



MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

“This too, shall pass.”

There once was a great king who asked his wisest advisor to give him advice that would always be true. After much meditation and head-scratching (we can imagine), the advisor returned with this gem of wisdom: “This too, shall pass”. This may not be an accurate account of the story, but I like this particular version. As Dire Straits says in their song: “Nothing lasts forever but the earth and sky”.

Many volunteer-run organizations experience an ebb and flow of warm bodies to fill crucial roles within the group. OWS is no different. When I joined the executive in the role of Secretary in January 2021, we had nearly a full executive - 19 warm bodies to keep the Society rolling.

Now we have only three key roles filled.

One of the things that the pandemic has forced upon us is a period of introspection. With many of our day-to-day distractions removed, it was a chance to take a good long look at our lives and decide what is truly important at this time. As a result, several members of the executive realized it was time to withdraw from their roles and focus on other priorities, the most recent of which was our President, Claudio Brun del Re.

Please don't get me wrong; I am not judging any of the executive members who stepped down and I am not questioning their decisions. Just the opposite – I am thankful for their contributions and hope to see them at future events. Nor am I trying to shame anyone in the Society about their lack of involvement. I am simply explaining our situation.

Our recent member survey showed us that the interest and passion for our group still exists. Members want to share their work, both within the group and to the wider world. They want to communicate and learn from each other. They want opportunities to learn from experts. And we want to make that happen. But we have many challenges ahead.

HERE ARE THE CURRENT ROLES & VACANCIES IN THE OWS:

- President: **Vacant**
- Vice-President: Joyce Corey
- Secretary: **Vacant**
- Treasurer: Vic Dohar
- Programs Coordinator: **Vacant**
- Newsletter Editors: Pamela Levac, Christine Cashman
- Membership: Vic Dohar
- Webmaster: **Vacant**
- Communications: **Vacant**
- Exhibitions Committee: **Vacant**
- Social Convenor: **Vacant**
- Publicity: Facebook – Danielle Beaulieu
- Archives: **Vacant**
- Digital Images: **Vacant**
- Reporter: **Vacant**
- Past President: Pauline Goss
- Photographer: Brent Goss
- Advisor: Anne Remmer Thompson

Currently, we do not have enough warm bodies to run juried shows, arrange a gallery exhibition, research and recruit artists for workshops or demonstrations, communicate regularly with members, update the website, or promote the Society to recruit new members. We know exhibitions and workshops are important to our members, but as of right now, all these things are on hold.

I wasn't completely sure what I hoped to get from the Society when I joined. Having joined late in 2019 just before the world changed, I have never seen the Society operating in full swing. I have never attended an in-person exhibition, plein air event, or paint-together session. I am a self-taught artist, and know next to nothing about the art world, exhibitions, or galleries.

What I do have is a passion for this medium and for those of us brave enough to try to master it. I have a vision of a dynamic, thriving Society where members can share their own passion and knowledge, where we can grow and learn together, where we can make new friends. I am willing to work hard to make that vision come to life.

Make no mistake – we are experiencing an ebb tide and the Society cannot function with only 3 key executive roles filled for very long. Is there a possibility that the Society could ebb right out of existence? Of course, that is a possibility with any volunteer-run organization. The smaller the organization, the higher the possibility. Will that happen? I don't know. As I said, I am willing to work hard so that it won't.

The pandemic restrictions have eased, and we have an opportunity to meet and spend time together once again. To be more than a list of email recipients with a common interest. I am excited at the prospect.

We have scheduled our first in-person event (see announcement below). I am excited to get out and meet our members, to share their passion, and to get to know each other a bit. I hope you will join us.

We will be looking for volunteers to help with this event and other events in the future. Warm bodies to help with the flow, you might say. Please consider helping out when and where you can. You can email me directly at president@owswatercolour.com.

Please take the time to read through the results of the member survey. I think you will find much in common with other members.

**When things are bad, remember:
It won't always be this way.
Take one day at a time.**

**When things are good, remember:
It won't always be this way.
Enjoy every great moment.**

I hope to meet you all in the very near future and enjoy some great moments together.

Joyce Corey.

Vice-President, Ottawa Watercolour Society

SURVEY RESULTS

Dear members,

As you know, we recently sent out a survey to all of you to get your thoughts and ideas about the OWS as we emerge from the pandemic. Many thanks to all of you who responded! Below, you will find a summary of what the survey revealed.

In recent editions of the newsletters, we have put out calls for volunteers to help renew the Executive of the OWS. Many of our members have resigned after years of service, and there are multiple positions to fill, if we hope to keep hosting events and functioning as a group. Perhaps this detailed picture of our membership will inspire you to come forward and see how you can help this lovely group of watercolourists spring back into life after two years of pandemic-induced hibernation!

Almost half of our 100+ members responded to the survey (we got 49 responses). “Respondents” and “members” are used interchangeably to refer to OWS members who responded to the survey.

If you would like more information about the survey, please contact Vic Dohar at vicdohar@gmail.com.

