

FRIENDS OF THE
NATIONAL LIBRARY
OF AUSTRALIA INC.

SUMMER 2017

Friends

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends

It is hard to believe that the end of another year is rapidly approaching. 2017 has been an exceptionally busy year for the Friends. Our functions continue to be very well attended, if not completely booked out. This reassures the Friends Committee that you continue to find our program of events relevant and appealing.

Most recently, on 20 October David Stuart's talk, *Discovering Ferdinand Bauer*, was a sell-out. And on 19 September a capacity audience gathered for the launch by Dr Bob Brown of the Friends preview of *Journeys into the Wild*, the magnificent exhibition of the late Peter Dombrovskis' Tasmanian wilderness photographs. There were many other similarly successful Friends events throughout the year. We hope that you will find our program of events for 2018 equally compelling.

Next year the National Library will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of its magnificent building. Stay tuned for news on how the Friends will be helping to commemorate this important milestone.

The tremendous support and encouragement provided by National Library staff makes the work of the Friends Committee so much easier. I wish to pay a special tribute to Sharyn O'Brien, who, following a well-earned promotion, will be leaving her role as Friends Executive Officer. Sharyn started with the Friends in June 2006 and, apart from some recent opportunities to act in higher positions, has been with us ever since. She has made a huge contribution to the Friends in so many ways and we wish her well. Katherine Crane has acted in the Friends Executive Officer role in recent months and we are very grateful for her support and hard work on our behalf. Thanks also to Kathryn Favelle, Eleanor Hing Fay, Antonia Kasunic and Belinda Jessup for looking after us so well.

From all of us on the Friends Committee, we wish all of you the very best for Christmas and a very happy New Year!

Gary Kent, Chair

LIBRARY NEWS



Max Dupain and Arthur Robb, *Exterior of National Library of Australia, Canberra, c.1965*, nla.cat-vn4315702

2018 Celebrations to Mark 50th Anniversary of the National Library of Australia Building

From February to August 2018, the Library will mark the 50th anniversary of the building through a wonderfully full program of events. The highlights include two major exhibitions. The first, *1968: Changing Times*, opens on 29 February and will explore the life and times of 1968—the year in which the building opened.

Other key activities include the Enlighten Festival in March, a Friends White Gloves exhibition in May and in August a Library open day (the first since 2001) to coincide with the date the building opened in 1968.

We can all look forward to a year full of wonderful National Library events, so pencil these into your calendar for the new year now!

Jenny Oates

CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

The Friends office will be closed from midday on Friday 22 December to 9am on Monday 8 January. Staff and Committee members wish all Friends a very merry Christmas and look forward to seeing you again in the new year.



Friends of the National Library
of Australia Inc.
National Library of Australia
Canberra ACT 2600
Telephone: 02 6262 1698
Fax: 02 6273 4493
Email: friends@nla.gov.au

More than Friends

Our Friends community supports the National Library in so many ways. Many of you visit regularly, as researchers but also to attend events and visit exhibitions. Seventy members are National Library Volunteers, working on projects behind the scenes, welcoming visitors on weekends and offering over 670 hours of free exhibition and building tours each year.

Your support for the Library has deep impact. In 2001, the Friends of the National Library made a \$25,000 lead donation towards the creation of the Treasures Gallery. Since then, the organisation has become a Gold Patron of the Library, contributing some \$240,000 in funds, supporting fellowships for Library staff, a creative fellowship, and preservation and digitisation projects including the digitisation of Federation documents and the Jessie Street papers. The Friends of the National Library Travelling Fellowship has supported professional development for 11 Library staff, providing them with the opportunity to meet with and learn from colleagues around the world. In 2007, Dr Marie-Louise Ayres, now Director-General, was one of those beneficiaries.

Each year, individual Friends members also donate to the Library's community appeals. Perhaps you supported the preservation of the Blaeu Map, now on display again in the Treasures Gallery following years of complex treatment. Or you may have donated to the appeal to preserve and digitise Bessie Rischbieth's rare collection relating to the suffrage movement. Friends members are the Library's most significant donor group. This year, the Friends membership has contributed donations of nearly \$100,000 to our appeals supporting the Library's Cook and Nolan collections. This level of support is extraordinary and extraordinarily consistent.

Thank you for helping the National Library to preserve and share the documentary history of Australia. There is so much your support makes possible and we value your contribution very much.

Kathryn Favelle
Director, Community Outreach



Rebecca Setnicar reviews the digital capture of correspondence from the Bessie Rischbieth collection.



Professor Raimond Gaita delivers the 2017 Seymour Biography Lecture.

Truth. Truthfulness. Self. Voice.

