Adelaide City Centre Public Art Report

Prepared by Barbara Flynn, Barbara Flynn Pty Ltd, Public Art Advisor

FLYNN

Contents

The City of Adelaide pays respect to the Traditional Kaurna Owners and Elders, past and present, of Kaurna Country – the land, waters, air and sky – on which the city is located. We acknowledge Aboriginal connection to material and creative practice on these lands for more than 60,000 years, and celebrate the enduring presence and knowledge of Aboriginal people. Knowledge of First Nations Australians is fundamental to how this project is being conceived and thought about and we will continue to seek their guidance as we move forward. No matter where we are, we are always on Country.

1
Overview

Preliminary Public Art Plan
for 923–935 Bourke Street,
Waterloo

Public art report

This report on public art began as an idea for a reverse brief for a cultural policy to support the City of Adelaide as it undertakes the cultural planning that will set the direction for its future.

The purpose of the report is to put forward an overarching proposal for the cultural transformation of Adelaide through public art. It will describe our initial ideas for art and new possible cultural uses for the central city, and the role that new art, architecture and landscape architecture can play.

Through two site visits and frequent conversations initiated in March 2023 by Jennifer Kalionis, Associate Director, City Culture, the thinking has been that what is called for at this stage is something refreshingly slim – a report. That makes it no less serious: by particularly focusing on the engagement of communities through art in the public realm – and liaising with as many interested parties as can be persuaded to become involved – we intend and hope that this report will be used to facilitate discussions and guide future policy. If additional detail is required, this report can be followed by a public art plan like the one Flynn wrote for the Sydney city centre in 2013 (included as an appendix with this report) that was unanimously accepted by City of Sydney.

A structure for the report was developed by public art advisor Barbara Flynn working with Jennifer Kalionis and Jade O'Donohue, Manager, Creative City. The report:

- presents key findings, concepts, opportunities and risks, and outcomes that can be anticipated
- delineates strategies for stakeholder engagement, including ways to engage with artists, government, institutions, the private sector, and communities of interest to the City
- suggests ways to engage artists and experts to be involved to advise.

Qualifications of lead art advisor

Barbara Flynn has been invited to write the report, which benefits from her experience as Curatorial Advisor to the City of Sydney and the state governments

of New South Wales (Barangaroo) and Queensland (Cross River Rail and Rail, Integration and Systems, Brisbane). The report also draws on Flynn's research on Adelaide and the visits she made referred to above – on 27–28 July 2023, 18–19 October 2023 and 29 February 2024 – to engage with relevant leaders at the City of Adelaide, the South Australian government and representatives of cultural institutions.

Flynn draws on her extensive experience as a New York gallery owner and curator to be one of Australia's leading curatorial advisors to cities, state governments, development companies, foundations and educational institutions. She is curator of groundbreaking public art by Jenny Holzer (2014) at 8 Chifley Square, Sydney, and has overseen some of the most innovative and anticipated public art projects in Australia, including Sydney's city centre (for City of Sydney) and new precincts at Circular Quay (AMP Capital, Dexus and Mirvac for Quay Quarter Sydney); Central Park (Frasers Property and Sekisui House); Parkline Place, tower over the new Gadigal metro station, formerly known as Pitt Street Over Station (Investa and Oxford Property Group); and Hunter & Pitt Streets to come (Milligan Group Pty Ltd).

As Curatorial Advisor to the City of Sydney for the City Centre (2013–18), Flynn drafted the City Centre Public Art Plan that was unanimously adopted by Council in July 2013, and identified artists to be part of the transformation of the Sydney city centre. The opportunity to work as Curatorial Advisor to the Barangaroo Delivery Authority and Lend Lease for Barangaroo (2014–16) saw her begin the process of selecting and commissioning artists for a range of innovative, site-specific artworks for Barangaroo South on Sydney Harbour. In 2023 Flynn was a member of one of five teams shortlisted to design the park for Central Barangaroo, and she advised Property and Development NSW (PDNSW), an agency of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, on public art for the Macquarie Street East Precinct from mid-October to mid-December 2022.

