



## **Oceanic Art Society 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting.**

**Held on Zoom and at 469 Oxford St, Paddington, Sydney, NSW,  
Australia.**

**December 11<sup>th</sup> 2021 at 11:00am.**

- **Apologies** were received from: Geoff Carey, Robyn Hodgson, Crispin Howarth, Warwick Majcher. Nineteen members of the Society were present.
- **Confirmation of Minutes of the Previous AGM.** Acceptance was proposed by Peter McCabe, seconded by Jerry Liew.
- **President's Report (Including Treasurer's Report).** A summary of the president's report is given below.
  - The year started sadly with the deaths of our founder President, Harry Beran and another founder member, Evarne Coote, who was our long-term Treasurer. John Greenshields gave a tribute to Harry Beran at the beginning of his talk with David Payne, and the many tributes that were received were recorded in the journal, as was the obituary of Evarne.
  - Like the previous year, 2021 was highly challenging; although we held five live events, there were many Covid constraints. Again, thanks to outstanding teamwork by the main Committee and the sub-Committees the OAS held its course, but next year could be even more challenging.
  - Margaret Cassidy has continued to strongly and professionally develop the scope and status of the OAS Journal in her second year as its editor. The Spring issue reported on the second lecture of the year, given by John Greenshields and David Payne on the Massim canoes of PNG's Milne Bay province.
  - For Margaret and the OAS this lecture was a first, as Margaret hadn't sufficient space in the Journal for David's wonderful drawings, so she put many of them in a beautifully-extended version on the website. This "online supplement" is surely the way of things to come for our Journal. The lecture was also the first to be streamed around the world by Zoom, so we ended up with a healthy audience of about sixty people, including a Californian who stayed up all night to watch.
  - David Welch and the staff at the National Art School were very active and creative in achieving this IT "first" for the OAS. We are greatly indebted to David for coordinating the OAS's move into streaming and webinars (OAS Now!). After Margaret showed us some of her own collection in an experimental webinar, we were emboldened to go forward with Harold Gallasch's Illustrated talk about the Baining people and their fire-

dance ceremonies, even though Harold couldn't travel to Sydney for a live presentation on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

- At last year's AGM, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary talk – "Objects as Ambassadors" was given by Matt Poll of the new Chau Chak Wing Museum in the University of Sydney. Matt described his heart-warming curatorial philosophy as exemplified in his exhibition at the Museum "*Gululu dhuwala djalkiri: welcome to the Yolngu*". Matt has moved on now to the National Maritime Museum, but has expressed interest in continuing to work with the OAS: it is noteworthy that three speakers in the last two years have attachments to the ANNM.
- We are also hopeful the CCW museum itself and the University will also (re)new its connection with us: Jude Philp, senior curator there, is looking at the possibility of "masterclass" workshops jointly with visual arts and anthropology students.
- The other talk this year, given in the OAS's pre-streaming era, was a characteristically enthusiastic and lively presentation by vice-President Crispin Howarth, on the Lake Sentani sculpture now in the NGA – how it was collected by a freebooting French poet and entrepreneur in the 1930's and sold in Europe to augment the collections of the Surrealist artists there.
- On 6<sup>th</sup> November we were able to hold our postponed Sydney Oceanic Art Fair at the National Art School, thanks to the extreme hard work of the sub-Committee led by Warwick Majcher and the continued generous support of the NAS staff from the Director down – notably from "Maz" Johnstone. It was a great success in all respects, most vendors reported good sales in the run up to Christmas and everyone was relieved to be doing something "live" again (albeit with masks). With the help of a donation, we made a healthy profit on the day, despite slightly reduced numbers of tables and vendors compared with 2019 (due to interstate travel restrictions).
- For the second time we added a lecture to the Oceanic Art Fair. Lesley Wengembo, a student at the NAS, talked about his life as an artist; growing up in PNG, having his talent recognised, getting commissions from local politicians and eventually a scholarship to train in Australia and worldwide. We filled the lecture theatre with Lesley's student friends for his heart-warming presentation of his work.
- All the Committee and sub-committee members have contributed time and energy "above and beyond" this year, and I won't single out any more names for special mention other than to repeat that David, Margaret, Rita and Warwick have done tremendous work, despite heavy family and/or work commitments, not to mention lockdown frustrations. Also Pierre Laffont has continued to curate the membership spreadsheet and has agreed to continue to do so even though he is currently living in the south of France.
- We have two new Committee members, Emma Lenyszyn and JD Mittman. Krisztina Turza is stepping back for a year to travel. Warwick Majcher is stepping down from managing the SOAF sub-committee; he has agreed to remain on the main Committee but change places with Erwin Kok who will now lead the sub-committee. During the year Dominic McGeary started posting material on the OAS's Facebook page. A formal thank-you to everyone for their contributions.
- There have been a number of significant donations this year, most notably Doug Mayhew who gave \$1000 to support SOAF, and Chris Boylan who donated several valuable Oceanic items for raffle prizes. Donations and raffles strongly contributed to the profit we made in the last financial year.

