HIGHLIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 2020

FOCUS ON ART

EXPLORE THE RACV ART COLLECTION FROM HOME

KEEPING MEMBERS CONNECTED

racv.com.au/club
WELCOME

Making meaningful connections

JOHN SLATTERY  Club & Membership Committee Chairman

We love hearing from our Club Members and there are many great stories in this edition about ways to stay connected. We are particularly excited about the launch of the RACV Art Collection database (page 4). Members will be able to go online and view more than 1000 works from home. We celebrate the advent of spring with a feature on edible flowers (page 6), and there are recipes online for you to try at home. Club Member Karen Dickson explains how mindfulness can boost your wellbeing and help you become more empathetic, particularly in light of RU OK? Day on September 10 (page 10). We have suggestions for ways to keep children entertained during the school holidays, including a “Best in Show” competition (page 8) and family fitness (page 14). Two members of our Young Professionals group talk about their virtual friendship for our new Me & You feature (page 12). Happy reading and I hope, like me, you enjoy the warmer weather.

ROB EVERETT  RACV Club General Manager

Our thoughts remain with our Members during this time of lockdown. In return, my team and I continue to be buoyed by the support and engagement of the wonderful community of Members who share their best wishes. This month our priority remains on providing Members with an escape through our online events, webpage articles, social-media posts, email updates and of course, Highlights magazine. I have been pleased to hear that many of our Interest Groups have been able to meet online and continue their connection outside of the Club, and that a new Art Group has been formed during this time. Our Member Exclusive Online Food & Wine Offer, which we launched at the beginning of August, was very well received and we look forward to bringing you another offer soon. Unfortunately, since our last edition, we have again closed our golf course at Healesville Country Club, meaning both properties are fully closed as we continue to act on the latest government advice. Once again, I thank members for your patience & support. For now, stay safe and well.

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HIGHLIGHTS SEPTEMBER 2020

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4 Cover image: detail of Lara Merrett, The happy prince, 2009, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 183 x 168cm.  
Courtesy the artist.  
Photography Christian Capurro

RACV ART COLLECTION

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SHARE YOUR STORIES
One of the best ways for Club Members to stay connected is by sharing stories. You can share a moment or memory on social media or send us an email.

• Post a photo on Instagram and use the hashtag #RACVClub
• Post a photo on your Facebook profile and add the tag @racvclub
• Email highlights@racv.com.au
RACV Head of Visual Arts Mardi Nowak says the RACV Art Collection is a celebration of Australian contemporary art, and the RACV’s new online database makes it accessible to all Victorians.

“At RACV, we value the role art plays in connecting communities and its ability to foster social cohesion across all ages, backgrounds and cultures,” she says.

“That’s why we’re thrilled to be able to bring the RACV Art Collection online for the first time in 17 years. It brings together artwork located at our Club and resorts and Members will be able to see more than 1000 works from the comfort of home.”

The Collection, which has grown significantly in the past two decades, features the works of contemporary Australian artists whose works reflect the experience and cultural landscape of Australia through an artistic lens.

Mardi says the RACV Art Collection is special because it’s a contemporary collection that showcases Australian work and supports living artists.

The RACV’s CMS (Collection Management System) database also meets industry standards and is in line with the NGV and other big cultural institutions.

“We have the usual features—name, title, size and images—but there are also curatorial remarks by myself and our in-house curator Ellen Wignell, which provide a deeper understanding of the work,” Mardi says.

“For the Indigenous works we have added language groups, allowing Members to see the area those artists are from and their other works in the collection. It’s a wonderful introduction to our strong Indigenous art collection, which includes 80 artists.”

The collection features well-known artists and those who are gaining recognition, including (pictured left) Night beacon I, 2005 by Philip Wolfhagen, one of Tasmania’s most regarded landscape artists.

“He is the master of atmospheric painting, capturing the mood in thickly applied paint mixed with beeswax,” Mardi says. “He can say so much in so few brushstrokes.”

