



Art Gallery Society of New South Wales

An Overview of 2021

For the year ended 31 December 2021

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Presidents Report 2021

The Art Gallery Society of New South Wales

The Art Gallery Society of New South Wales (the Society), since its formation in 1953, has remained an independent body with a significant history of supporting the Art Gallery of New South Wales (the Art Gallery). The Society delivers the membership program on behalf of the Art Gallery and works closely with that institution on all aspects of our activities.

The Society's mission is to provide support to the State's foremost art institution, and throughout its history the Society has proudly delivered on this mission in a variety of ways: raising funds for acquisitions, sponsoring exhibitions and programs, providing scholarships for staff and cultivating a supportive community of passionate art and culture lovers around the Art Gallery.

The early 2020's are a period with many significant milestones for both the Art Gallery and the Society:

- the 150th anniversary of the Art Gallery in 2021;
- the opening of the refurbished Members Lounge and opening of the Sydney Modern Project in 2022; and
- the 70th anniversary of the Society in 2023.

With this in mind, 2021 was envisioned as a year where the Society concentrated upon consolidation of our membership services and forward planning for future growth alongside the delivery of programs and benefits on offer to maintain engagement with our members.

At the beginning of 2021 we hoped that we would be recovering from the turbulent effect of the Covid-19 pandemic, and by the start of June it seemed that the crisis was behind us. However, by the end of that month the Gallery was once again temporarily closed and many of our onsite programs were placed on hold. Throughout the closure period, the Society partnered with the Art Gallery to deliver vibrant programs and events with a diverse range of online offerings until onsite programming could recommence. Our members also continued to receive their *Look* magazine, identified as one of the most important benefits of their membership and a key communication channel for long format content about the Art Gallery.

Throughout 2021 the Society developed initiatives to deepen member engagement with the Art Gallery and diversify our membership base. This included a focus on providing connection with members through regular informative communications, continued membership benefits and online engagement opportunities. As a result our members have remained loyal, and newer members were welcomed to the Art Gallery community.

Our strong and supportive relationship with our colleagues at the Art Gallery of New South Wales has always been a key factor in the ongoing success of the Society and the mutual challenges that we have faced in 2021 have deepened this relationship further. We would like to congratulate Director Dr Michael Brand, the Art Gallery Executive and the amazing team of staff at the Art Gallery for successfully navigating the past twelve months and leading the wider Art Gallery community towards a bright new future as demonstrated by the successful delivery of the Sydney Modern Project.

The Society is proud of the history of our organisation and are committed to building on this legacy as we move into an exciting phase of Art Gallery campus extension, refurbishment of the existing campus, and the launch of the new Members Lounge.

The Year in Review

2020 was an unprecedented year due to the pandemic, and as restrictions eased in the first quarter of 2021, the Society was well placed with positive indications of membership growth and engagement. By July 2021 we had recorded 3,000 new memberships, an outstanding result that we were optimistic would continue, and our events program had delivered consistently well attended events, despite the need for social distancing requirements.

However, the second Sydney lockdown (in June 2021) resulted in a four-month closure of the Gallery which significantly impacted membership uptake and renewals as members were unable to visit the Art Gallery and view the extraordinary exhibitions on offer. Three major ticketed exhibitions, the *2021 Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prize*, *Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize* and *Hilma af Klint: The Secret Paintings* were closed to visitors after having only been open for days.

The *Matisse: Life and Spirit* blockbuster opened in late November 2021 and early membership responses were strong with over 1,450 new memberships and over 1,500 renewals registered in the November/December period.

By 31 December 2021 the Society was standing at 19,949 memberships (reflecting 28,967 members), numbers which highlight the longstanding loyalty of our members and their commitment to supporting the Gallery through their membership. Our 2021 Christmas season Gift Membership campaign was the most successful campaign to date. Over the eight-week festive season 527 gift memberships were purchased, primarily by members for their friends and families, a further indication of member satisfaction and engagement.

