

The Vancouver Life Drawing Society AGM
1011 Main Street Vancouver
Saturday March 6, 2010, 2 pm to 4 pm

President's Report

2009/2010 in Review

This past year was one marked by a series of challenges that moved the Board of Directors to implement some innovative approaches in how Basic carries out its business. In a word 2009 meant "change" brought about by what seems a transition from the old guard of members moving on and new members taking over. A welcome change it is as new and younger members start to take an interest in the running of the Society; something that will hopefully continue.

One example of this change was seen in the Board of Directors. On February 7, 2009 a new Board was elected:

- President, Douglas Smardon
- Vice President, Anna-Maria Potamiti
- Treasurer, Peter Berger
- Secretary, Jim Yang
- Member at Large, Elizabeth Nichols

By year end the Board maintained only two of its original members and consists now of:

- President, Douglas Smardon
- Vice President, Randal Cullen
- Treasurer, Doug Janzen
- Secretary, Mary Hartlieb
- Member at Large, Elizabeth Nichols

I pause now to thank all members who have participated on the Board of Directors as each one of you contributed immensely to help further some of the positive changes that have been brought about.

The year started with a paid Studio Administrator position that the previous Board had hired to assist with the running of the Society. There is no limit to the amount of work required and this position was an attempt to alleviate some of the pressure off the Board of Directors. It was extended for three months until May 31 after which the Board deemed the position redundant.

Raising Volunteers

The first challenge I was faced with was shoring up the volunteer base as volunteers are what make this Society survive or thrive depending on the level of participation. The first thing I took into account was the positions that existed and what was needed. I had inherited a situation where a few positions such as the President, Accountant, Gallery Curator and Cleaner were entitled to the benefits of gratis sessions and membership and session managers had the session(s) they managed free of charge. Given the importance of the duties that session managers, the Board Directors and other key volunteers undertake the existing policy of handing out such generous benefits to some was inconsistent.

At the first Board meeting I pitched to the other Directors that each position on the Board would receive the same benefits as the President in return for sharing in some of the key duties. Many of these duties such as modeling booking were being carried out by the Studio Administrator but the economics of paying someone were out weighed by the benefit of compensating a larger group of volunteers for their time. Further any paid position assumes over site by the President whom in turn is simply a volunteer without the time to be truly accountable as to what the Studio Administrator was doing or what the time was being charged for.

Duties proposed for sharing among the Board of Directors were:

- Model Management Officer in charge of modeling bookings and the well fare of the models
- Special Events Coordinator
- Web Site Officer to liaise with the web site designer
- Session Manager Officer to oversee the appointment/change over in session managers.
- Media Publications Officer to organize promotion and publications such as a newsletter, pamphlets and email contact with members.

To date many of these duties have morphed into other volunteer positions and some remain not fully realized, at least not yet.

In recognition of the service they provide the session managers were offered gratis sessions. A session manager's first priority is to the attending artists, model and the running of a well managed session. Given they may not have the time to properly relax and draw they are given the opportunity to attend other sessions at no cost. A list of relief session managers was established to help provide coverage in the event a full time session manager needs some time away.

Other jobs that have been established as full time positions receiving similar benefits are the:

- Web Site Administration for designing and maintaining our web site.

- Email Administrator who manages our ipower email account, sends out the group emails to all members and alumni and maintains the membership contact list.
- Purchasing Officer who inventories our stocks and supplies, purchases and delivers them to the studio.
- Studio Coordinator in charge of promoting the Society via links to other web sites, publications and other promotional material.
- Modeling Booker in charge of booking the models for weekly sessions and updating the modeling schedule on the web calendar.
- Special Events Coordinator for coordinating festival events such as the ECC.

Improved Communication

The activities of the Board needed to be better communicated to the members. A revamping of the web site, mass emailing members and alumni and the posting of Board meeting minutes on the web site and at the studio have all been attempts to make the dealings of the Society more transparent.

