

5.3 MONASH GALLERY OF ART COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021

Responsible Senior Officer: Dr Andi Diamond, Chief Executive Officer

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Notes the 2020 – 2021 Annual Report presented by the Monash Gallery of Art Committee of Management.*
- 2. Acknowledges the leadership of the Committee of Management in the achievement of Monash Gallery of Art's strategic vision.*
- 3. Approves the date of development of MGA's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 by 1 May 2022.*

INTRODUCTION

On an annual basis, the Monash Gallery of Art (MGA) Committee of Management (COM) submits to Council its report on MGA activity over the past year and the MGA Strategic Plan.

The Monash Gallery of Art Committee is constituted as a community asset committee in accordance with section 65 of the Local Government Act 2020 and is referred to as the Committee of Management (CoM)

Pursuant to the clause 3.8 of the TOR reporting requirement the annual report for MGA 2019-2020 as approved by CoM is attached for Council's noting. This report is submitted to the CEO and subsequently provided to the Councillors. The report will be available for public view on MGA's website. This report presents the MGA Annual Report 2020 – 2021 in **Attachment 1**.

A requirement of the committee is to develop and submit to Council the MGA Strategic Plan. Due to the impact of COVID on facilitating strategic planning sessions with all Staff, Committee of Management and key Foundation members, the Committee of Management requires an extension to develop the new MGA Strategic Plan to 1 May 2022.

BACKGROUND

MGA's Annual reports on key aspects of the Strategic Plan that speak to how MGA achieves its mission, vision and strategic statement in particular how it is delivering on its four key initiatives:

- Compelling must-see exhibitions
- Nationally significant collection
- Culturally enriching experiences
- Build our capacity to deliver by increasing revenue & professional development of the team

Please find attached MGA's annual report for your review and approval.

DISCUSSION

The last year has been dominated by the impact of the global pandemic, we began the year entering into a four-month lockdown that meant we all went online and our world was mediated through a digital screen. MGA was closed to physical visitors for over half the year due to COVID restrictions. MGA's exhibition program itself responded to and reflected the impact the pandemic was having on society, in particular through the commissioning exhibition *STAGES: photography through the pandemic* and through the works included in the Bowness Photography Prize.

Over the course of the year, MGA continued our digital transformation journey with many of the digital engagement activities and projects planned fast-tracked as our prime way for audiences engaging with MGA transitioned online. This included our exhibition program, with the *Portrait of Monash: the ties that bind* and *STAGES: photography through the pandemic* microsite increased to include more online content, that included a virtual exhibition that could facilitate education and group tours online, as well as interviews with the artists produced in partnership with RMIT University. The integration of a virtual tour of the exhibition created a new tool to engage diversity audiences, created content utilised by the education sector and a documentation of the exhibition that is immersive and responds to the needs of key audience demographics. MGA also published the award-winning publication that celebrated MGA's 30th birthday through the lens of MGA's photography collection.

A strategic focus throughout the year has been the MGA/Wheelers Hill Library feasibility study, fully funded by the Victorian State Government through the Community Support Fund. The final business case was endorsed by Council in March 2021. It looks at the future of MGA and re-visioned the future of MGA and the Library as a uniquely focused venue, rebranded as the Museum of Australian Photography (MAPh). The development looked at the future of MGA and our ability to adapt and grow to meet the needs of our diverse audiences with an integrated cultural precinct that harnesses the power of photography, MGA's unique and nationally significant collection of Australian photographs, and to embed the visual with the literary arts to leverage the important role libraries play within the community.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Activities conducted during 2020-2021 were based in the creative and diligent aspiration of the MGA Strategic Plan to achieve the development and implementation of its vision as the Australian Home of Photography. The MGA Strategic Plan 2018-2022 supports the delivery of the Council Plan 2017-2021. In particular, it meets the aspiration of:

Strategic Objective - An inclusive community: Our people and communities are healthy, connected and engaged.

The MGA Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 includes a three-year annual action plan, capturing current activities for MGA COM and staff to identify, assess and address the priorities of the Plan.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

MGA has a unique role in the cultural and community life of Monash. It is an important local destination for social and cultural connection, for creative and intellectual wellbeing.

A priority for COM is the development of activities and business support that represent and reflect the city's demographic diversity, to sustain relevance and ownership by the community. In particular the *Portrait of Monash: the ties that bind* commissioning exhibition which showcased and responded to issues our community is dealing with.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The Monash Gallery of Art exhibition and activities programs accord with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities act 2006 and in particular the following rights: (vii) freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief; (viii) freedom of expression; (ix) peaceful assembly and freedom of association; (xi) taking part in public life; (xii) cultural rights.

CONSULTATION

Through the year, consultation has occurred with visitors to MGA by the medium of a visitor survey. This is a regular feature of MGA's connection with the community and an essential part of its framework for future planning.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

For the financial year 2020 – 2021 MGA. Even in the midst of COVID, MGA met its fundraising targets including raising over \$100,000 through the inaugural Photography Auction, with the artists and MGA receiving 50% of the proceeds of their work.

MGA implemented a new engagement calendar over the last year that focused on more intimate online events for donors, facilitating a rich and meaningful connection with MGA for all levels of supporters of MGA's Patrons Program, including a mixture of free and ticketed events. MGA also grew its online store that enabled MGA to continue to raise funds while MGA was closed due to COVID.

CONCLUSION

In 2020-21, MGA has continued to grow and cement its reputation locally, nationally and internationally as the Australian Home of Photography with high quality exhibition programming, public programs and partnership development, and pivoted towards online engagement. This has been supported by a focus on renewal, sustainability, network development and excellent governance by the COM.