The Art Gallery's front-of-house team were instrumental in converting exhibition visitors into members with 1,908 memberships facilitated via this channel in 2021. The Society is grateful for the enthusiasm and hard work of the Art Gallery team, reflected in these outstanding figures. The popular take-up of the NSW Government's Dine and Discover program also contributed to Society membership with 1,601 vouchers being redeemed for Society memberships in 2021.

Leadership changes

After a successful five years at the helm, Executive Director Ron Ramsey retired in June 2021 and Robert Heather, former Director of the New England Regional Art Museum, was recruited into the role. Robert brings with him a deep knowledge of contemporary art museum practice, and many years' experience in membership and alumni programs in cultural and educational institutions.

The Art Gallery's 150th anniversary

Early in 2021, the Art Gallery celebrated its 150th anniversary.

The Society acquired the painting *The rain song* (2020) by Guy Maestri as a gift to the Art Gallery in recognition of this milestone, and the work was featured on the production of new membership cards, distributed to all members in acknowledgement of this wonderful occasion. Additionally, a special Resonate concert was held to celebrate the anniversary. The concert included a commissioned piece of music by Ross Edwards as well as a curated program of music from 1871 to 2021, representing the years of the Art Gallery's existence. As part of the celebrations, the Art Gallery launched its new identity and in conjunction with this, the Society unveiled a new rebranding to align with the Art

Gallery's. This rebranding elevated *members* as the primary messaging across all Society communications channels and was reinforced through the successful redesign of *Look* magazine which was unveiled in the December/January issue.

Acquisitions for the collection

2021 was a positive year for contributions to the Gallery's collection, with four major works acquired by the Society for the Art Gallery throughout the year.

There were three exceptional works by Australian women artists acquired in 2021, including two works purchased through the Elizabeth Fyffe bequest; *Lovers* (1948 - 1949) by Joy Hester and *A Market in Kairouan* (c.1911) by Ethel Carrick. Additionally, Tempe Manning's *Self portrait* (1939), was acquired with funds donated by members through a successful appeal to the Society membership. *Self portrait* was included in the *Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize* exhibition and has embarked on a substantial Australian tour.

Finally, through a specific campaign and the generosity of our members, the Society acquired *Colonne Pascale* (2021) by contemporary Cameroonian sculptor Pascale Marthine Tayou. This work has been installed as a centrepiece of the new rehang of the international galleries in the Grand Courts of the Art Gallery.

Members Programs and Events

After the significant impact of the pandemic upon the 2020 events program, the first six months of the 2021 program commenced with strong programming and attendances as members were eager to participate in on-site events again. For the first five months of the year events continued and were held under NSW Health guidelines and restrictions. Unfortunately, the onsite program had to be immediately suspended when the Gallery was required to close on 25 June.

In contrast to the process implemented during the Gallery's temporary closure in 2020, most events that were on sale prior to the 2021 closure were postponed and rescheduled rather than being cancelled. Lectures were reformatted and our presenters delivered them online as either 'on-demand' or 'live' Zoom formats, with artist masterclasses and the Geraldine Turner Resonate concert being rescheduled to later in the year. This resulted in significantly less cancellations and refunds as the overwhelming majority of attendees were content to engage with these options.

Events that had to be cancelled and were unable to be rescheduled included exhibition related coffee tours and lectures that the lecturers were unable to deliver remotely. Those with bookings for these events were offered the option to have their tickets either refunded, gifted as a donation or taken as an event credit. On-site events were resumed after the Gallery's re-opening on 11 October with both free and fee-based online content continuing and a number of postponed activities were then able to be delivered to the original ticketholders and subscribers.

During the temporary closure Lower Level Three of the Gallery had also been closed for refurbishment which meant that the Domain Lecture Theatre, one of our main onsite venues has remained closed, affecting the delivery of key programs such as our Art Appreciation and other lecture series.

Free online content was offered to members to keep them engaged during the lockdown including Member's Screening Room documentaries; Artist's Speaks online conversations; videos of lectures and other exhibition related content created by both the Society and the Art Gallery.

The free members viewings for *Matisse: Life & Spirit* in November, which operated under restricted capacities and timed ticketing, were booked to capacity with large waitlists for most viewings.