Flynn's contacts are wide ranging, which enables her to bring an active network of artists, curators and other contributors to any project she oversees. She is a dual citizen (US and Australia). Before arriving in Australia in 1996, she was a gallery owner in New York (1980–94) and an executive with Gagosian Gallery, New York (1994–98). She held curatorial positions in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, and Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf museums in Germany, with funding from a Yale University Murray Fellowship. Her studies in art history were completed at Yale University (BA cum laude 1975). She undertook studies for a PhD at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts (1977–81).

Objectives for art in the City of Adelaide

Stakeholders

The history of the city's neighbourhoods and how they have developed to the present day, and plans for how the central city can be reframed in the next 20 years, are important considerations for a curator and artists who are commissioned for the project. Just as important is considering and recognising the significant contributions of First Nations people to the City of Adelaide, the larger South Australian region, and Australia as a whole.

Art addresses real conditions and issues of particular importance to people today while remaining inclusive of everyone. It's a delicate balance that can be achieved.

Benefit to the public is paramount. How can art, architecture and landscape architecture make all members of the community feel welcome in the central city?

It isn't expedient or callow to seize on an issue that people care about and ask artists to consider it in the art they make for a city. Ideally, the City of Adelaide will continue to commission resonant art for years to come. Subsequent additions will centre on the things people care most about in 2030, 2040 and beyond, adding layers and depth to the experience of walking the city and seeing its art.

Short- and long-term goals

Public spaces in the city can be better defined by asking questions with both short-term and long-term goals in mind. In the short term, it's important to ask about the cultural microclimate of a space. Why commission art for that place over any other, and how would you describe that place – is it a forecourt, a lane, a building façade? Thinking ambitiously long term, are we designing a whole new part of the city or making surgical interventions? How long do we want these artworks to last? Will they lose their relevance to people and, if so, when – does art have a use-by date? Above all, the experience of art can't be separated from the experience of being in the city. They need to be one and the same.

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Existing conditions – Country

The existing statuary of Adelaide tells a story of upstanding and fair-minded European settlers in this part of Australia. The local civic-minded supporters of art and culture today are in many cases descendants of the founders of Adelaide.

Like all the Australian capital cities, Adelaide is located on what is, was, and always will be Aboriginal land: Country. Adelaide has an opportunity to be a leader among the Australian capital cities by demonstrating an understanding of Country as more than the land – as the ground beneath us; the waters, air and skies around us; and the people, kin, care, song and story that make the world whole.

What is meant by 'Country'? As co-author of the NSW Government Architect's discussion paper *Designing With Country*, researcher and spatial designer Danièle Hromek writes about Country, explaining that:

> 'Country' (capital C) has a different meaning to the western understanding of the word 'country' (small c) … In the Aboriginal sense of the word, Country relates to the nation or cultural group and land that they/we belong to, yearn for, find healing from and will return to. However, Country means much more than land, it is their/our place of origin in cultural, spiritual and literal terms. It includes not only land but also skies and waters … Country incorporates both the tangible and the intangible, for instance, all the knowledges and cultural practices associated with land. People are part of Country, and their/our identity is derived in a large way in relation to Country.[1]

2
Insights from the process so far

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Key findings

Art can encompass the 'three stories of Australia' that Noel Pearson spoke of in his first Boyer Lecture in 2022: first, the story of the 'ancient Indigenous heritage which is Australia's foundation'; second, the story of the 'British institutions built on it'; and the third story, 'the gift of multicultural migration, the peoples from the earth over who brought their multicultural gifts to Australia'. These three stories, says Pearson, 'will make us one Australia'.[2]

Australia's waves of immigrants, many of them delivered from persecution and worse, may have struggled, but they ultimately found their niche and their way as Australia became the diverse nation it is today. In his first Boyer Lecture, Noel Pearson quotes Robert Hughes, who wrote that in Australia 'we showed that people with different roots can live together'.[3]