Section 1: About You

- 75% of respondents are age 60 or older. The remaining 25% of our members are between the ages of 40 and 60.
- 55% of respondents are new to the society or have participated in less than 2 juried shows. 28% have attained Fellowship.
- Most members (65%) paint 1-2 times a week or less.
- 10% of respondents exhibit regularly in a gallery, and a majority exhibit with other art organizations, through their own website, or on social media.
- Members prefer to attend OWS events near where they live within the greater City of Ottawa, but 25% are willing to travel to other parts of the city for events.
- Membership is quite diverse and there seems to be no correlation between the results of any of the general questions.
- The comments from this section have a common theme: the desire for a community to connect with other watercolour artists, to share and exchange ideas.

Section 2: Programs and Activities

- The core OWS activities were ranked as follows:
 - o 1st: Exhibitions
 - o 2nd: Workshops
 - o 3rd: Socializing with members
 - o 4th: Paint-ins, paint-outs, critiques
 - o 5th: Fellowship achievement program
- There is generally low interest for the Fellowship program (20% of respondents are interested in obtaining their Fellowship).

- The types of workshops and training were ranked as follows:
 - o **1st: Formal training classes with a renowned watercolourist**
 - o **2nd: Technique and demonstration workshops**
 - o **3rd: Critique sessions, member show and tell**
 - o **4th: Technical workshops, like framing, stretching paper and photography**
 - o **5th: Product demonstrations by commercial representatives**
 - o **6th: The business of art, marketing, social media, and advertising**
- The great majority of members prefer to attend events during the day, on weekdays or weekends, with only 24% of respondents preferring weeknights.
- The majority of respondents would like to participate in regular activities every three months.
- Most members did not realize Zoom is available to them for their use in watercolour-related activities with other members.

Section 3: Exhibiting Your Artwork

- The majority of members feel that it is important to exhibit their artwork. However, there is not consensus about the importance of social media.
- 70% of respondents would like OWS to have in-person gallery exhibits. Members are also open to a mix of on-line and in-person exhibits.
- Close to 90% of respondents have not participated in a show at the Walter Baker centre gallery because they feel that the location is too far, and it is not conducive to sales. The survey reveals that respondents would prefer a different location for a physical gallery space that is more conducive to sales, easier to get to, and more aesthetically pleasing.
- Most respondents (75%) are comfortable with the entire jurying process being on-line for future juried exhibitions. However, the majority also feel that a mix of on-line and in-person exhibitions would be preferred.

Section 4: Communications and Newsletter

- Respondents are happy with the amount of communication received. They use email and the newsletter to keep up to date with what's happening in the OWS.
- Everyone reads and seems to appreciate the newsletter, and about half of respondents have downloaded past issues. There was a variety of suggested new topics for newsletter articles (product reviews and member recommendations were at the top of the list).

Section 5: Website and Social Media

- Most respondents never or rarely visit the OWS website. Only 10% visit it 2-4 times a month. The reasons given for visiting the website are: view the current on-line show; look at events and announcements; download the newsletter.
- Respondents prefer Facebook or Instagram for social media, overall.

Section 6: Final Question

22 of the 49 people who answered the survey left final comments. Here is a summary of those ideas.

Many respondents thanked those on the Executive for the time and effort it took to put together this survey, and for all the work it takes to run the OWS. Going forward, there is a desire for:

- Exhibits
- Teaching and learning opportunities
- Traditional watercolour combined with new ideas to attract younger members
- More events and opportunities to get together in person, and continued online events

Here is some of what you had to say:

- “I joined years ago, in the late 1990s, when I started enjoying watercolour after retiring. I wanted to learn more and become more involved with other watercolourists in the region. Their experience in the field was tremendous and it’s the reason why I have continued to this day as a member in OWS. The opportunity to exhibit and take workshops with other members was what I was looking for from the beginning. Thank you.”
- “You organize good workshops.”
- “I feel it’s important to be in an organization that promotes watercolour artists.”
- “I have always loved learning more about my preferred watercolour medium and, in turn, teach it without reserve to my classes. I encourage my students to explore watercolour on their own and become members of different associations, like ours, that do the same.”
- “As a young watercolourist, the OWS was a very important avenue for me to learn not only about the medium and technique, but also about exposure. I did enjoy fellowship with many very talented OWS members. The memory of those early days is very precious to me.”
- “I hope this survey and the responses received spark some new life into the OWS and its activities.”
- “I believe it is important to foster traditional watercolour painting but there also needs to be encouragement of new ideas, techniques, watercolour media and watercolour supports to attract younger artists.”
- “I am fond of this organization and proud to see it still going strong after 40 some years.”
- “I joined OWS during the pandemic, so haven’t gotten a chance to participate actively yet, but I am looking forward to doing so this year.”

**SAVE
THE
DATE!**

We’re having a Spring Fling!

Come join us for a chance to meet and greet and paint!

There will be a plein air session followed by a reception where we can mix and mingle and compare paintings.

Tickets for the Spring Fling will be \$20.

**Monday, May 30th, afternoon / evening at the
Britannia Yacht Club. Details to follow.**