

# ART GALLERY SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES AN OVERVIEW 2016

For the year ended 31 December 2016

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2016

The Art Gallery Society is an independent body with a proud and significant history of supporting the Art Gallery of New South Wales, dating back to its formation in 1953. It remains an independent association, partnering with the Gallery to deliver vibrant programs and events that enliven member engagement with art and the Gallery. Our goal is to attract new members while raising funds in support of the State's foremost art institution.

Based on a range of criteria, including the number of paid-up members; the level of member engagement in programs; high membership retention rate; membership benefits, and fund-raising for art acquisitions and other support, the Art Gallery Society is unique amongst museum membership organisations in Australia. Councillors are proud of this history and are committed to building on this legacy.

# **Appointment of Executive Director**

The year began with the appointment of Ron Ramsey as Executive Director of the Society on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016. Since taking up the role Ron Ramsey has largely been responsible for making important strides:-

- Re-invigorating a strong and positive working relationship with the Gallery.
- Maintaining the diverse range of stimulating member programs that continue to attract large appreciative audiences.
- Overseeing an increase in membership numbers peaking at 28,277 individual members, with 3,473 new members joining in 2016.
- Steering the re-design of LOOK magazine, including it becoming a bi-monthly edition.
- Implementing a staff re-structure to improve efficiency.
- Overseeing the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Gallery which looks to the future.

#### **LOOK Magazine re-launch**

Membership research has consistently shown that alongside the wonderful amenities of our Members Lounge the most valued benefit of membership is receiving LOOK magazine. LOOK was successfully re-launched in a new larger format, high quality bi-monthly edition on 25 October. The response from Members has been overwhelmingly positive.

# **Operational Review**

Throughout the year, Council reviewed important aspects of the Society's operations. Senior AGS managers gave presentations to Council about their areas of responsibility, including programs, achievements and strategies for the future, on which Council deliberated. It was then decided that given we had a new President, Vice President, Treasurer, Executive Director and two new Councillors, and with the benefit of the AGS managers' information, it was timely for the Council to commission an independent review of the Society's operations.

#### Independent Review

In early September 2016 Council commissioned an independent efficiency review of the Society's operations from Deloitte, the leading business consulting and financial advisory firm. The Deloitte Review was presented to Council in late October 2016. The report identified strengths and weaknesses, and made recommendations. It identified the three most profitable areas of AGS activity were: membership, lectures and international tours.

#### Implementing Review recommendations

A key Deloitte recommendation was to merge the Society's Corporate Members Program with the Gallery's Corporate Development Division. This proposal would do away with unnecessary duplication and confusion resulting from two separate, competing corporate membership programs in support of a single institution.

The Society will continue to operate its own Corporate Sponsorship Program, maintaining and building relationships with current and potential sponsors of Society programs and events.

The Review also recommended a limited staff restructure to achieve greater efficiencies within the Society's operations, as well as a better use of members' funds. It recommended reducing the number of senior managers and creating one assistant director role, resulting in net savings in operating costs.

After due consideration of several options, Council unanimously endorsed the re-structure and proposed changes. The re-structure took place in February 2017 resulting in two senior manager positions being discontinued.

#### **Memorandum of Understanding**

The Art Gallery Society and the Art Gallery of New South Wales have reached an historic agreement, which affirms and formalises their 64 year partnership. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) clarifies the nature and benefits of the partnership and articulates a vision for the future.

The purpose of this first MOU is to build on the goodwill that exists between the Society and the Gallery. Importantly the MOU recognizes the Art Gallery Society as art institution's membership body; that it is independent and that it's constitution and its name remain unchanged. The MOU also acknowledges the separate rights and responsibilities of both organisations, while outlining joint goals and protocols for projects and programs. These include:-

Membership and audience growth strategies
LOOK magazine
Philanthropy and corporate programs
Marketing and communications
Programming, venue use and functions
Volunteer co-ordination
Intellectual property
Financial support
Membership services and facilities

Council believes the agreement has adequate flexibility to meet changing circumstances. It recognizes that changing circumstances can affect the implementation and objectives of the MOU.

