

**AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF MINIATURE ART
NATIONAL ANNUAL AWARDS EXHIBITION
OPENING SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SATURDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2018**

Good afternoon and thank you very much for inviting me to open the 2018 National Annual Awards Exhibition of the Australian Society of Miniature Art.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land—the Mouheneener people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

May I acknowledge among you:

- Patricia Young, President of the Tasmanian Society;
- This year's Judge Diane Casimaty, Life Member of the Art Society of Tasmania;
- Bernadette O'Connor, founder of the Australian Society of Miniature Art Tasmania in 1992;
- And the Committee who have done such great work to bring this all together.

I would like to take a few moments to tell you a very interesting story relating to miniature artworks discovered by my Official Secretary, David Owen. Way back in December 1934 the Rotary Club of Hobart hosted an exhibition of what was called, and I quote: “the most beautiful and costly collection of miniature art in the world”.ⁱ How could that be? Well, here is the true story.

Tasmanian Governor Sir Ernest Clark opened the exhibition in the Lord Mayor's court-room. It was Titania's Palace, a dolls house, which had already been on display internationally in more than 100 cities, raising money for disabled children.

The palace consists of 18 rooms and salons, is 4 feet 1 inch tall, is built in a 12 inch to 1 inch scale and contains hand-carved mahogany furniture. There are 3000 tiny works of art and miniatures from around the world on display inside the palace – some of them hundreds of years old, dating back to the 16th Century, hence their value.ⁱⁱ

Titania's Palace was created by a Major Sir Neville Wilkinson, an Irish artist who had attended the Royal College of Art in South Kensington, London and subsequently developed an interest in miniature decorative painting involving a technique which he called "mosaic painting", using an etcher's glass.

The palace, which Sir Neville worked on with James Hicks & Sons, Irish Cabinet Makers, became more and more elaborate until it was finally opened by Queen Mary, on her wedding anniversary on the 6th of July, 1922, fifteen years after construction on it had begun. It includes miniature paintings of Queen Mary and Queen Alexandra by Sir Neville and many other paintings including a watercolour by the British landscape artist Samuel Palmer and a portrait of George Washington which is no larger than a pea.

Sir Neville designed the Titania's Palace to be portable so it could be packed up and travel around the country to go on public display to raise money for children's charities. As I explained earlier, it was shown in 160 cities in Britain before going around the world including to Australia and as we now know to Hobart in 1934.

After Sir Neville's death it was sold a number of times before it was bought at auction by the Danish company Legoland. Today Titania's Palace can be seen at Egeskov Castle in Denmark.

I personally have had been captivated by the skill of miniaturists – probably since I sat for a miniature portrait on ivory painted by Sue Collins as a teenager. So I have a collection of miniature paintings which has grown since I have been Governor and includes two gifts, a Carlene Vickers from our municipal trip to the West Coast and a Claire Gill which was presented to me at function we had at Government House to celebrate Joan Humble's success in receiving two international miniature art awards.

So I am very much looking forward to viewing this exhibition and I offer my warmest congratulations to all exhibitors.

It is therefore now my pleasure to officially declare open the 2018 National Annual Awards Exhibition of the Australian Society of Miniature Art.

Thank you.

ⁱ Examiner (Launceston), Tuesday 11 December 1934.

ⁱⁱ http://www.mountmerrionhistorical.com/MM300/titania's_palace.html, accessed 4 September 2018.