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Director's Message-November 2020

Catherine Purdon

This November Newsletter brings us closer to the end of a most challenging year, full of uncertainty, in which COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way we think and deal with others. One of the major disappointments, Ikebana wise, was not being able to go ahead with our annual Sogetsu Ikebana Exhibition at the Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha Auditorium, although we were fortunate to be able to hold a "virtual" exhibition.

One highlight was that the *Spring* workshop, which was originally set down for August and conducted by Vernisher Wooh, the most recent recipient of the Norman and Mary Sparnon Endowment Scholarship, was held on 10 October. The *Spring* workshop had a focus on a variety of seasonal and spring themes.

Our last workshop for 2020, *The Joy of Colour*, was held on 21 November. This workshop followed a different format from the usual, with Sogetsu Ikebana student and award winning contemporary visual artist Jordan Azcune explaining how we perceive colour by eye and language. Sogetsu Ikebana Teacher Pat Mackie then did a demonstration emphasising colour after which the participants created their own Ikebana arrangements expressing colour through the use of fresh and dried, coloured and/or bleached natural material.

Both these workshops proved popular and were well attended and reports on each can be seen later in the Newsletter. One of the main reasons for these in-house workshops is to provide a wonderful opportunity to gain from the knowledge and experience of different Teachers, and although overall the number of attendees was more than satisfactory, I'm sure that other members could easily benefit from attending.

Our End of Year Sogetsu lunch is to be held at Hana Zushi, a Japanese restaurant at Sunnybank, on Wednesday, 2 December. Last year we called it "Bonon-Kai" which literally means "forget the year party". That name would still seem to be appropriate for 2020! I hope to catch up with as many of you as possible on that day.

I must make mention of the wonderful support I have received during this difficult year by our new Honorary Secretary, Ann Downey, our Assistant Director, Christine Wyer, our

Treasurer/Web Manager, Nicole Dorner-Scales and the rest of the Management Committee. Without their assistance it would have been almost impossible to keep the Sogetsu Queensland flag flying.

My very best wishes to all our Sogetsu Ikebana Queensland members and their families for a safe and peaceful Christmas season.

Catherine Purdon

The following is a quote from Sofu Teshigahara in the book *Creative Japanese Flower Arrangement* by Norman Spannon:

Your object in arranging flowers should be to create a lie, for in the context of Ikebana a lie becomes truth. By this I mean that a lie is just imagination, and Ikebana without imagination is worthless. Do not try to produce a facsimile of something in the material world, but rather give shape to those thoughts and feelings which exist within you. Flowers are concrete, but Ikebana is abstract.

Ikebana and Creativity

Freshness

There are old, well-trodden paths and there are new, freshly made ones. You must not think that the only paths are the old, comfortable ones. Even though they might be difficult and unfamiliar to travel, the new paths must also be taken, and this requires courage and effort. The old paths exist as are, but the fresh ones and those yet to be created are endless in their possibilities. It is well if you discover a new path or even make one for yourself. Nonetheless, you should never forget the old ones.

Freshness, or originality, is ikebana's greatest appeal. One cannot physically alter the appearance of a room easily, but with ikebana, one can make a significant change. In other words, into a static space you bring something that has the power to transform.

The Sogetsu style always strives for originality. This is not necessarily the same as exoticism – the exotic and the original are usually completely different things. Relying only on exoticism can result in very crude work.

You should constantly be looking for ways to change things. Perhaps I should say that you cannot change things by your own will, rather, you become an instrument for their change. Change is the measure of progress. If growth means change, then making changes also encourages growth. If I change, I grow.

Wilted and inflexible things cannot change; they have no personality. One never knows how long one will live, but regardless of age, one should always remain flexible. Stagnation is the most frightening thing in the world. Rather than retreating, one should constantly move forward.

However, affecting only surface change with a light attitude does not indicate progression. It should not even be considered.

Flowers, vases and floral forms cannot be set "as usual". Above all, the rarity of the moment cannot be forgotten. If you are aware of it, then there will be many ways to express it. How does one express freshness?

