



ART GALLERY SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
2014 ANNUAL REVIEW

For the year ended 31 December 2014

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2014 – Start of a new era

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Following the previous year's 60th anniversary celebrations, 2014 became a year to review the progress of the Art Gallery Society, develop initiatives to broaden the base of membership and enhance members' engagement with the Art Gallery.

The Society maintained its proud tradition of providing support to the Art Gallery, particularly by financing the acquisition of works of art for the Collections. At the same time it continued to respond to changing economic, social and demographic conditions by working to engage all sections of the Art Gallery's core audience.

The Society's unique position as an independent company within the Art Gallery remained an asset, giving it an unrivalled ability to contribute financially to the parent institution, to manage an outstanding program of membership activities and to communicate the Art Gallery's work effectively to members through its magazine *Look*, its online newsletters and its events.

A review of stakeholder relationships commissioned by the Art Gallery in 2013 and undertaken by consultant Jennifer Bott nonetheless made it clear that, as her report recommended, the time had come to document the relationship between the Art Gallery and the Society in a Memorandum of Understanding, and negotiations towards such an outcome began during the 2014 year.

Acquisitions for the Collection

The Society was delighted to complete the funding of Giovanni Battista Moroni's *Portrait of a Man* 1565-1570, through members' donations to the Collection Circle Acquisition Program. The work is considered by curators to be the finest Renaissance portrait in the Art Gallery's collection, the features caught in a moment of introspection that illuminates the work's humanity.

Assistance was also gladly given to the purchase of Basile Lemeunier's *Portrait of Edouard Detaille* 1891. This exceptional portrait shows Detaille at work in his studio on the great canvas of *Vive l'Empereur*, bought two years later by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Lost for 123 years before its rediscovery in Paris, the portrait perfectly complements the battle scene, which remains a favourite with visitors, and now hangs permanently beside it.

Loyal members of the Collection Circle Acquisition Program donated \$200 per year or more, and their names are listed below starting on p16.

Young Members The Society's Contempo group, which changed its name during 2014 to Young Members (see below p8), funded the Nike Savvas work *Rally* that hung from the ceiling of the entrance court, delighting visitors, for much of the year.

The Young Members also funded *No sleep till Dreamtime* by Kamilaroi urban artist Reko Rennie who brings traditional symbols together with the visual language of hip hop and graffiti subcultures to subvert idealised views of Aboriginal identity.

The total funding for acquisitions provided by the Society during the year amounted to \$1,005,584.

Other financial support to the Art Gallery

In 2014 the Society continued its three-year commitment, which began in September 2012, to donate \$240,000 per year to support the Wednesday evening Art After Hours program. The donation was agreed in response to the Art Gallery management's request for assistance following government budget cuts.

The annual professional development scholarship for Art Gallery staff, worth \$12,500, was awarded to Simm Steel, senior lighting technician, to research international best practice in his field.

New leadership

A new Council leadership took office following the Annual General Meeting in March 2014, with Volunteer Guide Les Moseley as President and Brian Ladd, former head of the Art Gallery's Public Programs department, as Vice-President. Former President John Masters resigned from Council and was thanked for his services. New Council members Jill Keyte, elected in March, and Edward Palmisano, who was appointed to a casual vacancy, brought additional talents to the Council.

Executive Director Craig Brush resigned after 25 years' employment with the Society, and was thanked for his long service, while former executive Judith White returned to the role. At the end of the year Jill Sykes resigned as editor of *Look* after 13 years and 150 issues, and she too was thanked by Council and staff. Her place was taken by John Saxby, former arts editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

General membership

The new leadership of the organisation reviewed performance on membership. It became apparent that while the loyalty and activity levels of the membership remained exceptional, numbers had dropped by about 10 per cent since the Global Financial Crisis – a lesser decline than in many arts membership and subscription organisations, but a cause for concern nonetheless. A number of initiatives were put in place to reverse the trend:

A change of name Council considered that the name "Society", while it had served the Gallery and the organisation well for 60 years, could be a barrier to some potential members joining. Council therefore proposed to change the name to "Art Gallery of New South Wales Members", since the term was already widely in use throughout the Art Gallery, was commonly used in museums both in Australia and overseas, and was readily understood. Legal advice was received that any name change should first be voted on by a general meeting of members, and if passed should then be registered with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. Gallery management supported this initiative.

The discussion with members began when a Special General Meeting was convened for 27 October to discuss the issue. Since several members raised reservations, and since the name change resolution as originally framed was considered in some respects unsuitable, no vote was taken but general agreement was expressed to continue the discussion.

