

Because of all our work in recent years in improving and expanding our digital offerings – updating our website, creating a TJC YouTube channel offering virtual exhibition tours, putting the Collection online, and revamping our online shop - TJC was in a much better position to face the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

When we launched our Collection online in November 2019, we were able to literally unlock the Collection to everyone across the world. When we launched our first virtual lecture via Zoom in April 2020, anyone, anywhere could enjoy our lecture program from the comfort of their home. The digitizing of TJC has not only enabled continued access to the museum during the pandemic, but it has also expanded our impact and outreach into a future post-COVID-19 world.

On the recommendation of public health officers, TJC responded swiftly and closed its doors to the public on 18 March 2020. It was painful for us to cancel our tours, lectures, and members events along with our highly anticipated major fundraising event at the Melbourne Club. However, the safety of our visitors, staff and members was paramount and remained so all through 2020.

Because of COVID-19, our programming had a bumpy ride in the latter half of 2020. Although we continued to offer a wide range of programs both virtual and on-site in 2020, many were, sadly, cut short by the pandemic. After closing *Fairhall* in mid-March, the exhibition-house remained closed until after the end of 2020. Many of our on-site lectures and member events were cancelled, then re-scheduled, only to be cancelled again.

The year began pre-COVID-19, with the much-lauded exhibition **JANET LAURENCE: THE PALM AT THE END OF THE MIND**, part of our continuing *House of Ideas* series. Janet Laurence is one of Australia's most celebrated contemporary artists and in this exhibition she undertook to explore our Collection alongside her own creative multi-disciplinary practices of sculpture, installation, photography, and video. In **THE PALM AT THE END OF THE MIND**, Laurence explored the fragility of the natural world and the challenges facing our environment using William Johnston's own collecting and gathering from around the world and his love of gardening, to underpin and reflect her ideas.

*A BOY'S OWN STORY | Summer at The Johnston Collection 2019|20* opened in late September featuring the work of contemporary artists and makers, Douglas McManus; Chris O'Brien; Troy Emery; Noel Button; Lucas Grogan; Tristan Brumby-Rendell; Kevin Smith; Luke Hockley; Steve Campbell-Wright; David Pearce; Terry Williams; Trevor Smith; and David Collyer, alongside the posthumous work of A. Keith Collyer (1917-1983), Archibald Collyer

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(1883-1939). Edward John Scollay (1917–1985); and George Compeigne Campbell (1917-2007). *A BOY'S OWN STORY* challenged the widely held assumption that men can't knit or sew by featuring the work of male artists who have made a life's work in craft mediums that have traditionally been associated with women. *A BOY'S OWN STORY* generated a lot of media coverage including a feature article in The Age newspaper and an interview on The Conversation.

*AN INTERIOR LIFE | William Johnston & His Collection* opened on 17 February but unfortunately was closed just four weeks later due to the first Melbourne lockdown. However, within a fortnight we were able to upload a virtual tour of the exhibition to TJC's YouTube channel and over the next few months, the video was viewed by tens of thousands of people from all around the world. *AN INTERIOR LIFE* recreated the "English Country House style" inspired by the interiors of the great English designers, Sybil Fowler and John Colefax of Colefax and Fowler, London.

As mentioned previously, our lectures and talks program was disrupted because of the COVID-19 lockdown. However, despite the interruption, we were still able to present more than 40 events over the year including lectures (both on-site and virtual), walks and talks, a book launch, as well as community events, Open House Melbourne and Government House Open Day. The Friends of The Johnston Collection presented a diverse program of events in 2020 also, including a Spring Garden Tour, a Pearls and Pinot fundraiser, and the First Friday Book Club which was successfully held over Zoom during the Melbourne lockdown.

Our e-newsletters became particularly important in 2020 by keeping our subscribers and members connected with the museum during lockdown. In April we introduced our *At Home with TJC* newsletter that was delivered to our subscriber's in-boxes every Sunday afternoon with TJC news, virtual gallery tours and lectures, and articles about the Collection.

Although our SHOP was closed for much of the second half of the year, sales through our online SHOP increased significantly in 2020. Our most successful SHOP item was a bespoke Liberty fabric facemask manufactured in Melbourne for TJC. Sales of our cards, books and jigsaw puzzles also soared during this period with people taking up traditional pursuits such as letter writing, reading and games while stuck at home during lockdown.

This has been a year of constantly adapting, staying connected and being creative. We could not have done this without the generous support and dedication of our donors, sponsors, members, volunteers and TJC staff. Your support has been all the more vital to us in 2020, a year of unforeseen disruption and challenges. I am so grateful to you all for remaining so wonderfully supportive of TJC all through this most difficult of years. Thank you.