How art can interpret key findings

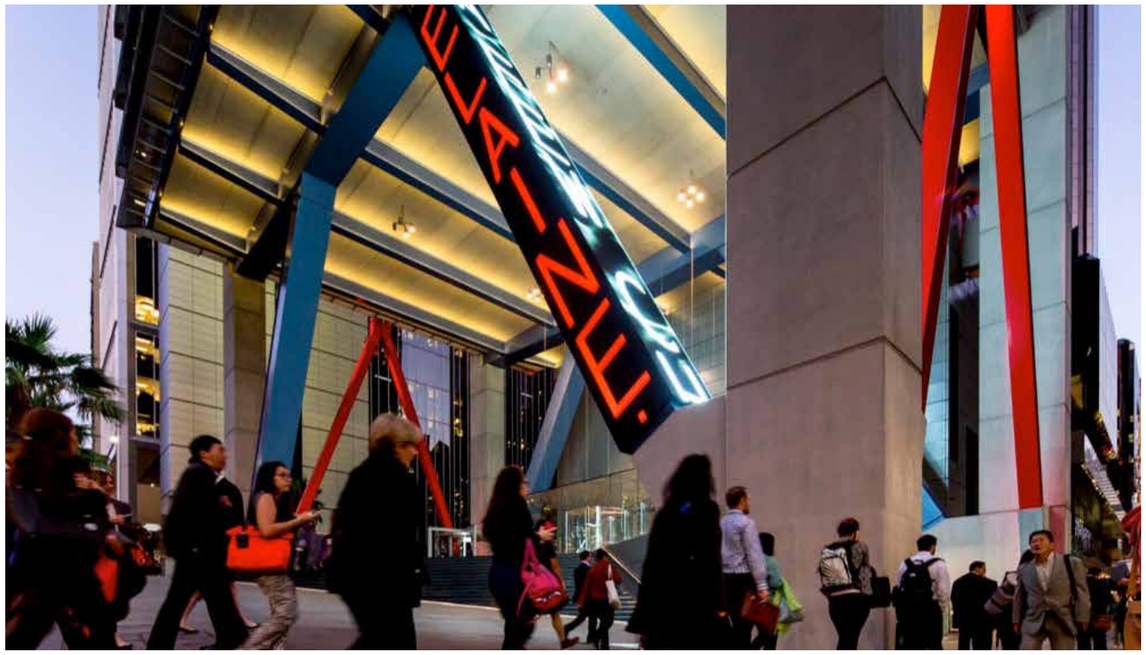
Australia's multicultural story could be told through art linked to waves of immigrants, with art made by artists of those groups, nationalities, and ethnic and cultural affiliations. We could then see what the art of many nations looks like – inclusive, by all.

The facts show that the British arrivals gained while Australia's first peoples often lost – and can still suffer exclusion and lack of recognition today. Transformation can be achieved by giving voice to Australia's first peoples and by folding in the colonial and immigrant stories in ways that are unique to Australia and South Australia, not borrowed from other transformative projects worldwide.

