

## Judges Report

### **The Winner, Dick and Joan Green Family Award for Tasmanian History 2022**

#### Shortlist:

- Alison Alexander, *The Waking Dream of Art: Patricia Giles, Painter* (Pillinger Press)
- Cassandra Pybus, *Truganini: Journey through the Apocalypse* (Allen and Unwin)
- Jock Serong, *The Burning Island* (Text Publishing)

The dramatically contrasting character of each of the three shortlisted books for the Dick and Joan Green Family Award for Tasmanian History 2022 has meant that direct comparison is almost impossible. All three were written by highly accomplished authors who have brought deep historical knowledge and literary skills to their respective works. To select a winner from this extraordinary shortlist has indeed been a difficult but nevertheless rewarding and enjoyable task.

In their deliberations, the Judges were mindful of the importance of history writing not only in informing our understanding of the past, but as an influence on our perspectives on Tasmanian society today and our aspirations for a just, equitable and sustainable future. We were also conscious of how each of the shortlisted authors engaged with diverse elements of history writing that was creative, scholarly and personal to craft highly characteristic narratives.

Jock Serong's *The Burning Island* underscores how historical fiction can enlarge our understanding of a tumultuous period in Tasmania's colonial history. Serong undertakes his story-telling with serious intent and finely-honed research skills to produce a novel rooted in the historical record but shaped by imagination and creativity. This engaging narrative introduces readers unfamiliar with the wildness of Bass Strait in the early nineteenth century to an intriguing cast of compelling characters and a surprising array of atmospheric settings.

Cassandra Pybus's *Truganini, Journey Through the Apocalypse* guides readers through the catastrophic events experienced by Tasmania's First Nations people during the invasion of their Country with sympathy and insight. In lyrical prose Pybus draws together the threads of Truganini's story, providing her with an agency and humanity that moves well beyond the way she has often been cast as the unfortunate and inevitable victim of genocide and imperial predetermination. Pybus offers an expert analysis of this critical historical period by extracting more intimate understandings of Aboriginal lives from the colonial archive.

#### **Winner**

In *The Waking Dream of Art: Patricia Giles, Painter* historian Alison Alexander reminds us that the twentieth century provides fertile if sometimes neglected soil for important investigations into Tasmania's history. Her rigorous and exhaustive engagement with archival and social sources has resulted in the rich documentation of one of Tasmania's most important but often overlooked female artists. This biography offers an intricate study of gender, politics and

environmental activism in the mid to late twentieth century, and the influence of these forces on artistic production and cultural life. Giles emerges as a modest woman with an extraordinary strength of mind and purpose in pursuing her career as an artist who opened the eyes of many Tasmanians to the wild beauty of the land around them. More than 300 of her works are reproduced in a beautifully designed volume. In awarding the 2022 Dick and Joan Green Family Award for Tasmanian History to Alison Alexander, we recognise the importance of the role of women in Tasmanian history, and the powerful creativity of artists such as Patricia Giles.

**Judging Panel:**

Professor Kate Darian-Smith (Chair)

Professor Greg Lehman

Ian Terry

July 2022