Comparative Art and Literature plus qualifications in Sociology. Sylvia is an internationally recognised specialist on 19th century French society.

In this lecture Sylvia will discuss Madame de Pompadour, the 'divine Marquise', who rose from obscurity to become Louis XV's mistress, sole confidant and power behind the throne, cleverly maintained her power over the king in her role as arbiter of taste. As his roving eye strayed over younger women, she left the routine side of being a royal mistress to the more energetic and reinvented herself as the unofficial minister of the arts. The grateful Louis awarded her vast sums to embellish Paris with magnificent mansions, and gardens. She masterminded the porcelain Manufacture de Sèvres and oversaw its designs which subtly celebrated her intelligence and beauty throughout Europe. The lecture will trace how she carefully controlled her image through the manipulation of artists such as Boucher and writers such as Voltaire

Lecture 9

Thursday 11 November 2021

Glen Eira Town Hall Auditorium

10.00 am & 1.30 pm

John Keats: Romantic Poet

Susannah Fullerton OAM, FRSN

Immensely popular and a great favourite, we are pleased to welcome Susannah back to Yarra to conclude our 2021 program. Susannah majored in English Literature at the University of Auckland and then completed a post-graduate degree in Victorian fiction and prose at the University of Edinburgh. Her passion for, and expertise in, literature is wide ranging, and this combined with her training in drama ensure that her lectures are both informative and entertaining. Susannah has been President of the Jane Austen Society of Australia (JASA) since 1996. Considered an expert in her field, Susannah has published extensively on Jane Austen and lectured widely both in Australia and overseas.

She manages a popular online book club, Literary Reader's Guides, and circulates a free monthly newsletter, Notes from a Book Addict. Susannah is a member of the Dylan Thomas Society of Australia, the Australian Bronte Association, the NSW Dickens Society, and is Patron of the Kipling Society of Australia. Susannah has worked on literary prize committees, organised literary conferences and is a most experienced tour leader of literary travels to Europe, the USA and New Zealand.

In this lecture Susannah recites some favourite poems and recounts the tale of the short but amazing life of John Keats. Keats battled a difficult childhood, terrible financial worries, the loss of a loved brother from TB and then the knowledge that he himself would soon die from the disease. Amidst all this, he created some of the greatest poems in the English language. His life was tragically short, but Keats was blessed with a 'teeming' poetic gift which triumphed over both his personal suffering and savage criticism. The sensuous loveliness of his poems demonstrates his cherished belief that Beauty and Truth are one and the same.

Special Interest Event - Two Lectures by Sylvia Sagona

Wednesday 29 September 2021

Glen Eira Town Hall Auditorium

1.30 pm

Cost: \$45

Desperate Housewives: French Bourgeois Women and the Velvet Prison of the Boudoir

In her first lecture Sylvia will look at the tightly policed upbringing of the future young bourgeois bride whose limited horizons often led to neurosis and 'wasting illness'.

The medical profession discovered new 'female' syndromes such as hysteria, kleptomania and 'green disease' which proved how unsuited women were for anything but bearing children. It was not until the development of the first Department stores such as the Bon Marché and the invention of shopping that women could walk free in the city. Meanwhile a woman's only confidants were her diary, her piano, and the pampered pets whose condition mirrored her own. Sylvia will extract the real meaning behind the images of a seemingly idyllic life in the work of the 19th century French Salon and Impressionists artists such as Beraud, Renoir, Stevens, Manet, Degas and Caillebotte as well as in the posters, advertisements and bottle labels of the time.

Nice and the Invention of the Riviera: Painting the Belle Epoque

Sylvia's second lecture will investigate the importance of light in all its forms - in art, health and tourism at the dawn of the 20th century.

The chilly British discovered the sunny charms of the Riviera in the writings of Tobias Smollett in 1755 when he was recovering from pneumonia. By the time Nice was handed over to the French under Napoleon III complete with railway networks to bring in the crowned heads of Europe, including Queen Victoria and the Russian Tsars, it had become a winter haven for the European elite, boasting neo-Moorish-Gothic-Russian follies set in sumptuous gardens. However, it was the blinding blue of the Bay of Angels and the vibrant colours of the hills and perched villages which attracted the artists of the Belle Epoque who were enchanted by the vibrant luminosity of the landscapes. It would be here that Matisse, Renoir, Picasso, and Chagall would create their masterpieces

Bookings open on Trybooking from 10am 20 August. If you have Trybooking issues text Joanna on 0438 370 461.