

ART GALLERY SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES 2011 ANNUAL REVIEW

ABN 26 000 207 198 For the year ended 31 December 2011



E. Phillips Fox

CONTENTS**PAGE**

2011 – THE YEAR IN REVIEW	3–5
ACKNOWLEDGED DONORS	6–8
PRINCIPAL SPONSORS	9
CORPORATE MEMBERS	9
STAFF	10
CONTEMPO COMMITTEE	11
COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS	11
VOLUNTEER GUIDES	12
VOLUNTEER TASK FORCE	13–14
2011 ACQUISITIONS	15

2011 – THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2011 was a very successful year for the Art Gallery Society. A year that encompassed a wonderful presentation of exhibitions at the Gallery, from *First Emperor: China's Entombed Warriors*, the annual excitement of the *Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes*, through to *Mad Square: Modernity in German Art 1910 – 1937* and the beautiful *Dobell Drawing Prize*, to the astonishing *Picasso: Masterpieces from the Musée Picasso, Paris*.

While it is gratifying to know that 45% of our membership have been members for more than 10 years, encouraging membership in a city like Sydney, that has so many competitors for our leisure hours contains many challenges. Experience tells us that the best way to attract new members is through the Gallery's exhibition program – the more people that come in through the front doors, the more people we can convert to members. But, current members have a role to play too, in ensuring the Society thrives, by being ambassadors for the Society and the Gallery, encouraging your friends and acquaintances in being "part of the art".

One of the ways the Society is looking at increasing membership is to promote the Society to Sydney's multicultural communities. The Gallery's wonderful Community Ambassadors who do an excellent job in making the Gallery known to the Asian communities through their own personal networks, but also by providing tours in Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese are one of the important aspects of this approach.

There are many other communities out there who do not attend the Gallery, whether because visiting museums is not an ordinary part of their lives in their countries of origin, or whether they feel the Gallery does not represent opportunities relevant to their home cultures.

The Society's role here is to encourage people to dip their toes into the Gallery's waters and to see that what the Gallery and the Society has to offer is for everyone.

ACQUISITIONS

Following in the Society's tradition of acquiring works for the Gallery's collections, 2011 proved to be another milestone in providing funds as the single biggest benefactor to the Gallery.

E. PHILLIPS FOX: *NASTURTIVMS* (C.1912)

To acknowledge the passing of the great artist and personality that was Margaret Olley, the Society approached the Gallery with the offer to acquire an artwork in her honour. Several of her own works were suggested, as were works by other artists, but as always, the needs of the Gallery's collections were the first priority. To this end, when Emmanuel Phillips Fox's painting *Nasturtiums* came up for auction at that time, the Gallery excitedly came to the Society to say that this important picture was exactly what was needed to fill a gap in the Australian collections.

This work became the focus of the Society's *Collection Circle Acquisition Program* fundraising drive, and our Collection Circle members, and members generally, gave generously to this important purchase.

As Edmund Capon said at the time, Phillips Fox was one of Olley's favourite artists and she would be thrilled to know that the Society had acquired it in her honour.

He also assured members that the work was so important that it would rarely be removed from display.

BILL HENSON – *UNTITLED 2009/2010*

Despite the controversy surrounding the Bill Henson exhibition in 2008 at the Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Senior Curator, photographs at the Gallery, Judy Annear, approached the Society this year to see whether we could fund the purchase of two Bill Henson photographs. The answer was "yes" unanimously.

Both *Untitled 2009/2010* the works are both beautifully atmospheric and poetic images that the Society is proud to add to the Gallery's photography collection.

The funds came from a new acquisition category for smaller one-off curator purchases, outside of the main acquisition fund, and is a wonderful start to this new initiative.

CONTEMPO – *MOTHER INDIA 2005*

The younger members group of the Society, *Contempo*, has a reputation in the Sydney art scene for engaging young people with the Gallery and the Society. They, and the *Young Friends*, as they were previously called, have an impressive history of fundraising exclusively for contemporary works for the collections.

This year they once again supported the Asian

collections by providing funds for a video work *Mother India 2005*. A raw and honest work that explores the lives of women in India, by renowned artist Nalini Malani, shows that *Contempo's* committee, volunteers and members are committed to acquiring for the Gallery the most cutting-edge contemporary art of our time.

LOOK MAGAZINE

In the Society's recent on-line survey, *Look* magazine came up once again as the most important benefit of Society membership. Members who completed the survey offered suggestions on what they would like to read in *Look* and we endeavoured to accommodate them and will continue to do so when we can.

Producing a membership magazine of such quality and interest every month with only two staff members is a huge achievement and members' appreciation of the end result makes it all worthwhile.

With around 20,000 copies per month, *Look* is still the largest audited art magazine in the country.

EVENTS

The Society's events program is the biggest of any arts membership group in Australia – if not world-wide.

One of the most significant differences between the AGNSW and most other museums around the world is that it allows its institutional educational programs and its membership programs to run side-by-side to present to the public and members alike an open door to the visual arts and the humanities in general.

