

Art as Therapy

NGV International | 28 March – late September 2014

10 February 2014



Renowned philosophers and authors Alain de Botton and John Armstrong will present their unique take on art through a specially-curated *Art as Therapy* program, in a collaboration between the National Gallery of Victoria and The School of Life Melbourne. The program will be launched with a Secular Sermon by de Botton at the NGV on Wednesday 26 March, coinciding with the permanent opening of The School of Life Melbourne.

The *Art as Therapy* program will include a free, self-guided tour of the NGV Collection, consisting of specially-written labels for over sixty works. The labels, written by de Botton and Armstrong, re-contextualise

artworks to challenge visitors to examine assumptions about themselves, society, and how art is viewed in galleries. Private tours with The School of Life Melbourne's faculty will also be on offer from Saturday 5 April.

Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV, said: "We are thrilled that the philosophical ideas of Alain de Botton and John Armstrong will be applied to works in the NGV Collection as an extension of their innovative book *Art as Therapy*. This self-guided tour will be available for free to all visitors and we hope that the thought-provoking words of de Botton and Armstrong will encourage a deeper engagement and understanding of the selected artworks."

Kaj Lofgren, Director, The School of Life Melbourne, said: "We are so happy to be partnering with the NGV on this project, and we look forward to providing a new and innovative way of interpreting such a wonderful collection."

Art as Therapy explores the idea that art can have a powerfully therapeutic effect and be enjoyed not only for where it came from or who made it, but what it can do for you - the ordinary visitor with the concerns that trouble us all: work, love, status, mortality and sometimes-tricky relationships. The *Art as Therapy* tour will be accompanied by a brochure (available from the Information Desk at NGV International) and smartphone app (available for iPhone and Android). Along with the National Gallery of Victoria, artworks at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada, will carry *Art as Therapy* labels.

***Art as Therapy* public programs:**

Secular Sermon: Alain de Botton on *Art as Therapy*

Wed 26 Mar, 6pm for 6.30pm

We often hear that art is meant to be very important but we're seldom told exactly why.

Alain de Botton believes art can help us with our most intimate and ordinary dilemmas: Why is my work not more satisfying? Why do other people seem to have a more glamorous life? How can I improve my relationships? Why is politics so depressing? In this Secular Sermon Alain will introduce a new method of interpreting art: art as a form of therapy, providing powerful solutions to many of life's dilemmas.

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This event is a collaboration with The School of Life Melbourne. The School of Life Melbourne's Secular Sermons engage cultural figures to give us their take on the virtues to cling to or the vices to be wary of in our complex world. Expect packed congregations, persuasive polemics, and pop-song hymns.

Speaker Alain de Botton, philosopher & author, founder of The School of Life

Venue Great Hall (enter via Waterwall), NGV International

Cost \$28 Adult | \$23 Concession | \$22 NGV Members

Bookings essential at www.theschooloflife.com.au (tickets on sale 10am, Wed 12 Feb)

Art as Therapy Guided Tours with The School of Life Melbourne Faculty

Saturdays, 3pm on 5 April, 12 April, 26 April, 10 May, 24 May

Join faculty members of The School of Life Melbourne on a guided *Art as Therapy* tour at the NGV. Groups are limited to 25 people per tour and tours will include an introduction by the faculty, a guided walking tour of the gallery, and facilitated, post-tour reflection.

Venue NGV International, beginning at the Information Desk

Cost \$50 Adult

Bookings essential at www.theschooloflife.com.au (tickets on sale 10am, Wed 12 Feb)

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Alain de Botton biography

Alain de Botton was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1969 and now lives in London. He is a writer of essayistic books that have been described as a 'philosophy of everyday life.' He has written on love, travel, architecture and literature. His books have been bestsellers in 30 countries. Alain founded The School of Life in London in 2008. Since that time more than 50,000 people have taken part in its programs. His latest book, *The News*, has just been published through Penguin Books Australia.

John Armstrong biography

John Armstrong was born in Glasgow, educated in Oxford and London and moved to Australia in 2001. He is the author of seven books, including *In Search of Civilisation* (2009); *Love Life Goethe* (2006) and *The Secret Power of Beauty* (2004) – all published by Penguin. He is currently Senior Advisor in the Office of the Vice Chancellor, University of Melbourne. His book *How to Worry Less About Money*, came out in May 2012. He lectures widely, is a regular commentator on ABC radio and is a contributor to major international newspapers and journals.

Image caption:

August Friedrich Albrecht SCHENCK, Danish
1828–1901, worked in France c.1857-1901

Anguish (Angoisse) c.1878

oil on canvas

151.0 x 251.2 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, 1880