The term of the MOU is a renewable three-year agreement. The Society has the protection of termination provisions, which it can initiate, and dispute resolution procedures to ensure the smooth implementation of the agreement.

Ultimately the MOU is a statement about the growth and development of the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales; its contribution to fulfilling the future vision of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and the role the Society will play in that vision.

#### AGS Strategic Plan

Developing a new AGS strategic plan for the future of the membership organisation is a priority for Council. The strategic plan will mesh with those of the Art Gallery and Art Gallery Foundation, and will build on the findings of the Deloitte Review. Our aim is to increase and diversify memberships, continue to offer outstanding programs that engage members with art and the Gallery, and grow financial support for the Gallery. Work on the Strategic Plan commenced in March 2017 and

#### Support for the Gallery

The Society funded four works for the Gallery's collection in 2016. The principal acquisition being John Russell's *In the afternoon* 1891, an important Australian impressionist work, as well as *The glow of the city* 1929, depicting a glamorous flapper in front of a New York skyline by Australian-born Martin Lewis.

Two works were funded from the Dagmar Halas bequest fund: *Arums growing* 1927 by Grace Cossington Smith and a landscape *Through the trees Toongabbie* 1920 by Hilda Rix Nicholas.

Members contributing to the Collection Circle Acquisition Program donated a minimum of \$200 per year each. They are loyal donors and their names are listed below, starting on page 13. The total funding for acquisitions provided by the Society during the year, including the Dagmar Halas bequest contributions, amounted to \$545,791.

The Society's major support of the *Art After Hours* program has meant that Wednesday evenings are an energised and often youthful gathering of thousands of new and regular visitors eager to embrace a typically engaging and innovative program.

Similarly, the AGS' partnering with the exhibition *O'Keeffe, Preston and Cossington Smith: Making Modernism,* which broke the attendance record when displayed at Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne (12 October 2016 – 19 February 2017), ensures the Society continues to enable members and the broader community to engage and interact with significant works of art. (*Making Modernism* will be presented at the Art Gallery of New South Wales 1 July – 2 October 2017)

# **2016** THE YEAR IN REVIEW

#### **General Membership**

2016 saw a growth figure of 1159 memberships. 2016 started with 16884 memberships and finished with 18043 memberships covering 28350 individuals. Overall renewal rates for General Memberships were 80.5%.

Membership staffing costs were down in 2016, with an increase in email generated online renewals and the streamlining of associated processing reducing the overall workload. The Society continued with its roll-out of a long-life smart membership card system, with new membership verification technology introduced at Member Exhibition Previews, the members lounge, Gallery shop and the exhibition ticketing desk.

The 2016 members Travel Draw achieved \$137,000, an increase of \$2,408 on the previous year. The Travel Draw was supported by Emirates, Arab Bank Australia, Taylors Wines, Faber-Castell Australia, Lindt Swiss Chocolates, Sofitel, Renaissance Tours, Paul Newton, Catapult, Platform Bausele, Defiance Gallery and Brett Mickan Design.

#### **Corporate Development**

The corporate membership program remained steady during a challenging economic and political year. At the end of 2016 the total number of corporate members stood at 162.

The generous sponsors who have continued to support various Society programs in 2016; including Brian Abel for sponsoring our workshops, Arab Bank Australia for sponsoring the Learning Curve Lecture Series, Artology for sponsoring the Resonate Concert Series, Clifford

Chance for sponsoring the Archibald Preview and End-of-Year Parties, Faber-Castell Australia for sponsoring the Kids Club, Philip Bacon Galleries for sponsoring the volunteers, Resimac Limited for sponsoring the Art Appreciation Lectures Series, Lindsay Yates and K.W. Doggett for sponsoring our printing and paper supplies and our long-standing wine sponsor Taylors Wines.