Event highlights through the year included:

- onsite exhibition related coffee tours and members viewings;
- the Learning Curve *Dressed to kill* series;
- the Art Appreciation series on the theme of *Love, Sex and Death*;
- the annual Archibald preview party;
- the *Restoration* architecture series;
- *The living art of India* series;
- Art workshops & masterclasses and *Drawing the Collection*;
- *The Crown* High Tea's; and
- the Young Members meetup's.

Online lectures of Raphael and Dante and the curators talk of Hilma af Klint exceeded expectations with large numbers of members subscribing to watch them during lockdown.

Communications

Look magazine kept members connected throughout the year and a bold new design of the magazine was launched in December. This new design was created to align with the Art Gallery's identity, launched for the 150th Anniversary.

The magazine delivers an insider's view of the Art Gallery to members and continued to provide a wealth of accessible and stimulating articles by curators and commissioned specialist writers, providing members with exclusive insights into Art Gallery exhibitions, events and acquisitions, as well as member events and programs.

The print edition was complemented with a digital supplement in December/January, the *Regional Gallery Guide*, which was distributed to members through dedicated emails and to a broader audience through social media platforms. The magazine continued to be produced in a digital edition which was shared with new members upon joining and allowed them to enjoy some of the benefits of membership immediately. A selection of *Look* articles was also published on the Art Gallery's website and promoted through the Society's and Art Gallery's social media channels.

The Society's e-newsletters, including *Members* and *Young Members*, continued to engage members with current information on the Society's programs and activities. The *Members* e-newsletter was distributed fortnightly to approximately 19,000 member contacts, plus an approximate 18,000 additional contacts made up of lapsed members, non-member subscribers and partners. This e-newsletter provided information on members' programs and events, Art Gallery exhibitions, benefits, supported fundraising efforts and promoted engagement through special offers and competitions. The *Young Members* e-newsletter was distributed monthly to almost 9,000 subscribers, with a range of content directed to a younger age demographic of 18–40 years.

The Society's broader digital campaigns reached over 3.1 million users across email and social media channels in 2021. The Art Gallery distributed its regular *Artmail* e-newsletter to approximately 173,000 subscribers in 2021. The Society was well represented in this popular e-newsletter, with a dedicated section to promote Society membership, programs and events, and key campaigns such as gift memberships, *Luxury Draw* and the *Collection Circle Acquisition Program*.

World Art Tours

2021 was an extremely challenging year for the Society's successful World Art Tours (WAT) program delivered in partnership with Renaissance Tours. Following on from the very difficult previous year, 2021 continued to be deeply affected by the global pandemic, which effectively decimated the travel industry.

In 2021 the Society was required to cancel all scheduled international tours and the associated highly successful series of Saturday Armchair Travel Talks. Instead, a series of online talks, *Enchanting Cities*, was presented by some of our most popular tour leaders covering destinations as diverse as Chicago, Venice, Singapore, Samarkand and Morocco.

The Society worked closely with our long-term travel partner, Renaissance Tours to maintain a presence in the cultural tours market, and a number of Sydney, regional and interstate tours were planned and delivered post lockdown from September 2021 onwards. However, the focus on *Regional Art Escape* tours and *Sydney Day Tours*, was continually fraught with ongoing obstacles, including border closures, last minute Art Centre, Artist's Studios, Gallery and Museum closures, unpredictable weather events, late cancellations by tour members and the last-minute withdrawal of Tour Leaders, all due to COVID-19 outbreaks.

