

“PAINTING AND DRAWING LANDSCAPE”

SUMMARY OF UNIT TO BE HELD IN TERM 4 2019

This U3A Class is to be aimed at beginners and more advanced students, who wish to explore the art of painting and drawing landscapes, in a style of their own choosing. We are surrounded by many wonderful landscape and seascape images on the Mornington Peninsula and whether individuals choose to paint ‘plein air’ (direct from nature), or to work from photographs or sketches indoors, is up to them. Hopefully, (weather permitting) we will as a Group, venture outdoors and paint something direct from nature, but in most instances, we will work in the Art Room.

LANDSCAPE IN ART HISTORY – without making this part of the Course too theoretical, we will look at some of the artists and styles of landscape painting at different times during the course of this Unit. This is a fascinating area of study and for those who wish to delve further into the topic, I would encourage them to go to their local library and find books on landscape painting and the work of landscape painters. A few artists who produced interesting and perhaps wonderful images depicting landscapes are:

- **John Constable** – 1776 – 1837 – English – who was an excellent landscape painter of the early 19th Century. Painted the “Haywain” and beautiful studies of skies and clouds. Constable aimed to record exactly what he saw, rather than to romanticise or portray the subject in a mythological or biblical setting, as was the practice of 18th and even many 19th century artists. If he included figures, buildings and objects in his compositions, landscape remained the principal focus of attention. He wanted to express the atmosphere and weather conditions, by carrying out many painted studies outdoors, although his larger works were painted in his studio. His studies were painted very freely outdoors or ‘plein air’, during the spring, summer and autumn months and he wanted to retain some of the spontaneity of those studies in his larger and more complex paintings. Constable’s “Haywain”, also known as “Landscape: Noon” 1821, was exhibited and acclaimed in Paris in 1824 and it later greatly influenced the French Impressionists.
- **William Turner** – 1775 – 1851 – English – was a ‘Romantic’ painter who aimed to express the great forces of nature, as in his “Rain, Steam and Speed” 1844, that showed a glimpse of the Great Western Railway, forging its way through a misty or blurred landscape. He produced large paintings of canals, boats and buildings of Venice, in the style of Claude Lorraine and Canaletto, which were exact in detail, but his expressive more abstract paintings were far ahead of his time. In his attempt to capture the forces of nature, he once had himself tied to the upper section of a ship’s mast, during a storm and he later painted the ship being tossed around in the storm, with the turbulent water and waves creating an abstracted impression. Turner worked with thinned oils and transparent watercolours, which expressed his visionary interpretations of landscape.
- **The French Impressionists** –
- **Claude Monet** – 1840 – 1926 painted rapidly and often the same subject at different times of the day or in different seasons e.g. “Rouen Cathedral” aiming to capture the fleeting effects of light and atmosphere. He also made

numerous studies of the lake, trees, Japanese style bridge and waterlilies in his garden, culminating with his massive “Water Lilies” paintings (finished in the Spring of 1926) and now displayed in the Orangerie Museum of Art.

- **Eduod Manet** – 1832 – 1883 – although sometimes considered a French Realist painter, his style became more free and his vigorous treatment of the sparkling interplay of light, colour and texture went far beyond representational subject matter. Manet painted a wide range of subjects, including “The Bar at the Folies-Bergere”, which conveys the appearance of an instantaneous snapshot. Landscape was less of a focus for Manet, but he also painted ‘plein air’ at times.
- **Pissarro** – 1831 – 1903 – Almost exclusively a landscape painter, Pissarro used pure unmixed colours to produce sparkling, atmospheric effects.
- **Auguste Renoir** – like Manet, Renoir painted a wide range of subject matter and often depicted the joyous and beautiful aspects of the world. His earlier works were in the Impressionist style, but later his compositions became more controlled and solid. Renoir was a great colourist and he instilled into his work appealing atmospheric effects, such as in “Luncheon of the Boating Party”.
- **Post-Impressionism** – 1880 onwards
- **Paul Cezanne** – 1839-1906 – painted a variety of subject matter, including landscape. Cezanne was a great draughtsman and was less concerned than the Impressionists with trying to capture light and the fleeting moment. He analysed form and broke images down to their elementary shapes, such as in “Mountains, L’Estaque” 1880. Cezanne became an inspiration to younger artists, including Picasso and is often referred to as the ‘Father of Modern Art’.
- **Vincent van Gogh** – 1853 – 1890 – was born and grew up in the Netherlands, but developed his mature style in France. Was a devoted ‘plein air’ painter of landscapes, but also painted other subject matter indoors, such as portraits and still life subjects. Van Gogh famously developed his highly individual style, with thick often swirling brush strokes, which conveyed his emotional and often tormented mental state. Of his landscapes, his painting “Starry Night” is one of his most famous works, with its multiple moons and stars.
- **Early Australian Landscape Painters**
- **Eugene von Guerard** – 1811 - 1901 – was one of many early Australian (most born in England or Europe) landscape painters, all of whom were impressed by the unique landscapes of Australia, but who tended to paint what they saw in an English or European manner, such as with pale skies and wispy looking trees. Von Guerard was born in Vienna and became a very accomplished artist with a special interest in landscape painting. He arrived in Melbourne in 1852. While working in the ‘diggings’ of the Ballarat mine fields, he recorded his first observations of the new natural environment and made a sketch for his first painting depicting the Australian landscape, “Warrenheip Hills near Ballarat” 1854. He did many sketching expeditions over the next 15 years, not only in Victoria, but to Tasmania and New South Wales. Many of his sketches formed the basis for large paintings that were carried out in his studio. He gained an understanding of geological structure, the shape of gum trees and colours in the landscape.
- **Louis Buvelot** – 1814-1888 – was born in Switzerland, art trained there and in Paris. In 1865, Buvelot settled in Melbourne and devoted most of his 23 years

