



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

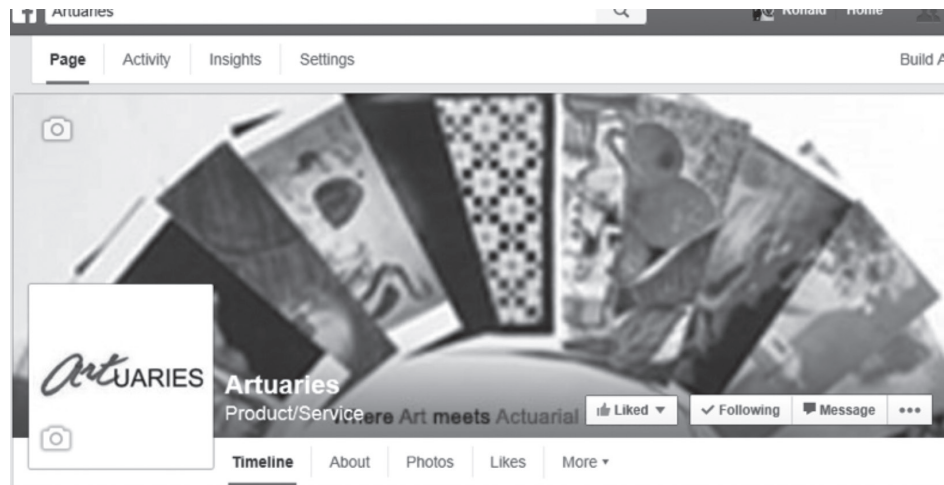
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ARTUARIES—WHERE ART MEETS ACTUARIAL SCIENCE

By Ronald Poon-Affat



I have brought together a group of super talented actuaries to contribute to a unique actuarial/art/charity project called the Artuaries.

The present group includes 10 actuaries who are painters, photographers and quilters. The group does include one U.K. actuary, John Gordon, FIA, so we can legitimately claim to be global. The artwork is set out within the Artuaries Facebook page.

A set of greeting cards showcase the group's artwork. These are available on the Actex website (www.actexmadriver.com) by searching the word "Artuaries." 100 percent of net profits are donated to the Actuarial Foundation; so it's keeping it all in the actuarial family.

HOW DID ALL OF THIS GET STARTED?

Even though I have minimal artistic and marketing talent, I grew up in Trinidad & Tobago during the '60s in a *Mad Men* environment. My dad was a McCann Erickson Art Director. I eventually brought Dad out of retirement to design the project's iconic logo.

I came up with the initial idea whilst visiting the home of my longtime friend and actuarial mentor Debi Gero who impressed me with both her deep passion for art history and a prolific contemporary art portfolio. I wanted to share Debi's art with a wider audience

and thought that there must be other artistic gems in the actuarial community. The name Artuaries was the brainchild of Debi.

Very early on, I reached out to Anna Rappaport, past president of the Society of Actuaries (SOA) and a dedicated artist, to discuss how to create a project that would be sustainable and have the greatest impact. Anna was the pragmatic voice who suggested that the first project should be a set of greeting cards that would be timeless (as opposed to a calendar, say), easy to manufacture and distribute and not be too expensive.

WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES?

The main challenge was to find actuaries who are interested in art and would be interested to show their art. Artistic actuaries are not as boastful as long distance runners, say, so it was quite a challenge to uncover artistic actuaries. Thankfully, we live in an age of social media so Facebook and LinkedIn played an invaluable role in attracting other artists to come out of the woodwork.

To join this merry band, one did not have to be professionally trained; the only qualification was that one had to be an actuary and to have created art that you wanted to showcase.

Just like financial services, distribution is key to a successful operation and Gail Hall of Actex stepped up to the plate volunteering to facilitate the sale of the cards on Actex's site. We cannot thank Gail enough for her assistance. It was our goal to keep it totally nonprofit and actuarial so the Actuarial Foundation was the obvious candidate to be the recipient of our net profits from sales.

NEXT STEPS

A lot has been achieved to date. The artists have been assembled, the cards have been produced, the distribution is in place, the charity has been identified and the artists were profiled in two editions of The Actuary magazine; so what else is there to do?

The present twin goals are to attract more actuarial artists from around the world to the project and to find a tipping point that will substantially increase sales and fund raising. Next steps will be the roll out of a pipeline of projects to proudly display actuarial artwork on calendars, coffee-mugs, t-shirts, caps, etc.

When the project was started the main goals were to raise funds for the Actuarial Foundation, create a network of like-minded actuaries, showcase their art and show the world how cool actuaries really are. On that measure, I think that we are on the road to being a success. ■

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