

11 Nov 2024  
Te-Whanganui-A-Tara, Aotearoa

Kia ora koutou to all our members and the CANZ whānau!  
Thanks for joining us for the 2024 Annual General Meeting of Ceramics Association of New Zealand.

This is my first time writing a Chairperson's report for Ceramics NZ and indeed the first time in the organisation's 60+ year history to have a chairperson's report rather than a President's report.

In early 2023 as we faced potentially winding up the Association, declining membership, uncertainty around the role of a national association for ceramics, and no clear leadership following the departure of long-term key people such as Louis Kittleson and Meagan Blake. I proposed some radical changes to the operation of the association - including removing membership fees, changing the organisational structure, and becoming entirely volunteer-based. It was a blue skies approach and my aim has always been to create an inclusive ceramics community that is welcoming to all without any barriers to joining.

At our AGM last year we voted on some significant changes to the structure of the organisation and how we operate, based on feedback from the wider ceramics community and the assistance of Briar Monro who helped us develop our 2024-2027 strategic plan.

I am very pleased to say that the changes we adopted have been hugely successful (in my humble opinion). As of the AGM last year we had just under 100 members, and now as 2024 draws to a close we have over 650 members around the country as well as overseas members. This is a huge achievement and I want to thank everyone for supporting us as a Council when we proposed this idea last year.

In addition over the last year we have had some huge milestones - our first Ceramics New Zealand Open Studios pilot event took place in the Wellington region last year and set us on good ground for the first ever Ceramics NZ National Open Studios taking place around the country next weekend! We have over 60 artists participating and I am very excited to watch this event grow.

In addition we were able to bring our first international touring potter to NZ since 2018 with Kwak Kyungtae and Marco Minetti visiting 8 studios around the country, running number of workshops and demos. It was a wonderful experience connecting with so many clubs and studios to organise this tour, as well as a mammoth effort by so many people involved. Huge huge mihi to everyone who attended a workshop, hosted or chauffeured Kwak & Marco around (including my in-laws who got roped in!), pugged clay or got involved in any other way. Thanks also to Mac's Mud for the countless iterations of clay sent back and forth to Korea to get the right blend for our onggi and throwing workshops. It was wonderful to be able to use 100% NZ clay for these workshops.

We only received a small amount of funding for this tour from the Asia NZ foundation, so it was really a shoe-string operation in order to make it as accessible as possible. I was really pleased to see that the 3-day throwing workshop we offered in Christchurch & Dunedin was

over NZ\$1000 cheaper than the equivalent 3-day workshops being hosted in Australia. That is only due to the generosity of all of the studios, hosts, and organisers who freely gave their time that we were able to offer these courses at such a reduced price.

Nevertheless I am aware even at a discount the cost of these workshops was prohibitive for many people. We have plans to offer a wider range of options for touring potter programmes in the future and welcome your feedback.

I would like to Acknowledge Becky Richards for her editorial role in Ceramics New Zealand Magazine and her tireless work on ensuring we have a high-quality, prestigious publication showcasing clay artists from around Aotearoa. I am extremely grateful to her in securing Creative NZ funding for the next 2 years towards the publication of the magazine at a rate where we can remunerate contributors fairly. The latest issue will be published in early December - [pre-orders are open now](#).

We also launched the [National Studios Potters' Directory](#) this year which now has over 80 people registered. We are planning to also launch a National Ceramics Events calendar and website in 2025 - watch this space!

I'm happy that everything has gone quite smoothly with the transition to new ways of working and we don't have any amendments to the constitution this year, and are proudly supporting the continuation of fees-free membership for 2025.

Anyway this is already too long so I will close out by saying ngā mihi kia koutou again for all your support, thanks for believing in my vision for this organisation, being a part of it and the strong, inclusive ceramics community we are building.

Last autumn I was having lunch with Richard Stratton and Cheryl Lucas and I mentioned that we had made our membership free and Cheryl teasingly said 'A bit desperate ay?'. I quickly retorted 'it's inclusive not desperate!!'. And yes I am standing for re-election despite getting constantly teased, harangued, whinged at, etc; the occasional word of appreciation keeps me coming back for more (or maybe I am just delulu?).

We still have a few key roles to fill including regional council member vacancies for Nelson/Marlborough and Wellington/Wanganui/Taranaki/Manawatū, and of course still seeking my special twin flame co-chair for anyone who wants to support this organisation moving into the radically inclusive new future!  
xo Nicole

Dr. Nicole Gaston

Chairperson 2023-2024