In 2011, the Society presented 484 events, more than ever before. It sold 46,317 tickets to these events.

The Gallery's Public Programs Department's charter is to present mostly free events to the general public that focus on the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions and programs for primary, secondary and tertiary students.

It would be pointless for the Society to focus on these areas as well, and this allows us to present a complimentary program of events that run in tandem with Public Programs'.

The Society, in its programming, explores the wider humanities whose themes and strands cross over and interweave with those of the visual arts. Literature, music, philosophy and religion, for example, are all reflected and refracted in painting, sculpture and contemporary art. This combination of the programming between Public Programs and the Society provides the people of Sydney with an insight into art, artists and the creative world unequalled in this country.

ART APPRECIATION DIPLOMA COURSE

The Society's flagship art appreciation course, this year entitled *Absolutism to Enlightenment: European Art 1665-1765* continues a 22 year history of providing art appreciation to members and the public. It is the only course of its kind in Australia – not even university arts schools present a course of this kind.

Presenting Gallery curators and academics from across Australia, and sometimes abroad, the course provides an in-depth examination of the world's great art historical periods.

Each course contains 33 lectures and are held on Wednesday evenings and Thursday lunchtimes. Thursdays always sell out completely at 300 people per lecture and the Wednesday nights average 200 attendees per lecture – for this year's course 16,500 tickets were sold.

LEARNING CURVE LECTURES

One of the most important, and illuminating, lessons we at the Society have learnt over the years is that our members love to learn. And they love to have their learning experiences in the Gallery.

As with the art appreciation courses above, the Society's broad range of subject matter in our *Learning Curve Lecture Series* seems to have struck a chord with members. The broader humanities subjects as well as the visual art content has an appeal to members that is extremely gratifying.

This year our Learning Curve Series included Susannah Fullerton's *American Classics*, and Professor Robert Spillane and Dr Christopher Hartney's double act in *The Passions* course, both extremely well-attended and praised by members.

Much to our delight an experiment we tried three years ago – putting high quality lectures on on Sunday mornings - has worked!

We tested the waters first for the 150th anniversary of Charles Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species* with the course *Darwin's Great Idea: How Evolution Rewrote Our World* which to our astonishment sold out quickly.

Following this success we scheduled the following year a course to introduce members to the ideas inspiring Terence Maloon's extraordinary exhibition *Paths to Abstraction*. The course, called *Ways to Abstraction*, started two months before the exhibition and allowed members to be fully informed about the social, political and artistic times that fuelled the birth of a new way of seeing the world, that resulted in the birth of a new artform. This course completely sold out.

All this led us to develop a course along similar

lines for the *Mad Square: Modernity in German Art 1910 – 1937* exhibition this year, called *Apocalyptic visions: creativity to catastrophe in the Weimar Republic*, that put German art of the period in context so that members could view the exhibition more fully informed.

It was wonderful for us to learn that members will come to the Gallery early on a Sunday morning to learn!

ART-MAKING WORKSHOPS

Alongside enjoying their learning experiences within the Gallery, members also enjoy creating their own artworks within the Gallery environment.

The Society's practical art making workshops – for adults, teenagers and children were once again very successful in 2011.

The art-making workshops - the Society's and *Contempo's* – cover every imaginable artform – painting, drawing, ceramics, clay, collage, prints, photography – the list is endless.

The inspiration the Gallery provides to members, their children and their grandchildren in expressing their own creativity is an important part of its role and its purpose for the people of Sydney.

In 2011, for the first time, the Society presented the Kid's Art Prize, sponsored by Faber Castell Australia. The prize had wonderful coverage in the Sydney press and attracted 160 entries from members' children. And due to the press coverage we signed up many more family members so their children could enter the prize.

The prize was judged by *Archibald* favourite Jenny Sages, and was such a success that plans were made to present it again in 2012.

CONTEMPO

Contempo, our younger members group, is one of the most important elements of the Society.

Engaging young people with art, with the Gallery and with the Society, now, will not only benefit them in their future lives, but can only benefit us as well.

To this end the *Contempo* committee and volunteers give a great deal of their time and passion to present a fantastic range of events that showcases everything contemporary culture has to offer.

CONTEMPO EVENTS

In 2011, *Contempo* presented 88 events, themed across all areas of contemporary life – art-making workshops, the *Design Lovers Series*, what's happening in literature with their monthly *Book Club*, tours of contemporary exhibitions both inside the Gallery and at other venues, but their biggest, best and most

amazing event is their annual *End of Year Party*.

First established nine years ago, this party has become the number one must-go-to party of the Christmas season. Because the safety of the artworks is our number one priority, the number of attendees is limited to 600 and the tickets are much sought after. The creativity and inventiveness of costume that the people who attend wear range from the bizarre to the weird!

EVENTS FOR EVERYONE

The Society presents events that try to appeal to our members' many interests, and to suit every pocket, from low-cost coffee mornings, coffee lectures and free viewings, to more highly priced parties, concerts, and special events.