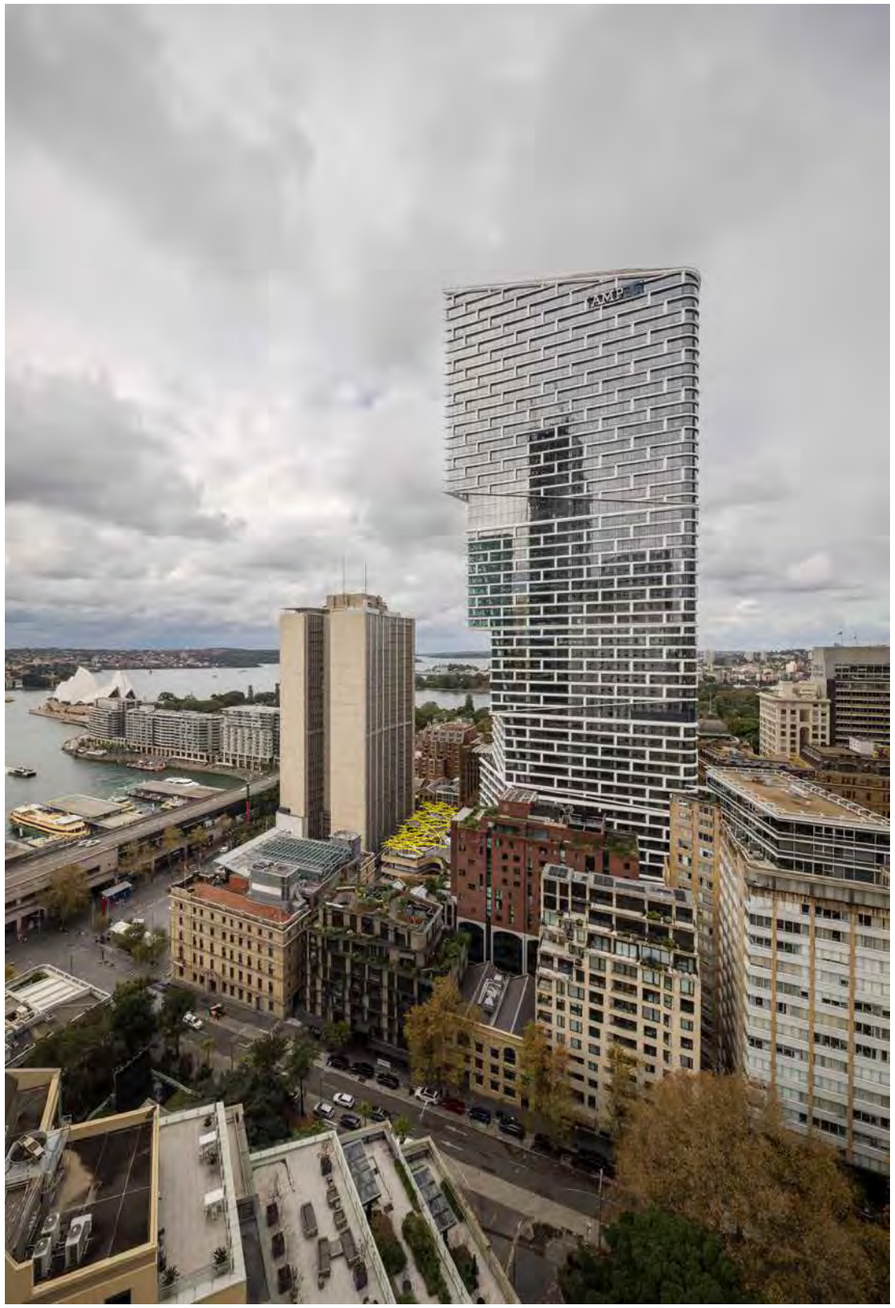
'Like nothing else in the world' might sound a little grandiose, but by aspiring to that we can create places that have their own unique appeal. And we want to make space for cultural practice: 'Design inputs are meaningless unless the community are there to bring them alive.'[4] Perhaps, beyond design, there could be ways to tangibly improve conditions for Aboriginal communities.

Impact

It's okay to believe in the impact art can have. Art can be monumental, as illustrated in the examples in this report of works by Jenny Holzer, Olafur Eliasson, Yhonnie Scarce, Louise Bourgeois and Junya Ishigami. Art is no less consequent when it is intimate in scale, as demonstrated by the works *The Distance of Your Heart* (2018) by **Tracey Emin** and *Empty Arms* (2023) by **Yvonne Koolmatrie**. Size doesn't matter. Whether large or small, art can be the missing element that defines a place and fulfils its potential by attracting people to a place.



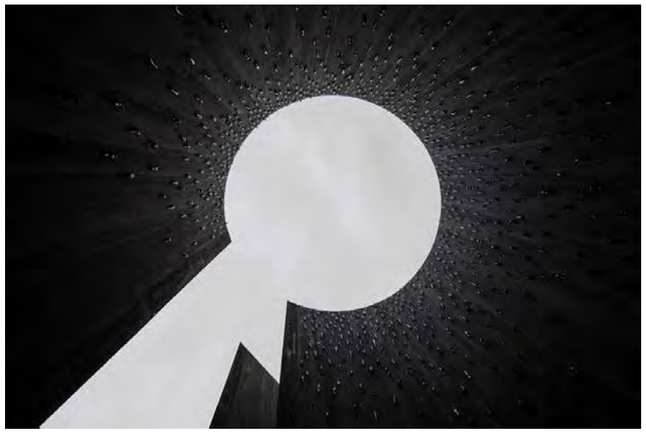
Jenny Holzer
I STAY (Ngaya ngalawa), 2014
LED sign with blue, green & red diodes
708.7 × 68.03 × 62.4 inches
1,800 × 172.8 × 158.4cm
Text: "The Letter" from *Skins: Contemporary Indigenous Writing* by Sally Morgan, © 2000 by the author; used/reprinted with permission of the author
"In the Dormitory" from *Is that You, Ruthie?* by Ruth Hegarty, © 2003 by the author; used/reprinted with permission of the author
© 2014 Jenny Holzer, member Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY
8 Chifley Square, Sydney
Commissioned by Mirvac
Project curator: Barbara Flynn, Art Advisor to Mirvac for 8 Chifley Square
Photo: Brett Boardman