here to the painting of landscapes. He had an extensive knowledge of French landscape painting, particularly of the Barbizon School, and an appreciation of Art based on ordinary scenes and ordinary people, rather than mythology and history that typified paintings of the Romantic Movement. He painted en plein air (out of doors), even though he generally finished artworks in his studio. Unlike Von Guerard, who travelled great distances to study and sketch landscapes of Australia, Buvelot confined himself to the outlying districts of Melbourne and the readily accessible areas of country Victoria. He was a devout 'plein air' painter, even though most paintings were finished in his Studio. Tom Roberts, (a great Australian Impressionist painter), claimed that Buvelot was 'the Father of Australian landscape painting'.

- **Australian Impressionist Painting – The Heidelberg School -1885**
onwards. During the late 1880's a number of artists gathered in the Box Hill district, firstly at Mentone and later in the Heidelberg area of Melbourne, particularly during the summer months. They painted outdoors, or 'plein air', following the French Impressionists and tried to capture the essence of the Australian landscape/seascape, by painting the atmosphere and light conditions more brightly than had been previously portrayed. The Heidelberg School was not a formal training institution, but rather than an exchange of ideas and the meeting of minds, painting styles and providing encouragement for enthusiastic young artists. The core group of artists were: Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Frederick Mc Cubbin and Charles Conder, but it expanded to include Walter Withers and David Davies.
- **Tom Roberts** – 1856 – 1931 – was born in England, but migrated to Australia when he was 13 years old. He spent four years studying in Europe and when he returned to Australia in 1885 he enthusiastically introduced other artists to the ideas of French Impressionism. Tom Roberts recognised the possibilities of applying 'plein air' painting theories to the painting of the Australian landscape, which is often flooded with light and colour. Roberts became known as the 'Bulldog', for his courage and tenacity. His versatility and ability to make a faithful reproduction of the subject before him, in an Australian Impressionistic manner can be seen in his lively landscapes like "Wood Splitters" 1885, which was the first of his scenes of rural labour. Roberts painted street scenes, such as "Bourke Street, Melbourne" 1885, "Bailed Up" 1895 and "The Breakaway" 1891. Roberts and other painters of the Heidelberg School marked a breakthrough and the establishment of a real Australian style and character in painting.
- **Sir Arthur Streeton** – 1867 – 1943 – inspired by Robert's enthusiasm for Impressionism, he depicted nature in a new and individualistic way, with wonderful paintings such as "Purple Noon's Transparent Might" 1896 and "Grey Day on the Hawkesbury River" 1896. Streeton's paintings had a lasting impact on other Australian artists.
- **Frederick Mc Cubbin** – 1855-1917 – was considered a 'bohemian' individual, who was quieter, introspective and more thoughtful than others in the group. His early landscape paintings had historical elements, with the bush being peopled by pioneers, swagmen and other Australian characters. His painting "The Letter", 1885, was the first of his paintings to be set in the local bush, which was probably partly painted outdoors and completed in his studio, with the figure being added afterwards. It was a precursor to the first of his

major paintings, “Lost” 1886, which has romantic overtones, but at the same time showed an attempt to capture the visual truth of the Australian bush.

- **Charles Conder** – 1868-1908 – arrived in Australia at the age of 16 years and became a good friend of Tom Roberts. Although their painting styles differed, they both loved painting outdoors. Roberts’ work always referred to actuality, while Conder’s reflected the decorative elements of landscapes and he was eager to capture the relationships between shapes and colour, producing emotional responses. Paintings such as “Coogee Bay” 1888 and “Spring Time” 1888, show his interest in patterns in nature.

The Heidelberg School included many other artists, such as David Davies, Walter Withers, Jane Southerland and Clara Southern. The Heidelberg School had a sudden impact on Australian Art, but its fading was more protracted. Roberts painted for another 30 years and Streeton continued to paint even longer. Both artists continued to earn respect and admiration for their talents, but their artistic vision became dimmed. They aimed to recapture the excitement that had illuminated their paintings of the 1890’s, but ideas that had been daring and innovative became orthodox.

There were many artists of the 20th Century and still in the present, of the early 21st Century, who developed their own individualistic styles of painting landscape, such as:

- Russell Drysdale, Arthur Boyd, Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, John Percival, James Gleeson, Fred Williams, John Olsen, Ian Fairweather, Jeffrey Smart, Lawrence Daws, John Passmore and many others.

Painting in general, during the 20th Century, became progressively more abstract, as was the trend for painters internationally. Despite this trend, their work still retained references to the distinctive character of Australian landscape, such as in the abbreviated forms and colours of Fred Williams’ work, where trees became little marks or blobs in the landscape – e.g. in his “Upwey Landscape” 1965. The broad brushstrokes and abstract impressions in John Passmore’s “Red Ochre” painting could have been produced by a Spanish or American artist, but its inclusion of earthy colours like yellow and red ochre, make reference to the colours of the Australian earth.

Art seems to have travelled in a complete circle and now in the 21st Century, there has been a revival of realism, but often with a twist. We have the freedom to work in very diverse ways, but still aiming to take the viewer to the place where the painting is set. To gain appreciation of so many artists will take a lot longer than one term and you may follow this short period of time with months and years of inquiry in the painting of landscape. Try to get to some of the galleries on the Peninsula, in Melbourne and perhaps overseas, as they will all enrich your experience of Art.