Mardi describes Lara Merrett’s The happy prince, 2009 (Highlights cover image) as intuitive and playful.

“She works like a sculptor, moving around the canvas to layer the paint and create the image,” she says. Members can curate their own selection using the database and create their own mini gallery with favourite pieces and email themselves, to research further.

Mardi also encourages Club Members to take part in the Club’s second Creation Station activity.

“Whether you’re viewing or creating, there is no better time to lose yourself in art; there is something very therapeutic about that,” she says.

The RACV Art Collection is online for the first time, offering Club Members the chance to explore more than 1000 works.
Lily Rattray inherited her passion for using wild plants and flowers in her cooking from her mother Catherine, who is a long-standing Club Member. “My mother was interested in old English cookbooks and cottage gardens and how, in traditional English cooking, they used all parts of the plants,” Lily says. “She used to put nasturtium flowers and leaves in our salads as kids and make dandelion tea and use chive flowers and stuff like that. I got my interest from her.”

The Rattray family run Flowerdale Farm, with Catherine and husband Charles operating the 120ha farm in central Victoria and Lily and brother James managing the wholesale business. As well as selling microgreens, Australian natives and sprouts, the business specialises in edible flowers.

Lily says the viola is their top seller and has the advantage of being in season most of the year. “The viola always looks so beautiful and so presentable. It’s more about how it looks than the flavour,” she says. Spring heralds the arrival of cornflowers, roses, dianthus and nasturtiums, which can transform a salad or drink. “Nasturtiums are spicy and delicious and look gorgeous,” Lily says. “They are evocative of an earlier era.”

Rose petals are popular, but being seasonal limits their availability. Popular in Middle Eastern food, Turkish delight is the most famous example of their use. “Some people deep fry them and put them on top of desserts, or make jams and syrups with them,” Lily says. The demand for edible flowers has been steadily growing and Lily attributes that to the rise of social media. “It ties in with the social media generation; people like to take photos of their food and flowers make food inherently photogenic,” she says. Lily says high-end fruit and vegetable stores sell their flowers and will order them in if asked. “I think people often buy a punnet of flowers because it fills their heart with joy.”

Spring is the perfect time to experiment with edible flowers, now that cornflowers, roses, dianthus and nasturtiums are in season.

The chefs at Healesville Country Club have embraced the use of edible flowers, and violas, nasturtiums, marigolds and lavender grow in the Club’s cottage garden. Club Chef de Cuisine Kauri Kondaschek says violas add interest as a garnish, while other flowers have interesting flavours. “Something like the rocket flowers have a nutty flavour and zucchini flowers have a beautiful petal, while pea or bean flowers add different flavours as well.” Kauri says lavender, which comes in different pinks and shades of purple, is fun to play around with in cooking. “I make a lavender and champagne sorbet, for example. I used to pick all the little purple flowers off to get the specks in the white sorbet, but now you can buy the flower petals, which are easy to fold into the syrup.” She says edible flowers add interest to salads. “It is that pop of colour,” she says. “We garnish even some of our hot dishes with the flowers for the same reason.”

If you grow your own flowers or pick them wild, just make sure they aren’t contaminated with pesticide.

WORDS: BLANCHE CLARK. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES
BEST IN SHOW

Enjoy all the fun of an agriculture show at home with a cake decorating competition, a craft display or a pooch parade

How do our chefs at Le Petit Gâteau and Healesville Country Club create those cakes that look like works of art?

If you have some time on your hands or you’re looking for ways to keep children entertained during the school holidays, then see if you can decorate a cake fit for a show.

Club Pastry Chef de Cuisine Kauri Kondaschek says buttercream is relatively easy to use, and there are tricks and tips that make working with fondant icing and chocolate easier.

Fondant is made from sugar, water, gelatin, vegetable fat or shortening and glycerol and must be well kneaded before use.