2017 Seymour Biography Lecture

The 2017 Seymour Biography Lecture was delivered on 12 September to a full theatre by renowned author and philosopher Raimond Gaita. Best known to the wider Australian public for his memoir *Romulus, My Father*, published to great acclaim in 1998 and made into a movie in 2007, he has an equally high reputation as a philosopher. He was the Foundation Professor of Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University until 2011 and Professor of Moral Philosophy at King's College, London.

In rather a self-effacing manner, Gaita spoke of not being a Writer with a capital W. He is not in love with language per se, nor can he write poetry—but he would love to be able to. Yet *Romulus, My Father* could be described as a tragic poem, Gaita said, not biography, much less autobiography, as it is not informed by critical reflection. Instead we read it as an authentic, moving piece of life writing. The book arose from the eulogy Gaita wrote for his father's funeral. In it, he pays homage to his father's values and compassion for, and acceptance of, his wife's erratic life, which in the final years excluded Romulus and young Raimond. She lived with her lover, Romulus' friend, and two years after his suicide she committed suicide herself, having suffered from a mental illness for many years. Gaita was only ten years old at the time of her death. Badly affected, Romulus himself was at times in an asylum.

Gaita explained his writing:

Writing about such things that affected me profoundly, I had to resist as much as possible all dispositions to pathos or sentimentality. That's not a merely personal remark. Anyone in similar circumstances should do the same. But in resisting these, I was not trying to get feeling out of the writing. I was trying to make the feeling true. I don't mean that I wanted it to be sincere. Sentimentality is sincere more often than not. In resisting sentimentality, I wasn't so much trying to feel right, but trying to see things right, to understand things right.

What helped Gaita survive into adulthood, he says, are his father's values and a number of people who, through their passion and love, earned his trust. Gaita is preparing a book of portraits of the people who matter to him. He talked at length about one of them, Martin Winkler, a German Lutheran

pastor who worked as a missionary in New Guinea, was interned in Australia and eventually taught German at Ballarat Grammar. Although a boarder at St Patrick's at this time, Gaita studied German with Winkler from year nine until the end of year eleven.

In Gaita's words:

Winkler was perhaps the wisest man I have known. Eccentric, and a strong, passionate personality ... My most vivid memories of my school years however—and the ones that still give me most pleasure and inspire my deepest gratitude—are of the times when Winkler went to the little organ he kept in his book-lined study and played Bach cantatas and talked about them to me.

I was entranced by his untroubled confidence that he had revealed to me some of the great treasures of Western civilisation. It never occurred to me to ask why he did it because I knew, as everyone does, that people enjoy sharing what they love.

A Writer or a writer? A Writer, surely! Gaita's voice was beautiful and true. And we listened in rapture to much, much more.

Ingrid Moses

A recording of this event can be accessed on the National Library's website at nla.gov.au/audio/seymour-lecture-2017.

RECENT FRIENDS EVENTS

Discovering Ferdinand Bauer

Botanical Illustrator, 1760–1826

David Stuart, former Australian Ambassador to Austria, presented a lecture on the early colonial botanical artist and illustrator Ferdinand Bauer, to a packed house of members of the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) and the Friends of the National Library on Friday 20 October.

Stuart's interest in Bauer was sparked during his posting to Austria, where he uncovered a significant cache of Bauer's drawings, paintings, botanical specimens and correspondence in the holdings of the Museum of Natural History in Vienna, including over 2,000 pencil sketches and drawings made by Bauer.

Ferdinand Bauer was invited by the British Royal Academy to join Matthew Flinders as a botanical illustrator on his voyage to circumnavigate the continent of Australia in 1801–1803. In 1801, Flinders landed near King George Sound, on the south-west coast of Australia, and set up camp. The expedition's chief botanist would walk with Bauer for over 20 kilometres a day, searching out plants never before seen by Europeans. Bauer was an indefatigable worker who produced on average three to four drawings a day. Between 1801 and 1805, he compiled over 1,500 sketches and 200 colour pictures, as well as 400 drawings of animals, birds and fish specific to Norfolk Island.

Stuart explained how Bauer achieved this prodigious output while maintaining the superb quality and detail in the finished works. Bauer would make an initial, detailed sketch of a plant, in situ, labelling each part of the sketch with coded numbers

that, on his return to Europe, he used as his guide to add colour to the images. He had developed a personal, numerically coded palette of approximately 1,000 colour tones that give the finished illustrations extraordinary precision.

In closing, David Stuart summarised Bauer's work as providing a prodigious legacy of the botanical art of the new world, and an enduring legacy of the scientific value of these rare plants.

Jenny Oates

Friends Exhibition Preview of *Dombrovskis: Journeys into the Wild*

On 19 September, the Friends hosted an exclusive viewing of the incredible wilderness photography of Peter Dombrovskis. Once again, this was an opportunity to see an extraordinary collection of treasures held for our nation in the National Library of Australia. In this case, a collection beautiful in itself and central to Australia's history and cultural life.

