

**LAUNCESTON ART SOCIETY 125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY RETROSPECTIVE  
ART EXHIBITION: "THE JOURNEY"  
OPENING SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY  
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
LAUNCESTON, WEDNESDAY 5 OCTOBER 2016**

Good evening and thank you very much for inviting Dick and me to the opening of "The Journey" — the Launceston Art Society's 125th Anniversary Retrospective Art Exhibition.

May I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land – to pay respect to those who have passed before us and to acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

The significance of a milestone of this length of time is well and truly matched by the size and scope of this exhibition, with the works having been sourced from nearly 50 private and public collections; and while the majority are contemporary – that is, twenty-first century – works, there are works representing most decades of the twentieth century as well.

Congratulations are therefore in order to the LAS subcommittee curatorial team chaired by Louise Skabo. The job must have been great fun but also, I would have thought, somewhat daunting at times.

And equal thanks must go to your sponsor, the City of Launceston and its QVMAG. This Queen Victoria Art Gallery is a truly magnificent space to showcase the city's artistic cultural heritage and its artists who are working today as members of the Launceston Art Society.

On a personal note I have a good feeling of association with the Society, because, as many of you will know, Tasmanian Governors have long been the Patron of Eskleigh Foundation, in Perth, which does such wonderful work in providing a range of disability support services to Tasmanians.

And it has been since 2009 that the Society has had its home base at Eskleigh, with your committee members there, assisted by other members, operating voluntarily to organise exhibitions, workshops, art trips, guiding, newsletters, art therapy sessions for Eskleigh residents and community programs.

It's a truly wonderful community outreach, and every member of the Launceston Art Society is to be congratulated for working together on this initiative.

Not to mention that Eskleigh itself, the old Scone homestead, is a pretty fabulous place to do art.

And it is a tradition that the Governor, as Patron, opens the annual Tasmanian Art Award exhibition at Eskleigh, which I enjoyed doing for the first time last year.

Now, given that this is an anniversary, I was able to locate through our research facility an interesting description in the Launceston Examiner of the Society in 1893 – that is, just two years after its founding by that name. And I will quote the description:

“Yesterday the Society’s fifth half-yearly exhibition was held in the old Museum room of the Mechanics’ Institute, and, taken as a whole, was a success ... The judging was in the capable hands of Mr A. R. Flaws, of Hobart, who was exceedingly pleased at the high standard and quality of the work he had to adjudicate on. One little matter perhaps might be attended to at future exhibitions, namely, to have the pictures carefully hung, a few of those at yesterday’s show being hung with a disregard to the horizontal that must have been somewhat irritating to the owners.”<sup>i</sup>

But it was not all plain sailing. Those of you who know your history will know that the Society was, quote, “in abeyance”, between 1914 and 1922.<sup>ii</sup>

And the issue in recent decades of the Society not having a permanent base is in fact a problem that plagued you for much of your history. For instance a 1938 Examiner headline lamented: “Four Years without a Home”<sup>iii</sup>

And even worse was to follow, with this screaming Examiner headline: “‘Art is Dead in Launceston’: Views of Society President”<sup>iv</sup>

Well, today the Launceston Art Society is 125 years proud, and the art works all around us are a very fine testament to that.

You who are members here this evening must feel very proud of your long story and your active and healthy membership now.

I have barely mentioned the actual works. And sadly I had not time for a preview, as we did not arrive here in Launceston in time for one. But I have read through the catalogue and noticed some familiar names, as we have works by some of your exhibited artists hanging at Government House: so we have four Mabel Hookey works (two of which hang in the Main Hallway (*Clematis* and *Wattle*) and *Mountain Landscapes* in the Ante-Drawing Room; Edith Holmes's *Carnations* is in our apartment, together with an oil of *Bridge in Paris*; Robert Campbell's *Magnetic Island* is in the Upstairs Hallway. We have a Richard Bacon watercolour in Dukes apartment lounge; and two Jack Carington Smith works in our apartment – a water colour, *Low Tide on the Tamar*, and *Bush Scene* in oils.

Of course this exhibition shows the work of many fine individual artists, who collectively, through the selections of the curators, do excellent justice to “The Journey” — the Launceston Art Society's 125th Anniversary Retrospective Art Exhibition, which I now happily declare open.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Launceston Examiner, Friday 8 December 1893, page 7.

<sup>ii</sup> Launceston Examiner, Thursday 13 December 1923, page 10, article headline “Launceston Art Society: a Year of Recovery”.

<sup>iii</sup> Launceston Examiner, Thursday 8 December 1938, page 8.

<sup>iv</sup> Launceston Examiner, Thursday 8 December 1938, page 8.