Whether it be photography with our *My Favourite Things* talks with eminent Australian photographers, Australian or Asian art, prints and drawings or sculpture, or the humanities in general, the Society's aim is to present something for everyone.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

While corporate Australia was still coming out of the disastrous effects of the global financial crisis, the Society's corporate membership program this year continued in a healthy condition throughout 2011.

The inevitable loss of some companies to the program was disappointing, but during the year we saw some return and some new ones join, and by year's end the program had 189 corporate members only 19 down on the number prior to the global financial crisis.

Corporate member companies enjoy the opportunities the program provides for entertaining their staff and important clients at the Gallery, offering an unusual combination of art and networking that brings business and culture closer together.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

Some corporate entities actively contribute back to the community and the Society is fortunate to have Principal Sponsors who help us to achieve our goals.

Arab Bank Australia:
Learning Curve Lecture Series

Art Equity:
Contempo

Faber Castell Australia:
Kids Club

Resimac Limited:
The Art Appreciation Lecture Series

State Street Corporation:
Archibald and Christmas Parties

The Trust Company Foundation:
Resonate Concert Series

The Society is grateful to all the companies mentioned above and to all of those involved in the corporate membership program.

VOLUNTEER GUIDES AND VOLUNTEER TASK FORCE

An institution such as the Art Gallery of NSW cannot function, and could not survive, in the dynamic ways it does for the people of Sydney without the generosity, goodwill and time that the volunteers give to the Gallery.

In 2011, there were over 120 Volunteer Guides, more than 230 Volunteer Task Force and more than 25 Community Ambassadors, as well as the 16-strong *Contempo* committee and its Volunteers. Combined, the hours these volunteers save the Gallery and the Society in wages, has been estimated as more than \$1.6 million.

The Volunteer Guides and the Volunteer Task Force are the face of the Gallery, often the first point of contact for the public and the members.

The Volunteer Guides interpret the permanent collections and the temporary exhibitions for the public and members alike. The Volunteer Task Force provide practical, hands on assistance to Gallery through ticketing, exhibitions, serving members at events, to stuffing those all-important envelopes for membership and the Gallery's marketing department.

As mentioned before, the Community Ambassadors play a vital role in bringing the Gallery to the Asian communities of Sydney.

And, as a catalyst to members and audiences of the future we must not forget the *Contempo* committee and its volunteers who play a role, now, in securing the Gallery in the minds of the next generation.

AND THE NEXT CHAPTER

The end of 2011 closes an astounding chapter in the history of the Art Gallery of NSW, and indeed, the history of the Art Gallery Society.

The end of Edmund Capon's 33 year reign at the Gallery imbues us all with a sense of sorrow, but also enlightenment, and excitement for the future.

Edmund was always a great supporter of the Society and most of the Society's important acquisitions were acquired under his and the curators' guidance.

A lot of those acquisitions, now numbering around 230 pieces, are on permanent display.

The Society wishes Edmund and his wife Joanna all the very best in their new endeavours, and thank them for their support and appreciation of the Art Gallery Society.

At the time of writing there is no new Director on the horizon. But still, we all look forward to the next chapter of the Gallery and the Society.



John Masters
President



Craig Brush
Executive Director

Dated at Sydney
this 15th day of March 2011

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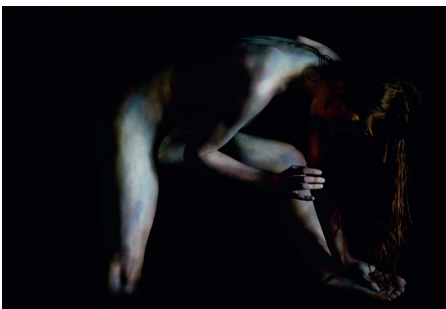
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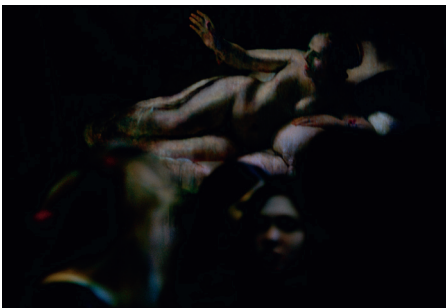
2011 ACQUISITIONS



Nalini Malani
(India 1946 -)
Mother India: transactions in the construction of pain 2005, video play; five video projectors in sync, sound, 5 minutes, dimensions variable. Purchased with funds provided by the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales Contempo Group 2011



Bill Henson
Untitled 2009/2010
archival inkjet pigment print,
104.5 x 154.5cm image
(approx.)



Bill Henson
Untitled 2009/2010
archival inkjet pigment print,
104.5 x 154.5cm image
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Emmanuel Phillips Fox
Nasturtiums c.1912 oil on canvas,
91.5 x 71.5cm. Purchased in memory of Margaret Olley
with funds donated by the Art Gallery Society of
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