

### Newsletter 5 ♦ December 2020

Member of the Association of Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society

ABN: 40 338 920 815



### From the Chair

with John Griffiths

It has been an interesting 'ride' as the Chair of ADFAS Byron Bay for the last three years. In my first year as Chair, we had very reduced numbers on the Committee. It was trying at times, but we got through. In the second year we had more than enough committee members, so we had a large group which made many of our lecture nights and other functions much easier. In this past year we started out with strength and energy only to be sideswiped (as all of us have been) by the COVID crisis.

Any Chair of an organisation like ours (all volunteers at a national and local level) needs a Committee behind them. In Byron we have always had an energetic and enthusiastic team and it has been a pleasure working with them (and in many cases their spouses and other members) – nothing has ever been too much trouble and all has been achieved with energy and humour.

We have maintained our membership numbers over the past three years, and our guest visits have been increasing.

Before I go any further, I need to make special mention of our Committee member, Sandra Manikowsky. We were all very saddened to hear of her sudden passing earlier this year and we miss her happy company and willingness to work on the Committee. Her husband, Zolt is a very good friend of ADFAS and we look forward to him being involved with us from now on.

As usual, we have had many interesting and high quality lectures over the past year – as I say, the great advantage of ADFAS as I see it is that you can see a little piece of the world in an hour lecture, surrounded by friends and colleagues – even with a compatible glass of wine and light snack!

A notable contribution to our funds this year was an injection from the (now wound up) Friends of the Bangalow Music Festival. This was organised by Vicki Brooke and Margaret Curtis (to whom we give thanks) and we look forward to using those funds over the next few years for our annual Young Musician of the Year awards.

We have had a few innovations in the past couple of years. One was that we ceased supporting the Byron Writers Festival via a Young Arts Award. We decided to be more active in supporting the Bangalow Music Festival and Southern Cross Soloists. That has been a most satisfying relationship. As a result, we have instituted an annual award – the ADFAS Byron Young Musician of the Year Award. This has been running for two years now – the awardee last year was a flautist, Jemima Drews and this year is a pianist, Francis Atkins. Both are highly talented young people and work with Southern Cross Soloists.

Last year, we had our first Activity Day (with Marion Elms). This was a great success with about 80 attendees. The Committee worked very hard on this event, and whilst not a financial success, gave us confidence and experience for the next effort whenever that may be.

We decided to make our AGM an event last year, so we separated it from our usual October meeting. We had a function in November. We invited a local expert speaker – in this case it was Geoff Hannah of 'Hannah Cabinet' fame. Geoff was a most entertaining speaker, and we had a record turnout for an AGM of some 80 members and guests.

This year is a little different. Our AGM was a low-key affair (because of Covid restrictions) but we will have a piano recital at the home of Helen Stahmann at Broken Head at the end of November. Our Young Musician of the Year (Francis Atkins) will be the pianist and we are really looking forward to the event.

I hope that I leave ADFAS Byron in good order and good spirits and look forward to a somewhat different but enjoyable next year or so in these uncertain and unpredictable times. I wish the incoming Chair and Committee well.

❖ John Griffiths

## Annual General Meeting 2020



Above:  
2020 Executive members  
Sue Brennan, John Griffiths  
and Dianne Stuart.

Right:  
A garden setting provided  
a wonderful casual  
atmosphere for those who  
attended the AGM.

