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PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2021

Rebecca Coronel

As Craft ACT celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2021, the pandemic tested us in ways that demanded more resourcefulness and ingenuity than ever. I am happy to say the Craft ACT team met these challenges head-on and with flair and innovation. We continued to deliver exhibitions and programs to our local community throughout this time while creatively adapting to the pandemic environment.

A sudden Canberra lockdown from August to October led to a reconsideration of the DESIGN Canberra program for the year, shifting our theme from 'Transformation' to 'Nurture.' The decision to postpone much of the DESIGN Canberra program for 2021 was difficult but provided an opportunity to reshape the program and address the needs of our members and audience during the pandemic. The Nurture program offered our members invaluable professional development. We also saw a surge in interest within the community for creative, hands-on activities as many of us sought to relieve the tensions of an uncertain world.

Craft ACT is one of the longest running, continuous member-based organisations in Australia. Since 1971, Craft ACT has played a vital role in sustaining Australia's high-quality studio practice and supporting craftspeople, designers, and audiences. A series of articles and images on our website explores the key moments and figures in our organisational history, and I highly recommend you take a look. What shines through in Craft ACT's history is the incredible generosity of our members and volunteers. Their gift of time and creativity ensures that makers and craftspeople in the Canberra region and across Australia are supported and flourish.

For the Craft ACT board of management, our focus for 2021 was to support the organisation through a period of significant leadership and program changes.

Our CEO of five years, Dr Rachael Coghlan, departed leaving a legacy of increased financial stability, growth to our membership, a well visited and diverse exhibition program, and the now well-established DESIGN Canberra festival. Long-standing staff member Kate Nixon, who ably supported and grew with the Craft ACT team, also departed for new opportunities. We welcomed Jodie Cunningham to the CEO role in July, confident that Jodie's skill and experience in arts administration, education, and professional art practice will maintain our organisation and bring new ideas and member initiatives.

A first for 2021 was the creation of our Circle of Hands donors' circle. Our first four donors, Jenny Edwards, Peta Furnell, Graham Humphries, and Paul Kerr, have helped Craft ACT forge new collaborations and invest in artist development and mentoring. The initial CO:LAB program was a professional development program aimed at upskilling makers in a commercial context. The initial project focused on delivering lighting within residential architecture projects.

As in 2020, I thank our Board of Management members for remaining engaged and collaborative throughout another challenging year, especially as they juggled the changes to their own workplaces and studios. I would especially like to thank two of our outgoing Board members for their exemplary service and commitment to Craft ACT. Past President Graham Humphries has been on the Board for eight years and, in recent times, has provided invaluable expertise concerning the Kingston Arts Precinct project. Treasurer Sam Bryant will hand over his duties in 2021, having steered our financial position for the past six years. Sam's commitment to ensuring payments are made and grants are appropriately managed has been largely unseen but hugely appreciated.

My thanks also to the Craft ACT staff, whose commitment to delivering programs and services even in the face of pandemic restrictions and closures of our gallery and shop has been superb.

Craft ACT Members are, of course, the backbone of the organisation. Our membership numbers attest to the success of the many programs and benefits offered by Craft ACT and confirm our relevance to the community we serve.

As in previous years, funding and support from government and sponsors have been essential to our operations in 2021. I thank the ACT Government and the Australia Council for the Arts (the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body) for their ongoing support of Craft ACT.

We very much appreciate the understanding and adaptability of our sponsors in such a challenging year, particularly concerning changes to the DESIGN Canberra festival.

We thank you for your continued support.

Rebecca Coronel
President
Craft ACT Board of Management