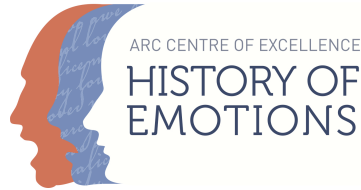


## ENGLISH AND THEATRE STUDIES RESEARCH SEMINAR

Joint event with the Centre for the History of Emotions



**Wednesday 31 July, 6.00PM**  
**OLD ARTS, THEATRE A**

**Peter De Bolla, University of Cambridge**

“The Blush of the World: Bonnard’s Nudes and the Disembodied Look”

This lecture sets out to provide a framework within which one might begin to look at Bonnard’s canvasses depicting his wife, Marthe, in the rituals of washing and bathing. It suggests that the most common way of understanding Bonnard’s depiction of his wife’s face – in ‘contre jour’ or shadow – fails to attend to something more obviously somatic: the blush. I argue that Bonnard was deeply immersed in a looking technique that was implicated in the world. In effect the sighted viewer is placed in a reciprocal optical relationship with the object seen. When one begins to look with Bonnard the world feels the presence and pressure of our looking and Bonnard’s depictions ask us to acknowledge that.

This lecture is part of a longer project on Bonnard and in the time for discussion and conversation I hope to introduce some of its other themes and interests. In particular I hope to be able to show some of what I call ‘Bonnard’s ghosts’, the effects of pentimenti in his painting practice which I think comprise one of the most profound acts of looking and painting in the history of Western art. My focus in this book is philosophical as well as art historical and if there is time I would like to explore how the philosophical challenge of what Stanley Cavell calls ‘skepticism’ is addressed by Bonnard’s canvasses.

Enquiries to Stephanie Trigg ([sjtrigg@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:sjtrigg@unimelb.edu.au))