Olafur Eliasson
Roof for stray thoughts, 2022
Quay Quarter Sydney
Commissioned by AMP Capital
Project curator: Barbara Flynn, Art Advisor to AMP Capital
for Quay Quarter Sydney
Photo: Adam Mork

Olafur Eliasson
Roof for stray thoughts, 2022
Quay Quarter Sydney
Commissioned by AMP Capital
Project curator: Barbara Flynn, Art Advisor to AMP Capital for
Quay Quarter Sydney
Photo: Adam Mork

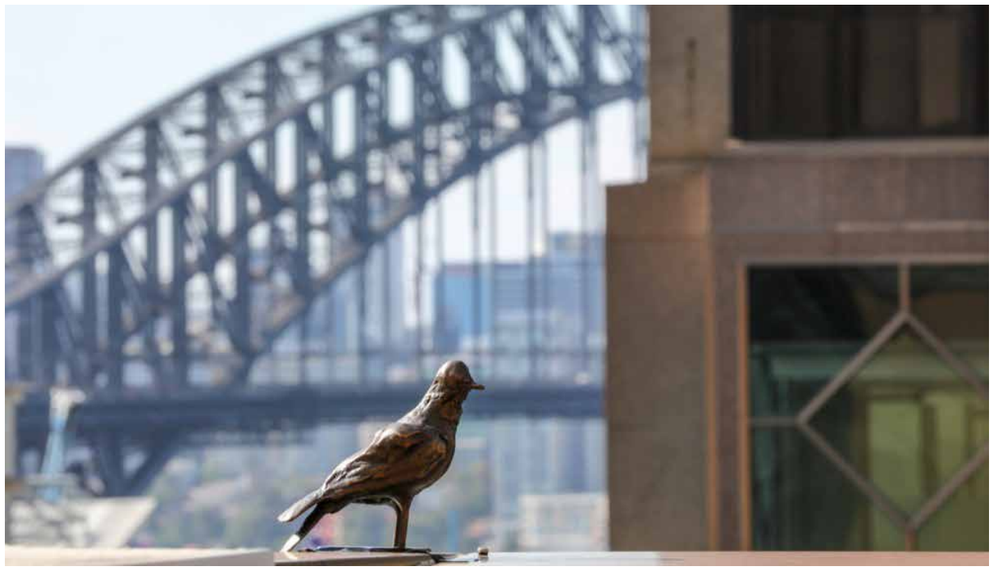
Olafur Eliasson
Your rainbow panorama, 2006–11
Glass in all colours of the spectrum
150 × 3 × 52m (diameter), mounted on columns
3.5m above the roof
ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark
Photo: Ole Hein Pedersen



Yhonnie Scarce and **Edition Office**
In Absence, 2019
Timber, hand-blown glass yams
Exhibited National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne,
15 November 2019 – 30 April 2020
Commissioned by the NGV Architecture Commission
Photo: Eugene Hyland

Louise Bourgeois
Maman
Bronze
6.4m (height)
This installation: Bürkliplatz, Zürich,
10 June – 2 August 2011

Junya Ishigami
Cloud Arch, 2014–22 (artist's impression)
George Street, Sydney
Commissioned by City of Sydney
Project curator: Barbara Flynn, Curatorial Advisor,
City Centre, City of Sydney



Above left:
Tracey Emin in Macquarie Place park sitting on bench with sculpted birds below

Above right and below:
Tracey Emin
The Distance of Your Heart, 2018
68 hand-made bronze birds placed on façades, in doorways, on railings and under park benches
Bridge and Grosvenor Streets, and Macquarie Place Park
Commissioned by City of Sydney, a City Centre project
Project curator: Barbara Flynn, Curatorial Advisor, City Centre, City of Sydney
Photo: Katherine Griffiths

Yvonne Koolmatrie and Karl Meyer
Empty Arms, 2023 (installation views; detail)
Bronze figure, steel coolamon, seating
Place of Reflection, Rymill Park/Murlawirrapurka, Adelaide
Photos (left): Brad Griffin; (above) Barbara Flynn

Original

It's good to be aware of precedents like The High Line and Museum Mile in New York but important to find Adelaide's own unique expression that people will flock to the city to experience, because it is unique to those who live and visit here.

