

**BOTANIKO ART GROUP
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 2022**

[VICE-REGAL SALUTE IS PLAYED]

Good evening and welcome to this reception for members and friends of the Botaniko Art Group.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and culture. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I commit to a future that listens to and respects Aboriginal stories, culture and history.

I wonder when last this Ball Room was last transformed into a magnificent art gallery?! The works collectively make a truly wonderful display. The fact that they all depict Government House trees and ornamental plants is a novel way of merging indoors and outdoors.

May I congratulate and thank each artist for your participation and contribution. May I also thank our Estate Gardens Manager Tara Edmondson and her colleague Bettina Elischer for their involvement in this project and working closely with Botaniko's Coordinator Jean Henley and Curator Debra Collins.

Your Botaniko Art Group may be interested to know that, in my community role, I am introducing to Government House a new focus on art.

On our walls on this floor, upstairs and in the basement floor, we have a mixture of owned works, and works on loan from our Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Significant as some of the loans are, some may say that others are, well, a little past their "view by date".

To this end, I have liaised with TMAG Director, Mary Mulcahy, to install some contemporary works, and works by Aboriginal artists.

We plan to use the walls opposite the Main Entrance as a boutique exhibition gallery. That is where you came in, with the lovely red ottoman and the double doors overlooking the South Terrace and harbour. Depending on the size of works, we hope to exhibit perhaps half a dozen or so for periods of time.

We have also engaged with the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment to encourage primary school students to paint or draw Government House features or features of the gardens – based on photographs we have sent them, together with art materials and canvas boards. We are expecting our first paintings later this year, and will feature them in the Ball Room. So – your group may have started something creatively and culturally enlightening!

You may be interested that any works we own have been donated. Government House has never had an art acquisitions policy, nor any budget. I am sure you have all noticed the large gilt-framed paintings of British Monarchs and their Spouses. We have a total of about 40 original artworks, as well as a number of prints and ceramics.

Everything Government House owns has to be assigned dollar value. The two most valuable are the very large portraits in the Drawing room, of King George the Fifth [painted by Sir Luke Fildes] and Queen Mary [painted by Sir William Llewellyn]. They are valued at \$75,000 each, but not too many houses, have such wall space for hanging.

In Lion's Court, sculptor Stephen Walker's "Brolga Group" is valued at \$48,000, perhaps so high a value because Tasmania has no brolgas!

Coming back into Government House, the owned works by Australian artists, including a Mabel Hookey, an Olga Garner-Morris and a Louisa Anne Meredith, are worth from five to eight thousand dollars.

Regarding Louisa Anne Meredith, at a function here earlier this year, Warwick Oakman, the well-known Tasmanian colonial furniture and art specialist, said that, in his opinion, Louisa Anne is Australia's most eminent nineteenth-century female artist.

May I conclude my remarks by referring to an amazing gift containing original botanical watercolours by Louisa Anne that we received recently, in August.

A Victorian resident, Diana Frew, donated an illuminated address with signatures of prominent Tasmanian citizens signed in a studded velvet-covered book. These were popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, as a way of showing respect for and friendship to a prominent individual. Diana Frew is a direct descendent of Lady Augusta Young, wife of eighth Governor Sir Henry Fox Young. They were the first Vice-Regal occupants of this Government House, from 1858 to 1861.

Lady Young paid a return visit to Tasmania many years later, in the 1880s, which prompted the compilation of the illuminated signatures for her. They were called "illuminated" because they were illustrated. This one contains original botanical watercolours by Louisa Anne Meredith, framing the signatures. Each page also bears her trademark "L.A.M." initials with a date.

This is a significant new donation to Government House. It is a fitting opportunity for it to be displayed and shared in this Ball Room this evening with your own unique works. Please do have a look at the open page.

I now look forward to viewing all the works. Don and I love the gardens here and walk in them multiple times every day, for their beauty and tranquility. Also, our dogs Oscar and Nala can't get enough of them – and thankfully gave up trying to chase the native hens long ago!

And please do enjoy the reception. Thank you.