- The financial report for 2020-2021 was circulated with the AGM documents. The Treasurer's summary follows: Membership income increased by \$1,438 - largely due to a campaign to recuperate late renewals that was spearheaded by Pierre and Rita – membership numbers have remained stable
- Profit has recovered by \$5,059.50, though this figure is skewed by some SOAF vendor payments (\$3,600) being received before the end-of-financial-year 2020-2021, in advance of the relevant costs-of-sales, which were incurred in November. Since the SOAF was eventually profitable this distortion is not material in respect of the OAS's financial situation.
- The OAS's equity thus increased to \$20,762.19 by July, an extremely good result in the circumstances, especially given that we could hold fewer live events than planned.
- Despite the energetic contributions of the Committee and sub-committee members during 2021, there are more challenges facing the OAS next year. Many of the most active committee members will be travelling extensively to restore their family lives after the COVID imprisonment.
- The Forums tentatively planned for next year will probably not now happen - at least in the form that was intended. Brisbane is definitely out, and the Melbourne sub-committee will decide early next year whether a "Savage" forum is feasible in November: the organisers fear that travel limitations and nervousness may still prevent a world-wide turnout of speakers.
- The talent and energy that the OAS Committee needs in order for the society to survive next year, let alone to thrive and to increase "live" activities next year includes the following:
  - A Secretary to take the pressure off all the active members of the Committee
  - A replacement Treasurer so that Rita's energy can be spent on organising speakers/events and coordinating institutional relationships
  - Someone skilled in IT and video editing/production to take the pressure off David who has a more-than-full-time day-job
  - Someone to organise a Forum – maybe in association with SOAF on 6 November?

There were no comments or questions.

- **Election of Office Bearers and Committee members.** The following nominations have been duly received and accepted:
  - William (Bill) Rathmell, President (nominated by Rita Uechtritz, seconded by Irene Ashburn)
  - Crispin Howarth, Vice-President (Bill Rathmell, Geoff Carey)
  - Rita Uechtritz, Treasurer (Noëlle Stiels, Pierre Laffont)
  - (No nominations have been received for the office of Secretary).
  - Irene Ashburn (p. Warwick Majcher, s. Jim Elmslie)
  - Geoff Carey (p. David Welch, s. Noëlle Stiels)
  - Margaret Cassidy (p. Noëlle Stiels, s. Jim Elmslie)
  - Jim Elmslie (p. Bill Rathmell, s. Noëlle Stiels)
  - Pierre Laffont (p. Noëlle Stiels, s. Bill Rathmell)

- Emma Lenyszyn (p. Bill Rathmell, s. Noëlle Stiels)
- Jerry Liew (p. Rita Uechtritz, s. David Welch)
- Warwick Majcher (p. David Welch, s. Jim Elmslie)
- JD Mittmann (p. Bill Rathmell, s. Noëlle Stiels)
- Suzanne Pilj (p. Bill Rathmell, s. Jerry Liew)
- Noëlle Stiels (p. Warwick Majcher, s. Pierre Laffont)
- David Welch (p. Pierre Laffont, s. Warwick Majcher)

The above nominees and were declared duly elected, unopposed.

- **Any additional questions/comments from the floor:** None.
- **Close of meeting:** The meeting closed at 11:27 am.

Following the Annual General Meeting there was an excellent presentation:

**Objects as Ambassadors**, by Matt Poll, Assistant Curator of Indigenous Heritage Collections, University of Sydney, Repatriation Project Officer. Matt explored the rewards and challenges of first nations community engagement in relation to the new exhibitions – *“Gululu dhuwala djalkiri: welcome to the Yolŋu foundations”* and *“Ambassadors”*, both of which had just opened at the new Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University.

This was followed by an **OAS Founding Committee Members’ Panel Discussion** led by Geoff Carey and comprising Chris Boylan, Robin Hodgson, Peter McCabe, Beth Pryce, Noëlle Rathmell-Stiels and Jim Specht: OAS’ 25<sup>th</sup> birthday - reminiscences, anecdotes, messages and a song from (or about): Harry Beran, Paul Dennett, Christine Koziel and other absent friends...

OAS members and their guests then raffled an (anonymously donated) valuable and truly magnificent giant clamshell Yua, from Yangoru in the East Sepik, PNG, as well as some smaller prizes. This was followed by an end of year lunch.

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