Review of membership prices and categories A benchmarking exercise undertaken by staff revealed that membership of the Society was more expensive than at comparable institutions both in Australia and overseas, while benefits were not such as to justify the

high pricing. Financial modelling of potential price changes was also undertaken. Council consequently resolved that, in order to make membership more accessible, and taking into consideration the climate of cautious consumer sentiment, prices would for the first time be revised downwards for most categories. At the same time new categories were introduced for Under-30s and for pensioners (not seniors only). These initiatives began in November in time for the summer exhibition *Pop to popism*.

Presence in the Art Gallery A new membership recruitment desk was installed in the entrance court at the start of *Pop to popism*, manned by Task Force volunteers with the support of Society staff and with membership signage. Society staff also began regular briefings of Art Gallery front-of-house staff to assist them in promoting membership.

These changes contributed to good recruitment from *Pop to popism*, exceeding the target of 1% of exhibition visitation in both November and December. In the two months 673 new members joined.

At the end of 2014 total general membership stood at 16,552 (26,483 cardholders), down by 548 on the previous year. The decline in membership, which at 30 June had dropped to 16,048 (25,676) was halted, but the overall results of the rebuilding initiatives will only become clear in the course of 2015. Total new memberships for the year 2014 were 2,166.

Corporate development

The Society's corporate membership program brings large numbers of companies and their clients in to the Art Gallery. It is a corporate hospitality program offering member companies client entertainment and networking opportunities on at least 12 evenings during the year.

The program promotes the work of the Art Gallery to a wide range of corporations and nurtures relationships with them, opening possibilities for upgrading some to higher-level sponsorship of the Art Gallery, as in the cases of Norton Rose Fulbright and State Street during 2014. The Society's corporate team further provides the Art Gallery with lead generation by referring companies interested in sponsorship or in venue hire. During the year the program also generated significant business for Chiswick at the Gallery restaurant on corporate viewing evenings.

In a difficult economic environment, the Society succeeded in retaining 162 corporate members. 36 new members joined during the year, close to the recruitment target of 40.

The program also develops sponsorship at a level appropriate to Society activities. The organisation greatly values its relationships with the loyal sponsors who enable it to maintain the high standards for which its programs are known. Sponsorship grew during the year with the addition of one new sponsor and the renewal of others. Current sponsors are listed below on p19, and the Society is most grateful for their support.

Events program

The program of members' events is unique in the range of high-quality cultural events and learning opportunities it offers. It is a crucial element in members' loyalty and in educating the core audience, and it brings significant numbers into the Art Gallery throughout the year.

In 2014 the Society ran 444 events for members, including lectures, talks, workshops for adults and children, tours and parties. Bookings totalled 42,213, and during the year online bookings increased from 34% of the total to 50%, thanks to development of the bookings system from May onwards. Online bookings increased by 44% compared to 2013. On average events booked to 82% of total capacity.

A review of the program conducted by staff and management, based on detailed analytics, addressed the issue of falling profitability and, in the case of some event types, lower attendances. As a result the number of events was reduced by 52, but the overall number of bookings increased slightly and there was only one cancellation – the lowest number of cancellations on record. Improvements were also effected in forward programming and in e-marketing of events.

Learning opportunities continued to be the most popular event type, with 80% of all bookings being for lectures and talks.

Art Appreciation Course The flagship of the Society's programs is still the art appreciation course, which in 2014 had the theme *Realism to Surrealism - European art and culture 1848-1936*. Increased to 36 lectures, its Thursday lunchtime session in the Domain Theatre sold out, with 93% of bookings being full subscriptions, while Wednesday evening bookings improved by 56% to an average of 251. When the 2015 series "Meet the Masters" went on pre-sale in October the Thursday session sold out on full subscriptions within 30 hours. Sponsorship of the series by Resimac completed its eighth year and was renewed.

Learning Curve Lecture Series Three series of Learning Curve lectures, covering a wide range of cultural interests, attracted large audiences: *Sublime: The pleasure of the overwhelming* with Damien Freeman, *Civilisation: Creating new worlds* with Dr Christopher Hartney, and *Pop to popism*, a series of introductory lectures for the summer exhibition, with curator Wayne Tunnickliffe as the keynote speaker. Once again Arab Bank sponsored these series.

Short series of coffee lectures on *Great Poets*, on *The Emergence of Modernism* and on *Literary Cities* were also popular, as was a new short series *Unwrapping Art* with Jonathan Cooper, while travel talks regularly packed the Centenary Auditorium.

The *Resonate* concert series sponsored by Artology continued to provide a program of high quality musical performance in the Art Gallery, and once again Pat Corrigan and his associates facilitated two sold-out jazz concerts, by Monica Trapaga and James Morrison.

Weekend workshops remained very popular with members both young and old. The monthly Kids Club, sponsored by Faber-Castell, grew to cater for 180 children in classes of 15, and the end-of-year drawing prize on the theme "Let's Go Pop" demonstrated the rapidly changing demographics of family membership, with children from a wide range of communities across the Greater Sydney region.