“The more you work it the softer it will get because you are melting the sugars,” Kauri says. “If it becomes sticky, you have overheated it. Wrap it well and leave it in a cool place for 20-30 minutes.”

When working with chocolate, avoid overheating or adding moisture as both cause clumping. Kauri suggests using a gel or an oil base colouring for the same reason.

“You’ll get vibrant colour without the risk of seizing.”

If craft is more your scene, consider the Royal Melbourne Show’s categories of stuffed toys, millinery, basketry, crochet, embroidery, knitting or quilting. You can challenge family members or other Club Members to create something for a Facebook or Instagram post.

If you’d prefer to give your pooch attention, you could teach him or her a new obedience or agility trick. In terms of grooming, brush your dog daily weeks before your “show” to ensure their coat is smooth and silky. Pay attention to the face and don’t forget their nails, teeth and ears.

We’d love to see your results. Post a photo of your cake, craft or canine on your Facebook profile and add the tag @racvclub
Or post the photo on your Instagram account and use the hashtag #RACVClub

You’ll find Kauri’s tips for making candied flowers and using fondant and chocolate at racv.com.au/club-highlights

WORDS: BLANCHE CLARK. PHOTOS: LEFT, A LE PETIT GÂTEAU CAKE FOR INSPIRATION, ABOVE, A BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG, GETTY IMAGES.
RACV Club Member Karen Dickson describes herself as a “corporate escapee”. Eleven years ago, she made a major career transition from being a management consultant to becoming a specialist in complementary therapies.

“When I was in a corporate career, I received a lot of help and aid from various complementary therapies, then when I decided to take a sabbatical from running a subsidiary company for a law firm, I studied natural medicine, which led to a career transition,” Karen says. “Following my heart and my passion, I realised I could help people to navigate through their busy careers and demanding lives, not only from a health and wellbeing perspective, but also by giving them the therapies, techniques and tools for performance, thriving and insight.”

Karen studied mindfulness meditation, kinesiology and hypnotherapy, and her company Ayus Life offers digital consultations and, when restrictions are lifted, face-to-face sessions, workshops and the chance to “uplug” at the Botanical Retreat in the Yarra Valley.

She learnt Mindfulness into Stillness Meditation with Dr Ian Gawler, who is credited with bringing meditation to prominence in the western world.

“It’s interesting how much mindfulness has taken off in the past 11 years, since I did that training,” Karen says. “It’s become mainstream, and there is a lot of scientific research proving its benefits.”

She says mindfulness can be used for health and healing purposes, or for insight or clarity purposes. “It is a tool, in many ways, a self-help or self-healing tool, and you can apply that to different situations.”

Karen conducted a live-streamed workshop for Club Members last month on Mindful Eating and, following its success, she will run another workshop on Mindful Thinking on 9 September.

“Mindfulness is also valuable for helping us stay connected to others. RU OK? Day, on 10 September, highlights how we can support people going through difficult times, particularly during a pandemic.”

“If we want to support people, we have to do that from a space of empathy,” Karen says. “It’s OK not to have all the answers. Sometimes it’s just as important to simply sit with people in moments of silence. Mindfulness can help us do that.”
In the first of our new section Me & You, two Club Members share how a Zoom lunch sparked their virtual friendship.

Club Members Nathan Rayner and Leon Poggioli recommend catching up over a virtual coffee or beer, after discovering common ground during a Zoom lunch for the Club’s Young Professionals group.

“I saw Leon a few times at Club mentor alumni events, but we never actually spoke,” says Nathan, who works as an insurance broker. “It was only at the Zoom Lunch session last month that we had a chat and after that we caught up again for a virtual coffee.”

“We also discovered, coincidently, we share a link to a small Japanese town. Leon’s wife is from Ishinomaki and my wife lived and worked very close to Ishinomaki for two years. This really surprised us both.”

Nathan and Leon became Members to use the City Club for business and they enjoy being part of the community.

“I used to be in a home-based role, before it was cool!” says Leon. “I originally signed up to use the Club as my CBD office between meetings. I then broadened my involvement to take up more of what was on offer.”