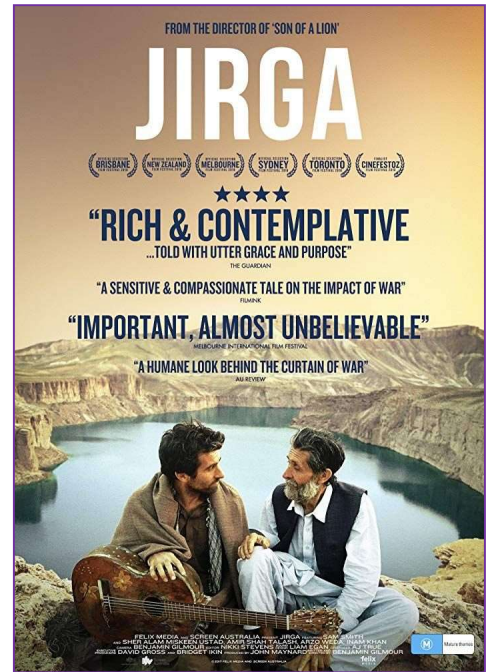


## Special Screening

On October 12<sup>th</sup>, Benjamin Gilmour presented his award-winning film 'Jirga' to a very appreciative audience. The evening began in a celebratory mood as for the first time since March, ADFAS members were able to meet in person. There was much excited chatter over drinks before the screening began.

Set against the teeming chaos of Kabul and the stark desolate beauty of the mountains around Kandahar, the film told the story of a former Australian soldier returning to Afghanistan to seek forgiveness from the family of a civilian he had killed during a night raid on an isolated village.

The story was powerful and the cinematography superb, especially when one considers that Ben Gilmour shot all the scenes himself using a hand-held video camera that he had hastily purchased in Pakistan. Juxtaposed against the moral corruption of war and the futility of foreign occupation, was strength of the human spirit – in the midst of unspeakable brutality, decency and forgiveness can survive.



*Benjamin Gilmour, with ADFAS  
Byron Bay & Districts Chair,  
John Griffiths.*

At the conclusion of the film, Ben spoke about the incredible persistence required for the making of 'Jirga'. After he and the film crew arrived in Pakistan, where the film was originally planned to be shot, he realised the major backers of the project were 'dodgy' which resulted in all arrangements being cancelled and the production crew leaving.

Ben was shattered and convinced actor Sam Smith that they couldn't return to Australia empty-handed. Fortunately, Sam possesses the same determination as Ben, and so the two men travelled to Afghanistan to make the film themselves. So, in addition to writing the screenplay, Ben was the director, cameraman, location scout, and recruitment officer, while Sam was the lead actor (all others were local Afghans), wardrobe manager and makeup artist. This extraordinary and dangerous endeavour was achieved in only 22 days of filming.

Much of it wasn't scripted. "We gave ourselves leeway" Ben explained, "and that flexibility provided more authenticity." One of the more difficult things was to convince the local participants not to act – just be themselves. They initially took to their roles with the drama and over-exuberance of a Bollywood blockbuster.





James and Dianne Stuart

The enthusiastic audience asked Ben many questions, and in addition to hearing details of the filming of 'Jirga' it was interesting to learn his philosophy behind its creation. Ben is a great humanitarian – at 18 he left home to spend a year working with Mother Theresa in India – and he is indignant about injustice and the toll of war. He is also a fearless traveller, and another supreme talent residing in our Northern Rivers district.

❖ Marion Pescud

Enjoying the film evening



Maggie Cross and Erica Light



Brian Sundstrom, Judy Baker and Sue Gow

## A Message from the New Chair

Well what a year 2020 has been..... It is with considerable humility that I take on the role of Chair of ADFAS Byron for 2021. I am fortunate to be supported by a loyal and hardworking committee – all of whom have agreed to another term in 2021, with the addition of Peter Harden as our new treasurer.

After many years as an inscrutable treasurer, Sue Brennan is stepping sideways into the role of membership secretary, a position held by our late and dear friend, Sandra Mankowsky, who passed away suddenly in May this year.

2020 marks the 20th Anniversary of ADFAS Byron and foremost, I would like to thank those former chairs and committee members who worked tirelessly to build up ADFAS Byron from a modest, yet determined, beginning in 2000, to what it is today. Large shoes indeed to fill.

Special acknowledgement goes to former chairs - Jill McCann, Shirley Nelson, Anni Abbink and most recently John Griffiths. We are all grateful for their guidance and support.