Just having a wealth of fresh materials doesn't ensure freshness in the setting. Neither does adding exotic flowers mean that the ikebana will be original. Often the opposite is true: using well-tried, familiar flowers in a new way will confer a sense of freshness more successfully. This is what we really strive for, not fresh materials, but a fresh and original outlook. This is true artistic originality.

People who respect and understand tradition are never restricted by it. Those who appreciate new and fresh things never hesitate to draw from tradition, using what they need and discarding the rest. They never rebel against it.

*The above is from **Kadensho** The Book of Flowers by Teshigahara Sofu*

Touch of Light by Edward Levinson

Thoughts on Haiku

Having lived in Japan for 40 years I feel I know it well. I often wonder if certain of my haiku will only have meaning for Japanese readers and people familiar with Japanese culture? Does it have international appeal to bridge cultures? More importantly, can a traditional short three line haiku (with or without a *kigo* seasonal word) have universal meaning and share something special with the world?

Most of my haiku come to me in inspirational moments felt through the senses: sitting or walking in nature, on trains, even while driving. When writing my haiku, the first image/word connections usually come to me in Japanese. I quickly scribble them down phonetically using the Romanised alphabet, following standard 5-7-5 syllable pattern, keeping to the rule of 17 syllables. Then I render them into English while working on the Japanese *kanji* to make it more poetic. My original inspirations usually include *kigo*, but I try not to intellectually force them into the poem. While not always exact translations, the English and Japanese haiku play off each other. On occasion English comes first or both versions come out simultaneously.

Through these haiku, I hope we can cross bridges together.

on bare branches
birds constantly chirping
awaiting cherry blossoms

spring morning
small bird dances at window
calling me to play

full of heaven's rain
heads bow to the earth
hydrangea flowers

confused on the path
bamboo shoots
show the way

cicadas crying
heart worrying
can I succeed?

cloudy day
shining persimmon
lives in heart

piecing garden
deep in me too
fall morning sun

gingko leaf
floats to the ground
homecoming

The above is an article in the current *Ikebana international Magazine* Volume 64 Issue 3.

Vernisher Wooh's Workshop

Ann Downey

Vernisher Wooh's long-awaited workshop finally happened on 10 October 2020. This was only our second workshop of the year - and what a year it's been. There was much excitement as 20 of us gathered at a new venue, Paddington Hall, to learn from Vernisher's adventures in Japan as recipient of the Norman and Mary Sparnon Endowment Scholarship in 2019.

The theme of the workshop was *My Spring Arrangement* and Vernisher's notes prior to the workshop challenged us to not just think about the flowers of Spring, but to think about what we do, and what happens, in Spring. She suggested that we consider a secondary theme, such as:

- Seasonal plant materials - use at least five kinds of material
- Only green/only leaves - all the different greens as the leaves shoot in Spring
- Curved and straight lines - with flexible flowering branches, eg, peach, magnolia
- Intertwining Vines - show movement, eg, the wind
- Use berries
- Colours in contrast
- Use thick branches to build a structure - add leaves, flowers, etc

Vernisher gave a short introductory speech in which she emphasised the importance of sketching your arrangement before you start, and passed on very useful information on the

latest thinking at Sogetsu Headquarters. We then worked on our arrangements for 45 minutes. Vernisher spent time with all participants, helping to fine tune our work as we progressed.

Then it was Vernisher's turn to demonstrate her Spring Arrangement. I think the photo says it all - container on its side, large branch, manipulated palm frond, and more!

I always think the most valuable part of any workshop is when the presenter discusses each participant's arrangement. When there are 20 participants, you learn at least 20 new things. Or, even if you already knew it, it is brought to front of mind again. This certainly happened in this workshop when Vernisher's expert eye led to adjustments and explanations that transformed many of the arrangements. Sometimes it is the smallest thing.

Thank you
Vernisher; you
were so generous
with your time,
knowledge and
skills.