Placement

A handy rule is that we don't need art everywhere and we don't want the same themes repeated from artwork to artwork. Australian civic society is dynamic, and change can be welcome. By treating the city as a palette, existing works of art can be relocated to new locations where their impact will be greatest. Curators are well versed in the procedures to follow in relocating works. Artists are consulted and agree to the moves, which can recontextualise and refresh works of art. New works can be commissioned systematically according to a plan a curator can develop working with the City's urban planning team. Art can reinforce the urban plan for the city.[5]

Surprise is an experience to be valued. The spaces described on page 22 that Flynn has christened 'stub spaces' are spaces that are unlikely locations for art that people will come upon during their daily commute or in the course of their meanderings. They will be surprised – astonished – to find something a lot more fascinating than cars and rubbish bins. A walk of Sydney artworks Flynn conducted with a worldly-wise audience in December 2024 was a revelation. At the end of the tour of six artworks Flynn has realised with artists, quite unexpectedly the organiser asked everyone to respond with three words to describe the experience. The responses were a revelation, showing how deeply affecting art in a city can be. Words like 'wondrous', 'moving', 'deep', 'rigorous', 'meaningful' and 'heartfelt' were used.

In this way, art in the public realm can reinforce urban planning and landscape design. A good precedent example of this is the northern part of central Sydney, which planners within the City of Sydney's administration started to redesign a decade ago. The City's external curators were asked if art could reinforce the urban plan. Art has subsequently done so, as evidenced by works for 1 Bligh Street (James Angus, 2012), 8 Chifley Square (Jenny Holzer, 2014), 200 George Street (Judy Watson, 2018), Bridge Street and Macquarie Place Park (Tracey Emin, 2018), Reiby Place (Lara Schnitger, 2020), Australia Square (Emily Floyd, 2021), Quay Quarter Sydney (Jonathan Jones and Olafur Eliasson, 2022), Circular Quay Precinct Plaza (Daniel Boyd, 2022) and Tarpeian Precinct Lawn, Royal Botanic Garden, overlooking Dubbagullee/Bennelong Point (Judy Watson, 2022).

Flat and walkable

Adelaide is a walkable city. Post-Covid in 2022, Flynn was asked by Museums of History NSW to lead walks of public art projects she had completed with artists. Even she hadn't realised how close together they were, and how exciting it could be to walk a circuit of works of art installed within a ten-block radius of one another. For the public, it made for an indelible experience. In the tours on offer in the West End of Adelaide by Dr Gertrude Glossop, the city already has a homegrown model for walks that are very popular with the public. One can imagine tours of public art by artists drawn from Adelaide's immigrant groups being led by people of those groups.

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Concepts

Include everyone

Public art can create opportunities and be grounded in the community, as directed by the community. If we ask questions, make the topics interesting enough to engage the community and listen to what people have to say, the vision for public art will continue to evolve and the project will manage to do something amazing. Stakeholders can be part of the discussion. Projects that are the most dynamic do not exclude them – it's a good approach to be unafraid of the input and the conversation.

Not the usual suspects

Quoting from the *State of the City* report, 'Between 2016 and 2021, 73.9% of the City of Adelaide's population turned over with one in four migrating from overseas and 4 in 10 migrating from elsewhere in Australia. This suggests the City of Adelaide acts as a demographic entrepot, importing people from overseas and distributing people overseas, interstate and to the inner suburbs of metropolitan Adelaide.'[6] When it comes to art, this sort of concentration of people and diversity is a positive.