A further heartfelt thank you to all our members and friends who maintained their support during year through our ADFAS@HOME program. We look forward to offering you a stimulating and more socially active program 2021 with both evening lectures and a daytime Special Interest Morning in the A&I Hall.

With our best wishes for an enjoyable reunion with family and friends over Christmas and a bright and safe 2021.

❖ Dianne Stuart

## Open Studios

I visited the studios of three artists in Mullumbimby, as part of the 'Open Studios: Ballina, Byron and Beyond' Arts Trail. Multi-talented duo, Anne Leon of *Anne Leon Design* and her husband Potts, of *Pottsmart*, share studio space, inspiration and some joint creative output.

Anne produces silk screen prints, ceramics, and naturally dyed textiles. She also overlays delicate watercolour designs on plant-dyed paper, which I thought were so beautiful that I purchased one.



Anne Leon



Potts with one of his 'image releases'

Potts is a silk screen printer and sculptor. He also creates hand-coloured native flora prints, and fabulous 'image releases' which he transposes on to salvaged timber. These highly original pieces begin with Potts making a collage of objects from black and white digital images on his computer, then he colours them before adhering them to reclaimed wood. The results are stunning.

Goosehouse Designs is the studio of mosaic and leadlight artist, Heather Stevenson, another multi-talented person who also dabbles in painting.

Her mosaic designs are varied and unique. While she mostly uses marble and smalti (Italian pieces of glass), she also includes other materials such as metals, mirror, and even buttons! What I found most impressive in Heather's work was her ability to add her mosaics on to self-moulded shapes. At her studio door is a sculpture of small pearlescent tiles hanging in folds to resemble a towel on a hook.



Above and right: Heather Stevenson's mosaics

I am always amazed at the depth and breadth of talent we have on the Northern Rivers. As I realise how fortunate we are to have such a rich artistic base, I look forward to all the wonderful creations I have yet to see.

❖ Marion Pescud



## Francis Atkins' Piano Recital

In recognition of their long standing support of ADFAS Byron, your committee invited a COVID restricted number of former ADFAS Byron committee members and supporters of ADFAS to attend a piano recital on 29 November featuring Francis Atkins, the winner of the ADFAS Byron 2020 Young Musician Award. This event was held at the Broken Head home of Helen Stahmann who provided her grand piano for the occasion. Helen has been a long standing member of ADFAS Toowoomba and is a great supporter of the arts.



*Francis Atkins and  
host, Helen Stahmann*

The afternoon began with drinks in a leafy courtyard, then the guests moved to the living room where a grand piano was situated in front of floor-to-ceiling windows which overlook the ocean. Francis not only enthralled the group with his mastery of the keyboard, but with his passion for the music from the great composers such as Bach, Mozart, Liszt, Rachmaninoff and others. One piece was accompanied by a butcher bird trilling loudly from the balcony.



Elements united to make the afternoon a stunning success – Francis' talent and passion, Helen's generosity in providing the wonderful venue, the sea views and even the butcher bird accompaniment!

❖ Marion Pescud



*An appreciative audience*



## 2021 Committee Membership

The 2021 Committee structure of ADFAS Byron Bay & Districts will be as listed below. If you have any queries regarding our Society, please don't hesitate to contact Committee members via e-mail. If they are unable to assist you, they will certainly direct you to the correct source.

### Executive

Dianne Stuart	Chair	dianne.stuart@gmail.com
Peter Harden	Treasurer	peterharden@bigpond.com
Diana Harden	Secretary	dianaharden@bigpond.com

### Committee

Sue Brennan	sueblu9@bigpond.com
Sue Gow	Susangow2@gmail.com
John Griffiths	johnagriffiths@outlook.com
Erica Light	ericalight8@gmail.com
Carol Marsh	cgriffiths17@hotmail.com
Marion Pescud	marionpescud@iinet.net.au
Kathy Watson	Kathryn.Watson@travelmanagers.com.au

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To our members,  
their family and friends



We wish you joy at Christmas  
and love, good health  
and happiness  
for the New Year.

We look forward to seeing you in 2021