

## This year we reimagined our museum as a place where people can access our wonderful collection from anywhere, anytime.

To meet this challenge, we began the year by redeveloping TJC's website, incorporating a new ticket booking system, online shop, and program archive. Our previous website, which was more than a decade old, was visually and functionally dated. The new TJC website is easy to navigate, purchase tickets and shop online. But, most importantly, it has enabled TJC to start the process of putting our collection online, making our museum universally accessible, and virtually 'opening doors'. We hope to launch the new virtual portal to the Collection early in the next Financial Year.

Another milestone for TJC this year was gaining Accreditation by the Australian Museum and Galleries Association Victoria. Over the past two years, a dedicated team at TJC has worked hard to procure the Accreditation through developing procedures, policies and practice to meet recognised museum standards. The Accreditation panel were particularly impressed by our temporary exhibition and lecture series and commended the museum for its pioneering co-curation model.

Through the programs we offer we continued in 2019 to honour William Johnston's vision for the museum as a place of experimentation and discovery. To this end we presented more than 80 curated events throughout the year including exhibitions, special tours, workshops, talks, lectures and master classes. We exhibited the work of more than 50 contemporary artists and makers, engaged over 40 lecturers and speakers and participated in four major Melbourne festival and cultural events. Here are some of the year's highlights.

We began the year with a continuation of the exhibition *PATTERNS OF COLLECTING | FROM THE BOWER* at *The Johnston Collection*, featuring artwork and items from the unique personal collections of four contemporary Victorian artists: Loris Button, Deborah Klein, Louise Saxton, and Carole Wilson. Their studio collections which ranged from curiosities, natural history specimens, memorabilia, discarded books, china, textiles and old tools of trade, were installed in *Fairhall* alongside and responding to William Johnston's collection. *PATTERNS OF COLLECTING* explored the ways in which objects are collected and ideas around the notion of a bower and a woman's private space.



In October we presented *HOME made GOOD | Christmas at The Johnston Collection 2018 | 2019* showing over 200 works from more than 50 Melbourne-based artists and collectives. In this 'inspired' interpretation of the Collection all the works were commissioned by TJC with the artists encouraged to challenge traditional practice and push the boundaries of contemporary making. The exhibition included a gigantic gingerbread replica of *Fairhall* exhibition-house made by Barbara Porter from nearly 65 kilograms of gingerbread mix, furnished entirely of gingerbread furniture, textiles, and paintings, whimsically recreating the antiques from the Collection; a giant sculpture by The Bond Family of Marie-Antoinette composed of discarded plastic bags and soft drink bottles, delivering a political commentary on ocean plastics; and an installation 'on disappointment', by the notorious Hotham Street Ladies artists collective as a response to a series of letters received expressing 'disappointment' in their previous exhibition at The Johnston Collection.

In February *OBJECT LESSONS | WILLIAM JOHNSTON: His Residence & Collection* opened. In this exhibition, significant objects gathered by William Johnston, particularly those he collected in India and especially Calcutta (Kolkata), were shown. *OBJECT LESSONS* recreated *Fairhall* as a relaxed British-style interior found in India in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, giving visitors an insight into what it was like to live as a colonial Englishman abroad.

Throughout the year Menu tours focusing on particular areas in the Collection were held offering visitors a further way to learn about and enjoy the Collection. We also presented specially curated programmes for Melbourne cultural events and festivals including the Melbourne Food & Wine Festival, the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival, and Open House Melbourne, engaging with a broad and diverse audience and further building relationships with our communities.

In 2019 we presented more than 60 lectures, talks, study series, and masterclasses featuring new and returned speakers from a variety of fields, bringing a range of voices and perspectives to our lectures program. Highlights included a Study Day in July, *PRIVATE COLLECTIONS | The Value of Art & Ephemera* featuring eminent speakers from the arts and museum sectors who considered ideas around collecting and collections. In August, artist Louise Saxton, one of the artists featured in the *PATTERNS OF COLLECTING* exhibition, held a workshop *TRANSFORM YOUR OLD DOILIES | Recycle, Re-use and Re-create!* In this sold-out workshop, Saxton showed participants how to transform no longer used domestic objects into artworks. From July to September the four artists from the *PATTERNS OF COLLECTING* exhibition took visitors on 'Walk & Talk' tours of *Fairhall*, discussing their work and the inspiration and processes behind the exhibition. Throughout the year, a number of Study Series were



presented including two outstanding series focusing on historic textiles, *ROBING AND INVESTITURE* and *FABRICATING THE WORLD* with art historian, Susan Scollay and others.

In 2019, a series of specially curated events for The Friends of The Johnston Collection were held including an afternoon tea at the Ian Potter Museum, a Masterclass with Julien Quentin at ANAM, and a visit to a number of private country gardens in Spring. These events foster enjoyment through learning and a sense of community amongst our members.

We continued our *OPENING DOORS* campaign to raise funds so that we can continue to deliver engaging programs for all and to preserve William Johnston's legacy into the future. In August we held our annual major fundraising event, a cocktail party at the exclusive The Melbourne Savage Club. It was incredibly successful, raising more than \$13,000 on the night. I would like to thank TJC's hardworking fundraising committee led by Lisa Arrowsmith. I would also like thank all the donors who supported us this year. Without your extraordinary generosity we wouldn't exist.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the many volunteers, supporters, members, and staff of TJC for your commitment, expertise and enthusiasm and for recognising the importance of what we do and for making The Johnston Collection the welcoming and vibrant place that it is.

**Louis Le Vaillant**

**DIRECTOR | CURATOR**

2019