The Joy of Colour Workshop

Presented by Jordan Azcune and Pat Mackie

On Saturday 21 November 2020 at 1 pm about 22 of us had the stimulating experience to attend a very full workshop about **The Joy of Colour**.

Titled "Colour by Eye and Language" Jordan opened the duet and took us on a colour journey.

Jordan introduced research and ground work published in 1969 by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay. Their theory is that cross-cultural colour concepts are centred on the notion of a **basic colour term**.

English language has 11 basic colour terms. Russian has 12 such terms, with light blue and dark blue each having separate basic colour terms. The English basic colour terms are red, yellow, green, blue, black, white, gray, orange, brown, pink and purple.

With a magnificent selection of colour images Jordan let us experience the changing visual value of a specific colour, depending on the addition of another colour.

"Hanunó'o colour words" offered a different perspective of the Colour Spectrum, with 4 reference points:

- Dark
- Light
- Dry
- Fresh

Victor Vasarely's images really made us see and think how colour plays up, depending on the immediate colour neighbour, and also the illusionary impact of size.

Want to watch the Len Lye Kaleidoscope "A colour Box" on YouTube that Jordan recommended? (I retyped all of the following... it might be right, or not). Go to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DksmbDMDUU&list=PLRy9hjXdcep9fG3PDg-XQZOuxRsyzyFlh&index=22&t=Os>

All in all, Jordan took a colourful journey into our hearts, eyes and minds. We were ageless equal people in a bubble of colour fascination.



The Ikebana-Colour-Duet continued when Pat took to the demonstration table. A blank canvas. Out comes a beautiful and unusual yellow container...

I find it complex to unpack the rest of Pat's demonstration. Is it because she so super seamlessly and effortlessly produced an arrangement?

Pat bent down, and lifted a long chain of leaves... I was transformed to another world... She made it look so easy to "down-stick" heavy material resulting in a light and airy arrangement. The magic kept coming with each branch and colour she picked from her secret paper bag. No wonder I've clean forgotten to write down any notes! I was too mesmerised watching the arrangement evolve. Magical. Joyous.

Then we all had a chance to play with colour and create our own! The packed workshop room got very quiet, very busy, and it was colour everywhere. What a delight to see all the individual arrangements. We learned so much more when Pat paid attention to each individual creation, and added her "magic touch" to enhance these arrangements.

Here are some of the comments on the workshop:

"Jordan's presentation was very interesting. Definitely makes me think of colours more when I choose the materials. For me it was really interesting that a colour looks different in different colour combinations. Never thought about that, so really the magic of colours impressed me."

"I was also impressed by Pat's demonstration too, as she always creates amazing arrangements."

"I thought it was an excellent workshop, good talk, good demonstration and so nice to see everyone again."

"Jordan... he was very knowledgeable and took colour to a new level... Pat... In her quiet way she inspires me to extend my energy and makes me expand myself..."





Message from Mr John Massy, our Patron
The Director, Catherine Purdon, received the following message from him:
Hi, Catherine
I hope that you and yours are all well.
Our world is a vastly different one from the one we knew just a comparatively short time ago.
Just wanted to get in touch with our ikebana family. We miss you guys.
Congratulations to the association and to the individuals who contributed to the virtual exhibition this year. The actual exhibition is one of the highlights of our year that we sorely miss.
Fond regards
Karen and John

Thanks to all the members who have contributed to the newsletters this year. It is contributions that allows us all to celebrate the awesomeness of ikebana.

Enjoy your Christmas break and send photos of the ikebana you do for your Christmas at home.

Regards Wendy

Love of ikebana plus hard work = achievement



Yvette Bassett and Chi Nguyen receive their Teachers' Certificates



Ann Downey
Teachers' Certificate



Four fine fillies and a colt celebrating Melbourne Cup Day



Gillian Jones
Teachers' Certificate



Louise Quinn
3rd and 4th Certificates



Carol Bennett 1st Certificate
Ani Wilson 2nd Certificate



Jordan Azcune, 1st Certificate
Eri Pitt 4th Certificate