Exhibition curator Matthew Jones explained to a capacity audience the background to Dombrovskis' work: his knowledge of the wilderness, particularly of Tasmania, where he arrived aged 5 with his Latvian mother from a refugee camp in Germany; his deep technical understanding of his art; and his patience and commitment to excellence. Jones revealed the difficulty as a curator in reducing the collection of 3,000 film transparencies held by the Library to the 80 that are on view in this exhibition, a task made all the more difficult by the uniformly high quality of the images. He has done a fantastic job. The exhibition demonstrates that Dombrovskis is well and truly in the top rank of international photographic artists, in the company of the likes of the great American photographer Ansel Adams.



Gary Kent, Bob Brown and Matthew Jones at the Friends preview of *Dombrovskis: Journeys into the Wild*.

Jones explained that Dombrovskis preferred a bulky Linhof camera, which used film much larger than was standard at the time. Difficult to carry while tramping the wilderness, its size allowed the depiction of very detailed images, a highlight of his photography. The works in the exhibition demonstrate an enormous breadth of treatment and subject matter and show a beautiful understanding of light and shade, colour, shapes and patterns. They are a moving testimony to the beauty of the natural world. The whole Dombrovskis collection has now

been digitised and is available on the Library's website, a testament to the Library's capacity to maintain its relevance to the community.

A highlight of the evening was the history given by former senator and committed environmentalist Dr Bob Brown. Dr Brown was a personal friend of Peter Dombrovskis for 20 years until the photographer's untimely death in 1996. He spoke movingly about Dombrovskis' arrival in Tasmania, his growing love for the wilderness and his close association with Olegas Truchanas (a fellow refugee, photographer and conservationist). The images Peter Dombrovskis produced had a profound impact on the community's understanding of the environment and the importance of preserving it. The now iconic *Morning Mist*, *Rock Island Bend*, *Franklin River*, was the central image of the campaign to prevent the damming of the Gordon and Franklin rivers. A highlight of Bob's presentation was his telling of the excitement he felt when he first saw this image and recognised its potential power. It has become one of the most famous Australian photographs of all time.

Just this one event justified my membership of the Friends. Do not miss the exhibition!

James Ferguson

A recording of this event can be accessed on the National Library's website at nla.gov.au/audio/dombrovskis-journeys-into-the-wild.

FRIENDS EVENTS



Friends Exhibition Preview: 1968

Be the first to see the Library's new exhibition *1968: Changing Times* at the Friends exclusive preview. This exhibition explores the political and cultural tumult of the period in which the National Library of Australia building opened, offering a national and international context for the year 1968.

Tuesday 27 February, 6pm

Theatre and Exhibition Gallery

\$20 Friends, \$25 non-members (includes refreshments)

Bookings: nla.gov.au/events or 02 6262 1698

FRIENDS DISCOUNT CODE FOR NATIONAL LIBRARY EVENTS

To claim your 15 per cent discount on ticketed Library events, bookings must be made online at nla.gov.au/bookings and the discount code **SUMFR18** entered when booking. This code is valid from **1 December 2017 to 28 February 2018** and does not apply to Friends events (select the members ticket option for these) or events that are free of charge.

FRIENDS NEWS

Give the Gift of Friendship



Share your love for the National Library with your family and friends this Christmas. As well as standard member benefits, a Friends gift membership includes a welcome pack of National Library merchandise. Gift memberships range from \$30 for a concession to \$60 for a household membership for one year. Contact the Friends office for details: 02 6262 1698 or friends@nla.gov.au.

Offer available until 15 December 2017.

Reminder—New Membership Fees

As decided by the Committee, new membership fees will come into effect on 1 January 2018. See the Friends website for full details: nla.gov.au/friends/join-the-friends-online.

The Lake View Book Club

The Lake View Book Club meets in the Friends Lounge at the National Library on the last Tuesday of each month from 6.15 to 7.45pm. It is open to all Friends. If you have any questions, please contact kathryncole@grapevine.net.au.

There is no meeting in December, but forthcoming titles for discussion are:

- Tuesday 30 January—
The Dark Flood Rises by Margaret Drabble
- Tuesday 27 February—
Manhattan Beach by Jennifer Egan

NATIONAL LIBRARY BOOKSHOP SPECIAL OFFER FOR FRIENDS

In conjunction with the Library's Bookshop, the Friends are pleased to announce a special offer for members who make a purchase using the National Library online bookshop.

For any purchase you make between **1 December 2017 and 28 February 2018**, you will receive a free copy of the

Ellis Rowan Address Book. This offer is in addition to the usual Friends discount and any other offers advertised on the Library Bookshop website.

To claim your free copy of the *Ellis Rowan Address Book* and your 15 per cent discount with all online purchases, use the promotional code **1718SUMFR** at checkout.

This code is valid from **1 December 2017 to 28 February 2018**.