According to the South Australian government, the top ten countries of birth in the state, after Australia, are England, India, China, Vietnam, Italy, Philippines, New Zealand, Scotland, Germany and Malaysia. About 18 per cent of South Australians speak a language other than English at home; the top ten languages, aside from English, are Mandarin, Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Filipino/Tagalog, Arabic, Cantonese, Hindi and Nepali.[7]

In this conceptual stage, we can look at artists who identify as Chinese, Italian, Indian, Vietnamese, Greek, Nepalese, Filipino and Malaysian, among other groups, and artists who identify as Muslim. We can also embrace those who identify with new immigrant groups from the world's trouble spots – sadly, too many to name. Not to be forgotten are Adelaide's international students who might feel disconnected and could find a place here.

One thinks of the comments of Melbourne-based Iranian artist **Hoda Afshar** (b. 1983 Tehran, lives and works in Melbourne) at a panel at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in November 2023. The artist spoke of the flood of expressions by women protesting the death of Mahsa Amini, who died in custody in Iran on 16 September 2022. Artists who represent these newer immigrant groups could help people who are newly here feel welcome, recognised, understood and accepted. It would be possible to invite artists of exceptional achievement who are based ex-South Australia and/or Australia to become involved. Someone like **Maya Lin** (b. 1959 Athens, Ohio, lives and works in New York), who is Chinese American, would have the experience, perspective, wisdom and spirit to collaborate with artists on the ground and be a wonderful guide for the project.

What does the art of many nations look like? Capturing and reflecting the values and ways of the people who live and work here, including those newly arrived, will guarantee that art for Adelaide will have a profound and long-lasting impact. It will be truly meaningful to the people of this place and serve as a revelation to visitors from elsewhere.

Hoda Afshar
Remain, 2018
Billboards
Exhibited at Substation, Newport, Victoria,
20 February – 10 May 2019

Maya Lin
Ghost Forest, 2019
49 Atlantic cedar trees
Exhibited and commissioned by Madison
Square Park Conservancy, New York,
7 June 2021 – 28 November 2021
Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Pace Gallery

Highlight Adelaide and South Australia

Art can reflect the people who live and work in Adelaide and South Australia today. A good precedent is the public art project Cross River Rail in Brisbane (2019–26), which draws exclusively on art by Queensland artists.

In conversation with the respected South Australian artists Yhonnie Scarce and Lee-Ann Buckskin, the following artists from South Australia were suggested: Betty Muffler and Maringka Burton, Brad Darkson, Yvonne Koolmatrie, Vincent Namatjira and James Tylor. The conscientious curator continues to spend time in Adelaide, makes studio visits and sees local exhibitions like *Neoterica* sponsored by Adelaide Festival. There are books on the subject, like Margot Osborne's *The Adelaide Art Scene: Becoming Contemporary 1939–2000* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press in association with Guildhouse and Carrick Hill, 2023).

Focus on the central city – build it and they will come

The *State of the City* report confirms that the population of Adelaide will increase by roughly 2.99 per cent per year, and reach 46,364 by 2041. The report makes a case for keeping a focus on the city, saying: 'The advantages of a larger city population are well documented. The main arguments for population growth relates to increased productivity by allowing businesses to benefit from economies of scale, having the ability to sustain a broader range of industries as well as providing wider employment opportunities. Cities have traditionally clustered business and people in a central location.'[8]

What one wants is a central city that is just that: a centre. Distances from home to the city in Adelaide and surrounds are not very great – it's possible, even easy, to travel in and out to take advantage of the central city attractions including new art.

Focus on Aboriginal Australia

One of the most exciting ways to undertake a public art project in Australia today is to centre it around Aboriginal people, who are part of the DNA of this place. South Australia is demonstrating itself to be the most forward-thinking Australian state in relation to the treatment and recognition of Aboriginal people. Aligned with this focus, art's role can be to give voice to the knowledge, pride, and connection of Aboriginal people to Country – to 'make the invisible visible'.

The South Australian Aboriginal art centres already use the city as a location and base. Maybe that is taken as a start and things are made more formal by asking the Traditional Owners, knowledge holders, Elders and family members for suggestions. What is the best way for art to find a place here? What kind of art would they want to see and what narratives could art meaningfully address?