# **Programs and Events**

45,557 people attended 411 paid members events in 2016. This does not include corporate evenings, members' exhibition viewings and world travel talks outside of Armchair Travel. 77% of bookings – 35,061 – came from course/lecture programs, which form only 32% of the number of all events.

Online bookings now make up more than 50% of bookings income, for the first time overtaking telephone bookings as the preferred method. Income from online bookings was the highest on record at \$628,608, a 23% increase on 2015.

Following the annual review of the previous year's program, some events that had dropped in capacity were phased out, and this saw average capacity rise to 87% - a 6% increase on 2015 and the highest in five years. On average 55% of events were completely sold out. Only five events, three of them Young Members, had to be cancelled, compared to eight the previous year.

#### **Communications**

Following a tender process, *Look* magazine a highly valued membership benefit was relaunched on 25 October. The new *Look* was officially launched with a larger format and page count and bimonthly frequency. November-December was the first edition of the new *Look* which included Auguste Rodin's *The kiss* 1901-04 on the cover. Under the direction of editor John Saxby and deputy editor Sarah Couper, the new *Look* increased from 60 pages to 84 pages and included a number of new features, additional content and changes to design. Also included in the magazine is *At the Gallery*, a stand-along guide to member events and Gallery programs. The *Look* Advisory Panel consisting of key Society and Gallery staff continued to meet on a regular basis to consult on future content and the review of publication options.

New production partner, Hardie Grant Media was given a broader brief and higher targets for advertising revenue per issue (\$65,000), which were exceeded for the November/December issue (\$70,673). With a circulation of more than 18,000 copies and a readership estimated to be two to three times that figure, *Look* remains a leader among art magazines in Australia.

Online communication The Society had a growing online presence in 2016 with its three regular email distribution marketing (eDM) channels to Gallery members: *Peek, Fuse* and *Corporate*.

*Peek* eDM, distributed on a fortnightly basis to all members who supply an email address, provides information on Gallery exhibitions and members' events, benefits and fundraising efforts as well as special offers and competitions. Total subscriber numbers are approximately 23,000 with an opening rate average of 40%, a click-through rate of 20% and a click-to-open (CTOR) rate of 50%.

Fuse eDM is distributed on fortnight monthly basis to Young Members, with a range of content directed to a younger age demographic of 18–40s. It had 9,500 subscribers with a CTOR average of 32%.

The *Corporate* eDM is distributed monthly to 1,100 subscribers among Corporate Members, with a CTOR average of 24%.

The Art Gallery of NSW distributes the *Artmail* eDM monthly to approximately 185,000 subscribers. The members are represented in the e-newsletter with a dedicated module to promote joining the Gallery, the benefits of membership, members' events and key fundraising campaigns such as the Collection Circle Acquisition Program and the members' Travel Draw.

# **Young Members**

Young Members: A total of 27 events were held for young members in 2016, a decrease from 62 events in 2015. Bookings totalled 553 down from 1359 the previous year. The role of young members coordinator has remained vacant since mid-July 2016. Studio visits and gallery tours remained popular.

The committee led by president Peter Plustwik have been working on a strategy for 2017 with the focus being on community, connections and acquisitions.

#### **Volunteers**

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. Their wonderful contributions are greatly appreciated by staff and visitors alike. For many Gallery visitors, volunteers are the welcoming face of the institution and of membership, but many do not realise the essential services they provide year round, through weekends and holidays, as well as in the evenings when special events take place.

The Society benefits directly from Task Force volunteers who staff the Society's Membership Desk, assist with behind the scenes program support; and provide a range of support in the Members Lounge. The Task Force volunteers added ticketing duties for exhibitions to their roster of duties and they enthusiastically took on the role. The Society was particularly grateful to the Task Force for their work on the members desk where they facilitated the recruitment 1381 new members. Young Members volunteers have greatly assisted the Society by mounting special events to encourage young Gallery visitors to join up.

In 2016 the responsibility for Volunteer Guides was transferred to the Gallery and provided guided tours of the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions for thousands of members, for the general public and for school groups. The Community Ambassadors provided tours in Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese and Korean and engaged in outreach work in their respective communities.