However, some very successful regional tours were able to go ahead as planned. Highlights were:

- *Spirit of Place: Art & Culture of the Torres Strait & North-East Arnhem Land;*
- *Ancient Lands & Sacred Sites: an archaeological exploration of Far Western NSW;*
- *New Art Spaces of Tasmania;*
- *Adelaide Artscape;*
- *Galleries of the NSW Hunter;* and
- *Masterpieces of the National Gallery London at the NGA.*

Highlights of the *Sydney Day Tours* included:

- *Artists' Studios of the Inner West;*
- *Tall Tales of Sydney's Skyline;*
- *In the Footsteps of Martin Sharp;*
- *Archaeological Treasures of the Chau Chak Wing Museum;*
- *Art Deco Sydney;* and
- *Art Deco Potts Point.*

Planning has been underway for a resumption of international travel in late 2022 or early 2023 and we look forward to the return of this successful program to its full extent. Our thanks to Evan Petrelis and the team at Renaissance Tours for their ongoing optimism, support and perseverance and to Liz Gibson for her ongoing commitment to making this program successful.

Luxury Draw

At the end of 2020, the Art Gallery Society transformed its annual Members Travel Draw into the Members Luxury Draw. This change reflected the economic challenges faced by businesses across multiple industries and the travel restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Society's Luxury Draw 2021 fundraising campaign was launched on 24 November 2020 with three prize packages, with a total value of over \$21,000. Our sponsors, Renaissance Tours and Arab Bank Australia, continued to generously support the first prize Luxury Escapes package. The two other packages included prizes from a range of supporters including: Robert Oatley Wines, Manly Spirits Co., Haigh's Chocolates, Faber-Castell, Allen & Unwin and more. The Luxury Draw 2021 campaign closed on Friday 2 April 2021 and was highly successful with 13,903 tickets sold, raising \$72,711.

Sydney Modern Project

Throughout the Art Gallery's temporary closure, construction on the Sydney Modern Project galleries remained on schedule and capital works on the reinvigoration of the current campus continued. It has been exciting to watch the new building take shape whilst the original building undergoes its own transformation.

Members Lounge

The Members Lounge closed in March 2021 to allow for the commencement of renovations, and a temporary Lounge was established in the Lowy/Gonski Gallery. Members very much appreciated the original features and natural light of the space, as well as the high ceilings and accessibility to the Gallery's entrance. The Society and Gallery have been working closely with the architects to ensure the new Members Lounge offers a world-class venue for members, one which includes the commission of bespoke furniture design, architectural features and an outdoor area.

Work commenced on the refurbishment of the Members Lounge in mid-2021 and we would like to thank the Art Gallery's Facilities team for project managing the renovation as well as Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects, Kane builders and furniture

designer Tom Fereday for their work on bringing us a new look Lounge for the enjoyment of our members.

During 2021, 22,540 members visited the Lounge, a number much reduced from the usual annual visitation (which averages around 60,000 visitors). Use of the Lounge is considered an extremely important benefit of membership and the Society looks forward to welcoming members back into the redesigned space when the Lounge reopens.

Sponsors, Partners and In-Kind Supporters

The Art Gallery's Business Development team worked closely with the Society to maintain and secure sponsors and partners to ensure the quality of our programs continued. Renaissance Tours and Arab Bank provided sponsorship and the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation provided a donation for events and programs, whilst Manly Spirits Co., Robert Oatley Wines, Allen & Overy, Allen & Unwin, Fiskars, Glenfiddich, Haigh's Chocolates, Kennedy Watches & Jewellery, Oroton, Waterford Crystal, Bed Threads, Maison Balzac, Garden Life, AGNSW Gallery Shop and Faber-Castell Australia provided in-kind support. The Society is extremely grateful to our sponsors and partners whose support ensures we can provide a diverse and engaging program for our members.

Art Gallery Society Staff & Council

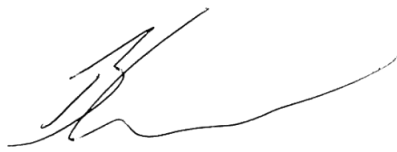
Once again, the Society staff have worked hard to provide our members with a variety of events and benefits. Although 2021 was another challenging year, the Society provided quality events and programs across online and onsite platforms to ensure members remained engaged with and connected to the beloved institution.

The Society was able to access NSW and Commonwealth Government funding programs and support to assist with salaries and business costs during the lockdown period and our team all worked from home for long periods of time.

