

President's Letter

Mitchell Hearn Bishop

This year I have had notable success in growing Arabian Jasmine. Known as "pikake" in Hawaii, this is the jasmine that is found in jasmine tea and a staple floral offering in India. My favorite lei is the pikake lei, and whenever I am in Hawaii and they are available, I buy at least one. The scent in my garden is a constant reminder of the location for the October meeting, although even in Hawaii it is a summer flower and needs a great deal of heat to flourish. In Hawaii, the only place I have seen it really do well is in the heat of Lahaina.

I'm not a particularly gifted gardener unless I'm highly motivated. My successes are erratic. This surprises many people but if you know any botanists,

they tend to be poor gardeners since they find all plants fascinating, are reluctant to interfere with the natural arrangement of things, and tend to be highly specialized. I had a lithics professor who was plagued by people presenting him with assorted chipped pebbles and demanding to know what they were. He would always reply with a certain cool enthusiasm, "that's a rock." The point being that it is impossible to identify on the basis of a hand sample divorced from context. Parallels with other artifacts are tempting.

Similarly, I am often quizzed as to what a certain plant is and find myself at a loss. Southern California is host to a bewildering array of introduced plants from all over the planet that only an idiot savant could memorize. The Irwin Garden at the Getty, for instance, is a continual source of irritation being a botanical freak show of an unprecedented nature.

Plants are found in nature with variegated leaves, copper foliage, or afflicted with structural deformities some find pleasing to the eye. Bob Irwin chose his plants based on color and texture and juxtapositions of those qualities and placed them in what he knew would be a constantly changing garden. Before spending twenty four years at the Getty I was an art student, and Bob Irwin was one of our visiting professors along with Jim Turrell. I've been thinking back on this, and with the upcoming opening of Turrell's Meteor Crater in 2005 I find myself thinking more and more about the Light and Space artists. More about this later. Fragrance, memory, and anticipation share an ephemeral nature and vary with individuals. As we all know, no two people remember events the same way. What we anticipate rarely happens exactly the way we expect it to.

By the time this newsletter appears, I will no longer be president, and Molly Lambert will be in my place. I want to extend my best wishes to Molly who is a colleague of many years and a good friend. I know Molly will be an excellent president and will bring a great deal to the organization. I would also like to thank Odile Madden for her invaluable help with the Honolulu meeting and Susan Sayre Batton.

I have been fortunate in having board members who are committed to the organization and a true pleasure to work with. As always, Chris Stavroudis was a good colleague and an unfailing source of support and encouragement. His term as Treasurer has now ended, and WAAC as an organization has entered a new phase. Tania Collas will take over his duties but will be able to rely on Chris for guidance when necessary. Last but by no means least is Carolyn Tallent, the Editor of this newsletter, who produces a publication that I have received many compliments on in the last year.

On a sentimental note, I have thoroughly enjoyed being WAAC President, and the experience has increased my esteem and affection for what is a unique and remarkable organization that has given me a great deal over the years. Undoubtedly the best part has been the members of WAAC, who are the most interesting group of people I have encountered in fifty years.

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President's letter, continued

Now that I have finished my term as President, I am going to start some personal research on conservation as it relates to the Light and Space artists, Bob Irwin, Jim Turrell, Maria Nordman, and Larry Bell, and I hope to publish an article on this subject. I see some interesting similarities with the conservation of technology based installation art and the conservation of digital formats. I have always been interested in conserving, preserving, and documenting the most ephemeral of aesthetic experiences. I will, of course, continue to be a member of WAAC and plan on attending the Santa Fe meeting next year with great pleasure and look forward to seeing many of you there.

Finally, on a more practical note, I urge you all to take a look at the web site (<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/waac/>) and have a look at the changes that are there. Walter Henry and Chris Stavroudis have been busy changing the web site to reflect more accurately what WAAC is up to. I hope in future that the web site will expand and change in innovative ways useful to our members and those interested in conservation in the West. On the web site, browsers will find information on our annual meetings and other activities we sponsor such as the the November packing workshop hosted by Nick Dorman at the Seattle Art Museum. This workshop is jointly sponsored by WAAC and the American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, and I hope it will be the beginning of a fruitful collaboration between these two organizations.

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Deadline

Contributions for the January Newsletter should be received by the Editor before **November 30, 2003**.