Volunteers will always have a role to play at the Art Gallery. The Society and Gallery are working together to identify new opportunities for volunteers as the Society and the Gallery grow.

Brian Ladd President, Art Gallery Society of New South Wales

#### **PATRON**

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

# **HONORARY LIFE GOVERNORS**

The Hon Bronwyn Bishop Mr Peter Flick Mr Raymond Kidd Mrs Carolyn Ward

# **COUNCILLORS** from April 2016

Brian Ladd PRESIDENT
Paula Latos-Valier VICE PRESIDENT
Brian Greenacre TREASURER
Anastasia Economou
Sue Dadswell
Jill Keyte
Edward Palmisano
Jo-Ann Smith
Ex-Officio
Dr Michael Brand
The Hon Ashley Dawson-Damer

# **IMMEDIATE PAST COUNCILLORS**

Les Moseley (until April 2016) Jackie De Diana (until April 2016) Christopher Wokes (until July 2016)

#### **HONORARY LAWYERS**

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Gavin Smith Valeska Bloch Isabelle Guyot

#### **VOLUNTEER GUIDES COMMITTEE 2016**

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Simon Chan

ASSISTANT GUIDES COORDINATOR

Jo-Ann Smith ASSISTANT COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS

COORDINATOR Kazuko Chalker

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CHILDREN'S GUIDES COORDINATOR Jenny Harrison

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COORDINATOR Samantha Tonkin

ASSISTANT LECTURE PROGRAMME

COORDINATOR Philippa Penman

SECRETARY/ TREASURER Choon Quek

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Potten, Keith Storch, Caroline Zurnamer, Linda

Potts, Irene Sullivan, Dorinda

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Elizabeth Kao Jennifer Mok

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Sue Dadswell Judy Tribe

ASSISTANT COORDINATOR NEW MEMBERS OFFICER/ CONCIERGE

Judy Embrey ROSTER OFFICER

Mary Grice

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Ruth Attwood FUNCTIONS ROSTER OFFICER

Sandra Beesley

**REGISTRAR** 

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Georgina Gye

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VICE PRESIDENT MEMBERSHIP

Sarah Close Brian Greenacre and Rebecca Mason

TREASURER EVENTS

Brian Greenacre Sally Bevan, Marcel Julliard, Maude Pare

Plante, Rosemary Nunes-Silva and

Harrington, Sophie

SOCIAL MEDIA/COMMUNICATIONS Matt Wan

**Christopher Murphy** 

Cap, Daniel

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14

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Wright, Lauren
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Yi, Naomi
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Farrow, Adrian
Farrow, Yvonne
Ferguson, Matthew
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Fisher, Karen
FitzSimons, David
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Flanagan, Richard
Flannery, Angela
Flynn, Christopher

Flynn, Paula

Fong, Colin

Fong, Karen

Forbes, June

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Gale, Tonia Gardiner-Hill, Bunny

Garumer-nin, bunny

Garland, Ian Garske, Jacqueline George, Janet Gibb, S J Gibson, Liz Gilkes, Elizabeth Gillespie, Judith Gilmore, Simon Gilmour, David Glasson, Martin Goodwin, Clive Goodwin, Jenny Gough, Linda Goyal, Manisha Goyal, Raj Grace, Carole Green, Anna Green, Christina

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Green, Richard

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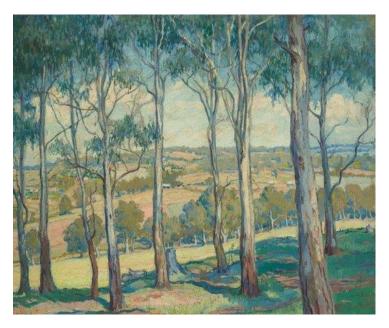
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In the afternoon 1891



**Hilda Rix Nicholas** Through the gum trees, Toongabbie 1920



**Grace Cossington Smith** Arums growing 1927



Martin Lewis Glow of the city 1929

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