Through the commitment of the Art Gallery Society Council and the leadership of Executive Director Robert Heather, the dedicated Society staff have ensured the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales remains one of the leading arts membership organisations in the country. The flexibility and resilience of our team and their commitment to support our members in a very difficult year has meant that the Society has continued to thrive and grow.

The year also saw the departure of key team members Joseph Alessi from the role of Assistant Director and Katrina Jones from the position of Membership and Events Manager, both of whom moved on to take up new career opportunities and we would like to thank them for their contribution.

It is with much excitement that we move towards the future with a reinvigorated Members Lounge and the opening of the Sydney Modern Project. This period will see the Society focussing upon maximising the opportunities to attract new members and maintain the loyalty and enthusiasm of our current members through engagement activities, programs and new initiatives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Greenacre', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brian Greenacre
President, Art Gallery Society of New South Wales

Position Holders

Patrons

Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of New South Wales and Mr Dennis Wilson

Honorary Life Governors

The Hon Bronwyn Bishop
Peter Flick
Dorothy Holt
Raymond Kidd
Joan Levy
Max Sandow AM
Carolyn Ward
Leslie Walford
Diana Walder OAM

Distinguished Service to Council

Prue Allen
Nancy Cash
Robyn Flick
Inge Grant
Annette Jameson
Adam Johnson
Brian Ladd OAM
Christine Liddy
Les Moseley
John Pearson
Natasha Serventy
Ross Steele AM
David Stewart-Hunter
Caroline Storch

Councillors 2021

Brian Greenacre *President*
Paula Latos-Valier AM *Vice President*
Sue Jackson *Treasurer*
Anastasia Economou
Sue Dadswell (retired April 2021)
Jenny Green
Brian Ladd OAM
Jo-Ann Smith
Ex-Officio
Dr Michael Brand
The Hon Ashley Dawson-Damer AM

Honorary Lawyers

Allen & Overy

Sponsors, Partners and In-Kind Supporters

January - December 2021

AGNSW Gallery Shop
Allen & Overy
Allen & Unwin
Arab Bank Australia
Bed Threads
Faber-Castell Australia
Fiskars
Garden Life
Glenfiddich
Haigh's Chocolates
Kennedy Watches & Jewellery
Manly Spirits Co.
Maison Balzac
Oroton
Renaissance Tours
Robert Oatley Wines
Sir William Dobell Art Foundation
Waterford Crystal

Art Gallery Society Staff 2021

Executive

Executive Director Robert Heather (from June 2021)

Executive Director Ron Ramsey (until June 2021)

Assistant Director Joseph Alessi (until October 2021)

Executive Assistant Batsheva Abrahams

Finance

Finance Manager Clare Vu

Finance and HR Advisor Roanne Papas

Look Magazine

Look Editor John Saxby

Deputy Editor Susannah Smith (until March 2021 going on parental leave)

Deputy Editor Monique Watkins (from March 2021, parental leave position for Susannah Smith)

Marketing

Marketing Manager Natalie Maroon (from September 2021 returning from parental leave)

Marketing Manager Carli Collins (until September 2021, parental leave position for Natalie Maroon)

Membership Services

Membership Services Manager Jennifer Dowd (from December 2021)

Membership and Events Manager Katrina Jones (until August 2021)

Membership Officer Rachel Rodd

Membership Assistant Cathy Shen

Members Lounge Team Leader Fiona McIntosh

Members Lounge Assistant Danielle Salvemini

Membership Engagement

Membership and Events Manager Katrina Jones (until August 2021)

Ticketing Coordinator Jamie Mackenzie

Senior Events Producer Sarah Maxwell

Events Producer Jaclyn Fenech

Workshop Coordinator Dot Kolentsis

Events Assistants Kristy Stewart, Lisa Tarbuck

Additional Support

World Art Tours Coordinator Liz Gibson

Acquisitions



Ethel Carrick, *A market in Kairouan* (circa 1919)



Joy Hester, *Lovers* (1948 – 1949)



Tempe Manning, *Self Portrait* (1939)



Pascale Marthine Tayou, *Colonne Pascale* (2012)