Leon works in cybersecurity and manages client relationships for some of Victoria’s critical infrastructure operators and has embraced meeting like-minded people through the Young Professionals group.

“It’s great to meet people from a range of different backgrounds, but who are all equally motivated to get out there and make a difference in the world,” says Leon.

A highlight for the two men has been the Club’s Mentor Program, which sees seasoned professionals sharing their expertise and knowledge with younger Members.

“The mentor program was fantastic, the dinner at the end of the course in the Members’ Dining Room was a real highlight,” says Nathan.

“I learnt a lot from my mentor but also from the other mentees that I got to know in the program.”

The pair say social isolation is challenging, but making the effort to stay in touch keeps them positive.

“Regular Zoom chats (day or night, drinking either coffee or a glass of wine) with new and old friends is a great way to stay socially connected,” says Leon. “I have friends in the USA who I often speak with in the evenings, which aligns to their mornings. There’s always plenty happening in the news to chat about.”

Nathan says he always feels more positive after a good chat and a laugh.

“I have had Zoom catch-ups with many friends in Melbourne but also Dubai, Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore,” Nathan says.

“At first it felt odd having a Zoom chat with someone living 10 or 20 kilometres away, but we’ve all adjusted. It’s been great to catch up online one-on-one but also with groups, such as old school and university friends.”

*‘Regular Zoom chats with new and old friends is a great way to stay socially connected.’*

Words: Jessica Hirst. Photos: Bourke Street Green by Milk Bottle Projects, Club Members Leon Poggioli and Nathan Rayner.
Parents facing the challenge of keeping their children active at home can help by playing games and being more active themselves.

RACV City Club Fitness Manager Con Kalogiannis says there are many fun ways to keep your kids active and reap the health rewards while community and school sport are on hold.

"Exercise for children has many health benefits," says Con. "From developing healthy bones, muscles and joints to improved cognitive function."

Australian guidelines recommend that children aged five to 12 years have at least 60 minutes a day of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity. But research, in 2018, found only 26 per cent of children in this age group met those guidelines. In addition, most children exceed the recommended amount of sedentary screen-based activity, in particular adolescent boys.

"Choose activities that are fun and something the kids enjoy doing," says Con. "That can be riding their bike or scooter, kicking a footy or taking the dog for a walk."

Parents can encourage a variety of activities and build incidental exercise into their child’s day. Children can help with the gardening, washing the car or anything that gets them up and moving.

"It doesn’t have to be structured," says Con. "At the moment, my two-year-old son is into climbing and jumping, with my supervision of course."

An AusPlay survey in 2017 revealed parents’ activities and behaviours strongly influenced the way children developed. There was a high correlation between the engagement of parents in physical activity and that of their child.

"The most important tip is to be a role model and be active yourself," says Con. "Children are never too young to get moving."

WAYS TO BE CREATIVE

- Scavenger hunt for five things in the house that start with the letter B or find five things in the garden that are yellow.
- Create an obstacle course using household items or draw one with chalk outside. For older children, time the race to make it more competitive.
- Make a ball out of an old sock stuffed with other old socks and tied at the end, then play kick-to-kick.
- Turn up the music for a dance party.
- Play skipping games outside or get moving with a hula hoop.
- Try balloon tennis with paper-plate bats. You can make them chopstick handles.
- Master simple circus skills, such as standing up and squatting with your back against another person, without using your hands.

Be a role model for your children and workout at home with our Club online fitness videos. Our Personal Trainers help you stay fit, with a growing library of videos to access at racv.com.au/club-highlights
As an RACV Club Member, you can now access exclusive benefits from the comfort of your own home. Discover delicious recipes, stay connected with online workshops and masterclasses, keep the family occupied with virtual activities and read the latest articles on everything from wellness to life skills from the team at Highlights.

Join the Club community online through our social channels and stay connected with Member events, exclusive stories and Club news.

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