

AKAROA COMMUNITY ARTS COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - CHAIR'S REPORT - 6 December 2021

The Akaroa Community Arts Council has a long and successful history of supporting the arts in Banks Peninsula. While maintaining a strong focus on the visual arts, in 2021 we have diversified in both the nature of our activities (e.g. augmenting our successful and longstanding practical art-making workshops with exhibitions and educational events), and the range of artistic areas (e.g. theatre, film appreciation, creative writing and, most recently, music).

Events and Workshops

Unfortunately, Covid-19 restrictions resulted in the cancellation of many of our 2021 events, in particular, second half-year workshops, and the scheduled Artistic Controversies public talks. The *Landings*, a theatrical reenactment of the waves of human migration to Akaroa, is ACAC's contribution to FrenchFest, which has been postponed until April 2022. Fortunately, with the support of Ethels Cinema, we were able to continue the ACAC Film Club where a small but committed group of film goers have gathered to watch and discuss films throughout the year. Although there have been disruptions, overall the year has been successful, with a number of highlights.

Firstly, we presented three wonderful exhibitions of local art during year - *Life is Art* in April, *WOW: Woodblocks Oils and Weaving* in July, and *UNLIMITED* in November. These exhibitions attracted around 1500 visitors, and we have been delighted to receive so many positive comments from people who clearly enjoyed the quality and variety of the art on show. In the *WOW* exhibition we were particularly pleased to be able to display a number of donated works by George Genet, which were auctioned as an Akaroa Area School fundraiser. Five thousand dollars were raised for the school. All three exhibitions were curated by Anne Moore, whose work in presenting the exhibitions has been outstanding. Anne led a team of volunteers who played a critical role in making each exhibition a success - we couldn't have done it without all your hard work and commitment - a BIG thank you to everyone. We are also grateful to the Akaroa Toy Library Committee which enabled the exhibitions through the sharing of the Toy Library premises. It has been a wonderful collaboration.

Another highlight this year was the creative writing workshop that was facilitated by one of New Zealand's leading writers, Owen Marshall. This was augmented by a wonderful evening of conversation with Owen at the Gaiety Theatre.

Membership and Fundraising

At the 2020 AGM we developed a financial membership system for ACAC and membership is now a very pleasing 76. We established a General Annual Membership for individuals (\$10), and for households (\$15). We also implemented a Donor Membership of \$500 for people who want to make a greater contribution to supporting the arts in Banks Peninsula. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of each of those donor members in 2021. These membership options and the funding they generate, have created opportunities to subsidise events, and in particular, to support art scholarships for children and young people. Art classes are generally costly to run, and while we are very appreciative of Christchurch City Council grants that subsidise the programme of workshops, participants still have to pay a significant cost to attend. ACAC is committed to fundraising efforts that will enable further subsidies to be made, so that more people can to experience high quality learning environments. Lesley Burkes-Harding, ACAC's Artistic Director and overseer of the arts programme, has once again been very

successful in grant applications that support the artistic programme. Without Lesley's contribution we would not be able to offer the range and depth of workshops that we do currently.

The ACAC Volunteers and Board

ACAC is completely dependent upon a committed group of volunteers who work tirelessly to support a vibrant programme of activities throughout the year. The significant developments in ACAC's 2021 programme, for example, the hosting of art exhibitions, have increased the workload for volunteers. In collaboration with the Akaroa Toy Library, working bees have created a new gallery space and significant effort has gone into curating and running the exhibitions. These events would not have been possible without the support of ACAC's volunteers, and our deepest thanks are extended to everyone who has dedicated their time and expertise to our collective efforts.

The ACAC Board

Special thanks go to members of the ACAC Board who are also key volunteer across aspects of the programme, and come together monthly to support activities and make decisions about future directions. Thanks in particular to ACAC's officers whose work has supported and advanced our administrative and creative efforts - Kat Luper as Treasurer, and Anne Moore as Secretary, who after six years in the role is stepping down at the end of this year.

The Years Ahead

The Board held a strategic planning meeting in April to consider progress and plan for the future. ACAC has an ambitious and increasingly diverse programme of activities. While fundraising efforts have increased, it was agreed that in order to make events more accessible, it is important to strengthen these efforts further in 2022 and beyond. It was noted that we need to work to retain current members, while at the same time engaging new members. The more members we have, the more we can subsidise ACAC's activities meet the expectations of our constitution in offering affordable art experiences to our local communities. In 2022, we will also increase efforts to engage Donor Memberships, targeted toward the particular interests of people and businesses that wish to support community art initiatives.

ACAC is committed to increasing programme diversity in the arts and, with the appointment of Clare Corban-Banks, this now includes music as an important development in 2022. The success of Owen Marshall's creative writing workshop has provided the impetus for us to harness our cross-genre strengths and explore the creation of an integrated writing, publishing and performance hub in Banks Peninsula. This is an ambitious plan that has the potential to create projects that will inspire and support writers, artists and performers to work together across artistic domains. This will include bringing together exciting new home-grown publications, including theatre scripts that can be used for live performances and concerts. This builds upon the existing expertise that has supported ACAC's *Landings* open theatre event. To this end, in the coming years, ACAC will work toward integrating these elements of our activities, thereby further strengthening ACAC's overall programme.



Marie Connolly
Chair