Because of the Art Gallery's need to use function spaces for commercial purposes, Kids Club lost its traditional venue and the Society's Council, with the support of Art Gallery management, resolved to set aside funds in 2015 for the creation of a dedicated workshop space in the atrium within the Members Lounge area.

Steps were taken to address the high cost of the traditional members' parties, beginning with a change of format for the Archibald preview party, with a greater focus on the art and

a cap on numbers of 500. The Archibald and the end-of-year Pop parties were all highly successful and contributed to member satisfaction.

Communications

Look magazine remained a highly prized benefit of membership, bringing its readers in-depth coverage of the Art Gallery's work each month.

A fall in advertising revenue over recent years had led to a substantial increase in the amount from members' subscriptions required to subsidise the magazine. A review was undertaken of the production contract, and as a result the contract was renewed for one year only, with an increase in the target for advertising revenue and a broadening of the advertising brief to include luxury goods.

Council determined that the magazine should remain monthly throughout 2015, given its significant role in promotion of members' events, with a further review of print and online publication to be undertaken during that year. Uptake of the iPad edition had been limited. The review would therefore consider development of an online version of the magazine which would be accessible across all platforms, and the possibility of less frequent but more substantial print editions.

Jill Sykes, editor for 13 years, resigned at the end of the year and was warmly thanked for her services, and John Saxby, former arts editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, was appointed in her place.

Online communications The Art Gallery Society has had a strong online presence over the course of 2014. The three key regular email distribution marketing (eDM) channels to Gallery members are *Peek*, *Fuse* and *Corporate*.

The *Peek* eDM is distributed fortnightly to all members who supply an email address. It provides a range of material that aims to keep members engaged and informed of upcoming Gallery exhibitions and members' events, benefits and fundraising efforts as well as special offers and competitions. The total subscriber numbers have steadily increased to approximately 21,000. *Peek* had a steady open rate throughout 2014 with the average being 41.21%, and also received a click-through rate of 21.47%, achieving a click to open rate of 52.1%. This significant increase in the click to open rate indicates that members are satisfied with the variety and quality of content within the e-newsletter.

The *Fuse* eDM is distributed on the alternate fortnight to Young Members. It has a range of content including events, special programs, special offers and giveaways that are directed to a younger age demographic of 18–40s. The open rate average for 2014 was 29.88%, with a click-through average of 11.07%, giving a click to open ratio of 37.05%.

The *Corporate* eDM is distributed monthly to Corporate Members, with an open rate of 33.66%, a click through average of 9.02% and a click to open ratio of 26.8%.

The Art Gallery of NSW distributes the *Artmail* eDM monthly to approximately 180,000 subscribers. The members are represented within the e-newsletter with a dedicated module which is used to promote joining the Gallery, the benefits of membership, members' events and key fundraising campaigns such as the Members Travel Draw.

The Art Gallery Society also promotes membership and members events outside the Gallery walls by leveraging the online communication and social media throughout the year of partner organisations including Arts Hub, Art and Australia, Alliance Française de Sydney, Belvoir Theatre, Better Read Than Dead, Creative Mornings, eAlmanac, Fine Fish Records, Fine Music FM, Musica Viva, New Philosopher, Palace Cinemas, Sounds Like Sydney, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Talks, Sydney Theatre Company, The Conversation and Urban Walkabout.

Contempo/Young Members

During the year, in consultation with Council, the Contempo committee, led by president Nicole Monks, decided to change its name to Young Members to avoid confusion over the purpose of the group. With guidance and support from the new Young Members Manager, Sophie Harrington, the committee ran a diverse and engaging program of events for young people both in the Art Gallery and across Sydney. The program is not confined to contemporary art alone, and contemporary art events attract members of all ages – hence the change of name. Also as the target demographic for Young Members is 18-40 years it is now clearly an events group for people across various membership categories (Student, Under 30s, Concession and General) not a membership category in and of itself.

Highlights of the events program included engagement and support of artists through studio visits including to Janet Laurence, Tony Albert and Natalya Hughes. Among favourite events were artist talks by Vivienne Binns, Euraba Paper artists, Ron Adams, Leo Coyte, James Drinkwater, Belem Lett, Monika Behrens, Phaptawan Suwannakudt, Nike Savvas and others, and private collection stories with behind-the-scenes tours of the Bresic Whitney corporate collection and the collections of Liz Nowell, Jason Wing and Blak Douglas AKA Adam Hill.