I wish to recognize three members in helping to further these initiatives:

- Doug Janzen who over hauled our entire web site to the magnificent site it is today.
- Joel Libin who took on the job of Studio Coordinator and started by updating the 2009 membership list and alumni lists back to 2002. It is these lists that form the basis for our mass emails for keeping members and the alumni in touch with Basic business. Joel has also been working to establish links with other web sites and organizations with the intent of promoting ourselves. He and Doug have been working with Judy Choi to update our business cards and pamphlet and get them out and are always looking for innovative ways to expand our presence.
- Cyprian Libera who maintains our membership contact list and sends out the mass emails keeping everyone informed on Basic highlights.

Improving Standards

Maintaining a consistent standard for sessions and modeling is now seen as primary objective for improving session attendance. The Board was running into some trouble with the introduction of Wednesday and Friday mornings sessions the previous year. This was done without taking into account that without an increase in attendance the existing attendance was merely being spread out over more sessions increasing costs without increasing revenues; the Society began to loose money. In an attempt to correct this situation unproductive sessions were dropped and then some reinstated again via pressure from members. The result was confusion as to what sessions were actually happening.

In the end it was recognized other costs were also increasing and the Board decided to raise the drawing fees and maintain a consistent session schedule.

In an effort to improve the quality of session management last October the Board staged a session management training session and brought all the full time and relief managers together to discuss the nuances of session management, better understand what is required and set some standards. This will likely be an ongoing event each year in an effort to continually strive towards improved session management.

The Board and namely the modeling booker remain open to comments from artists for modeling preference so standards are set for consistently reliable, capable and keen models. In recognition that good models have to be paid well the Board approved a small increase in modeling fees. It is hoped as finances improve through improved attendance modeling rates can continue to improve.

Gallery

Our Gallery Curator for the last few years, Cheryl Carpenter moved on to greater things and we wish her well. Joel Libin has taken up the challenge of being the Gallery Curator on top of his other duties as the Studio Coordinator.

One of the primary drains on the Societies coffers was the gallery openings mainly for insurance and promotion. Thanks to the effort of Peter Berger and Cheryl proper contracts were drawn up for use between artist/group/members and the gallery. Later in the year private members and group contracts were modified to pass on food costs and charge a "hanging fee" to offset the costs for insurance and printing invitations to the artist(s) having the show.

The Gallery continues to be a major focus for members affording them the opportunity to show their work. It is a labour intensive undertaking and more participation by members will be needed to see the Gallery flourish to its full potential. For this reason a Gallery Committee headed up by the Gallery Curator is in the process of being formed to carry out this work.

Studio

In addition to seeing regular use the studio was rented out by innovative members to hold art courses; two were held last year by Randal Cullen and one this year by Joel Libin. A lease agreement was draughted by Peter Berger for renting the space. Such steps are now becoming the norm as the Society strives to conduct its affairs in a more business like manner.

Last year two high schools, Churchill and Britannia, used the space three times for their International Baccalaureate programmes. This service was originally

granted freely by Basic Inquiry as part of our out reach initiative but last year the schools were charged the cost of the model. The Board has since felt the need to fully charge for these services by renting the studio as well. Despite this, interest in renting the studio space appears to be growing with a professional studio taking an interest in renting the space for their artists and another school has come forward wishing to rent the space for their students.

A maintenance committee headed up by Randal Cullen is in the process of being formed as keeping up with the workings of a studio is an ongoing issue. The heating and AC system was finally serviced this year including programming the settings to maintain ambient temperatures throughout the year. Lighting is the next project to be worked on.

Special Events

Elizabeth Nichols has been doing a marvellous job of coordinating our special events which included last year's Eastside Cultural Crawl as will again this year. This year she is also coordinating the Society's participation in the Drawn Festival. These festivals tend to bring out the best in what this Society has to offer and are becoming a great way to promote ourselves in the community.

Conclusion

Taking on the Presidency was no easy decision and at times I wondered what I had done to deserve this. With a little perseverance and hard work I have managed. From this past term I have learned what counts in the end is the support one gets from those around him. I wish to thank all the volunteers who have so graciously given of their time to the running of this Society and for their continued support. Without it I don't think I could have made it.