

**HOBART PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY ANNUAL EXHIBITION  
OPENING SPEECH BY  
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
WATERSIDE PAVILION, HOBART, THURSDAY 31 MARCH 2016**

Good evening and thank you for inviting Dick and me to attend this evening's opening of the Hobart Photographic Society's Annual Exhibition.

This is a very well-established event, as I believe that it has been running for something like fifteen years now, and that suggests that your work has become a significant part of Hobart's cultural fabric.

I'm told by your President Phil Hallam that there are a record number of first-time exhibitors this year, which is a terrific achievement for the organisers and the Society more generally, given that this is your biggest event each year.

I was able to have a preview of the works earlier today – being a total of 185 prints submitted by 48 exhibitors – and they are most impressive.

It was the great French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson who allegedly said: "Your first ten thousand photographs are your worst." ... Well, if that's true then the works we see on the walls around us are the end results of an awful lot of photography, because they are of uniformly high quality. Each tells its own story, and does so really well.

A feature of this annual exhibition is that exhibitors vary in their degrees of experience behind a camera. I think that provides great encouragement to those who may be described as emerging photographers; just as it enables the more experienced participants to showcase your talents borne of experience, while acting in some ways as mentors to your fellow photographers.

And on that note may I make brief mention of a few real talents on view here this evening:

Suellen Cook has won many national and international awards for her composite imagery. I particularly liked her work Audrey or Lady and Dog, which juxtaposes an elegantly dressed women in 50s style fashion with her mobile phone.

Andrew Fuller and Fran Adams are both excellent landscape photographers. Jenny Shota's Tasman Island from the Blade is a wonderful advertisement for the Three Capes Track, I instantly yearned to be back on Cape Pillar. And I really liked her King Cows on the Tarkine Coastline, showing a Hereford munching kelp on the beach.

And Macro photographers Beth Heap and Chris Wright are exceptionally skilled in photographing orchids and insects. I loved Chris Wright's pied oystercatcher. They are such wonderful birds to watch on the beach and for me bring memories of Maria Island flooding back.

Their work is also representative of the fact that this exhibition places no restrictions on genre.

I understand too that some of the images on display are a direct result of your monthly themed Challenges, which encourage members to try different genres, which involves trying new techniques, both in camera and processing, with critiques by colleagues. That sounds really innovative – if perhaps a little daunting! – and I'm sure is an excellent incentive for members to significantly improve their skills.

Works with a socio-political message are always food for thought of which Peter Manchester's Riches to Rags and Why Detention are good examples. And Gina Romalis's work Misty Mornings on the Derwent make us realise how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful place.

Now, having said that about some of your works on display, I am not a photographer myself and so make no claims to have any special insight into the artistry and allied techniques which constitute professional

photography. In fact, my i-phone aside, I don't think I have ever owned a camera. What about photographing your children you might ask. For the most part I relied on my father in law who lived next door. He gave me an album of photos of the children each Christmas.

I will bring my remarks to a conclusion by referring to the age-old debate about whether or not photography is art.

I was drawn to this when I remembered that I had read a couple of years ago that the world record price for a photograph was smashed when a black and white image of the Grand Canyon entitled "Phantom", by Australian photographer Peter Lik, sold for 6.5 million US dollars.

That's an extraordinary sum of money and one effect was that it set off a heated debate among art critics about whether photography is or is not entitled to be considered art.

I'll say a few words from one of the sceptics, the UK Guardian newspaper art critic Jonathan Jones followed by a riposte from that newspaper's photography critic Sean O'Hagan.

Jonathan Jones wrote as a direct response to the "Phantom" image: "Photography is not an art. It is a technology. We have no excuse to ignore this obvious fact in the age of digital cameras, when the most beguiling high-definition images and effects are available to millions. My iPad can take panoramic views that are gorgeous to look at. Does that make me an artist? No, it just makes my tablet one hell of a device."

To which Sean O'Hagan responded: "Photography is as vibrant as it has ever been – more so in response to the digital world, which Jonathan mistakenly thinks has made everyone a great photographer. It hasn't. It has made it easy for people to take – and disseminate – photographs, that's all. A great photographer can make a great photograph whatever the camera. A bad photographer will still make a bad photograph on a two-grand digital camera that does everything for you. It's about a way of seeing, not technology."

And the debate went on. For the record I'm a firm believer that photography is art – we simply have to look at the wonderful examples on these walls – and on that note I am very pleased to declare open the 2016 Hobart Photographic Society Annual Exhibition.

Thank you.