Street art walks, a curator's insight talk for SafARI, the unofficial fringe biennale, and a successful art and architecture talk series featuring Richard Johnson and James Pearce were also well received. Experimenting with new event formats such as talks in restaurants with international artists over their native cuisine in the 'Art, food, fun' series gave scope for further growth into innovative areas that connect young audiences with culture in Sydney. Young Members continues to have a reputation as cutting edge and culturally connected, increasingly drawing in young audiences.

The committee consists of 16 elected members and has the assistance of a larger group of volunteers. Their fundraising activities enabled the group to fund the acquisitions detailed on p3.

Subscribers to the Young Members e-newsletter *Fuse* reached 12,500.

Volunteer groups

The Art Gallery's four volunteer bodies – the Volunteer Guides, Task Force, Community Ambassadors and Young Member volunteers – have all grown out of the membership body and are integral to its role and its ethos.

The Art Gallery has for more than 40 years relied on the goodwill and generosity of spirit that its volunteers provide and, in common with other museums, still does so. Their

contribution, which has saved the institution many millions of dollars in those years, is highly regarded by other members.

In 2014 the Volunteer Guides, numbering some 180, provided guided tours of the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions for thousands of members, for the general public and for school groups and their committee managed the complex rosters involved. During the year Gallery management decided to employ a permanent coordinator to assist their work.

The Community Ambassadors numbered 33 and provided tours in Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese and Korean. They also attended meetings of the Volunteer Guides.

Task Force continued to give practical assistance to both the Art Gallery and the Society. Following the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman prizes exhibition, the Art Gallery terminated their ticketing duties which had saved the institution large amounts of money for some 30 years and were their main Gallery duty.

A large number of Task Force members transferred to the new membership desk, begun in November, where they were successful in recruiting significant numbers of new members. Some transferred to other duties connected with the end-of-year exhibition. In total 52, out of 200 members at the start of the year, resigned from Task Force. At 31 December Task Force numbered 148.

In addition to their duties in the Art Gallery, Task Force contributed to Sculpture by the Sea both as volunteers and by providing an artist subsidy.

Looking Ahead

The Society's Council ended the year looking forward to concluding the Memorandum of Understanding being negotiated with the Art Gallery's Board of Trustees and management, and to carrying through the proposed change of name to "Art Gallery of New South Wales Members".

The organisation also looked forward to seeing the development of a strategy for the Art Gallery, on which a preliminary workshop had been held in 2014, with the Society's President, Vice-President and Executive Director included among the attendees.

The Society's business plan for 2015, developed in consultation with Council and staff, included membership growth initiatives, improved event programming, and development of the organisation's online profile and social media usage.

It was also envisaged that, once the Art Gallery's strategy was unveiled, the Society would develop its own three- to five-year plan in relation to it.



Les Moseley
President



Judith White
Executive Director

PATRON

Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of New South Wales, to September 2014

His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of New South Wales, from October 2014

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The Hon Bronwyn Bishop

Mrs Joan Levy (deceased 2014)

Mr Peter Flick

Mrs Diana Walder OAM (deceased 2014)

Mr Raymond Kidd

Mrs Carolyn Ward

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Daisy Hsu

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Carolyn Bethwaite

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Pamela Blackett

Jenny Birt

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Mary-Jane Brodribb

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Pat Kreuiter

Dorothea Labone

Shirley Lilienthal

Susan Ma

Catherine Mairs

Susan Marjoram

Sandra Marsh

Joan Massey

Jann McClintock

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Ruth Attwood from December

REGISTRAR

Jeffrey Waiyee

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to September 2014

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MEMBERS DESK ROSTER OFFICER

from September 2014

Judy Tribe

MEMBERS LOUNGE ROSTER OFFICER

to September 2014

Lea Clarke

MEMBERS HOSPITALITY DESK ROSTER

OFFICER from September 2014

Lea Clarke

NEW MEMBERS OFFICER/

CONCIERGE ROSTER OFFICER

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Vere Kenny	Leslie Stevenson	
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Laura Lyubomirsky	Irene Thom	Sue Kerr
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Dana Skakavac		
Ross Smith		

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Jiyan Dessens
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Gavin Azar	Siobhan Cowell
Hannah Van Der Velden	Skadi Heckmüller
Harry Whelan	Yonas Bauer

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B Abel	W Blinco & A Jameson	D Clarke & S Lee
S Adams	A Blomfield	K Clarke
A Alford	P Bondin & A Singer	R Claxton
A & W Allaway	G & C Bradley	B J K & S M Cohen
J Allen	F Breen & C Hunter	S Cole
R Allen & P Witt	S Brettle	K Comerford
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Giovanni Battista Moroni
Portrait of a young man (1565-1570)



Basile Lemeunier
Portrait of Edouard Detaille (1891)



Nike Savvas
Rally (2014)



Reko Rennie
No sleep till Dreamtime (2014)

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