It is critical to understand that the project needs to belong to First Nations people. Aboriginal artists can tell their own stories and 'own' the art they make. Non–First Nations curators can work with First Nations curators in cross-generational curatorial relationships. Flynn creates these kinds of relationships in the work she does. In a recent tender submission, Coby Edgar (Larrakia/Jingili), a younger Aboriginal museum curator and cultural leader, described this relationship as a cross-cultural collaboration of equals, or 'ngapartji-ngapartji' ('fifty-fifty') in language.

Non–First Nations professionals among us will be expected to try hard to understand the sensitivities of the task and to bring modesty to the work. We can

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expect to make mistakes and be corrected. To be clear about these understandings and intentions of ours, we have compiled a list of what we're keeping in mind at this stage by:

- showing respect, acknowledging, sharing and listening
- being aware of trauma and the hurt that has been inflicted
- allowing everyone to engage in the way they feel comfortable engaging and to provide only the information they feel comfortable providing
- being clear about who on the project team is making decisions
- understanding that when a community shares cultural stories, it is sharing technical knowledge
- letting art create opportunities: create bona fide partnerships, co-design opportunities, roles for Aboriginal contractors and suppliers, jobs and training; and pay First Nations participants well.

It's time to chop and change

Looking at Adelaide as Flynn has done – by walking the city – art should be removed from Rundle Mall to allow the mall to do what a mall does best: encourage people to gather, to shop and to be entertained. Shopping, entertainment and art don't mix very well. Instead, new dedicated spaces for art can be created very near the mall but away from the hubbub and commercial focus of the mall.

If the recommendation to remove art from the mall is too sweeping, then let's remove everything except *The Spheres* (1977), the seminal work by **Bert Flugelman** (b. 1923 Vienna, d. 2013 Bowral, New South Wales) that stands in the mall now. It can remain and be expanded on by commissioning additional Flugelman works and concentrating them in the mall. (Artists' estates have provisions regulating them that can vary. Flynn's understanding is that the terms of Flugelman's estate allow such commissioning.) In that way, art in the mall will have unity and a purpose: as the world's showcase of the art of this great Australian sculptor.

Flugelman lectured at the South Australian School of Art from 1972 to 1983. *The Spheres*, arguably the sculpture by the artist that is best known and has been seen more often than any other work of his, was commissioned for Rundle Mall by Adelaide City Council and largely funded by the Hindmarsh Building Society to mark the company's centenary. The two spheres that make up the work were created in halves before being welded together and panel-beaten. Adelaide company Brister & Co fabricated the work and re-polished it in 2014.

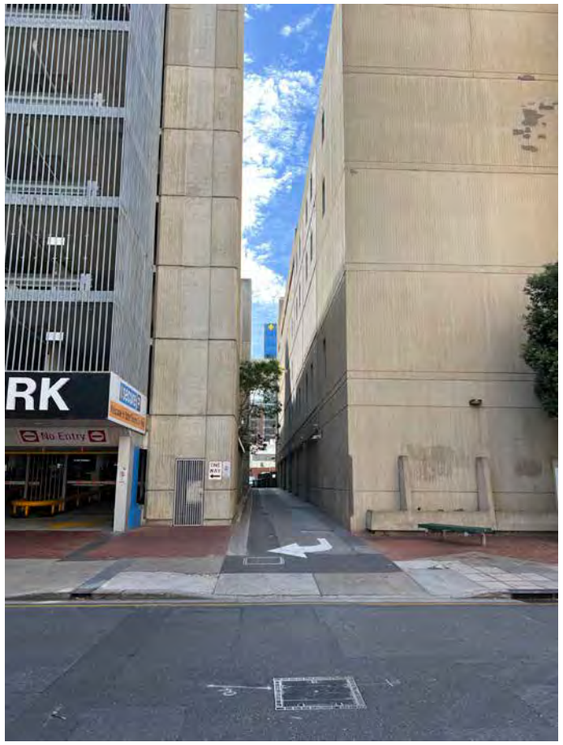
Flugelman's chosen material – mirror-polished stainless steel – is the perfect material for the public realm, one that excites people who can see themselves reflected in his artworks. It's important for any public art proposal to be achievable, and this one is: according to Dr Lisa Slade, Hugh Ramsay Chair of Australian Art History at The University of Melbourne, formerly Deputy Director, Art Gallery of South Australia, the artist's estate is well-organised and fabricator Brister & Co still operates in the environs of Adelaide.[9]

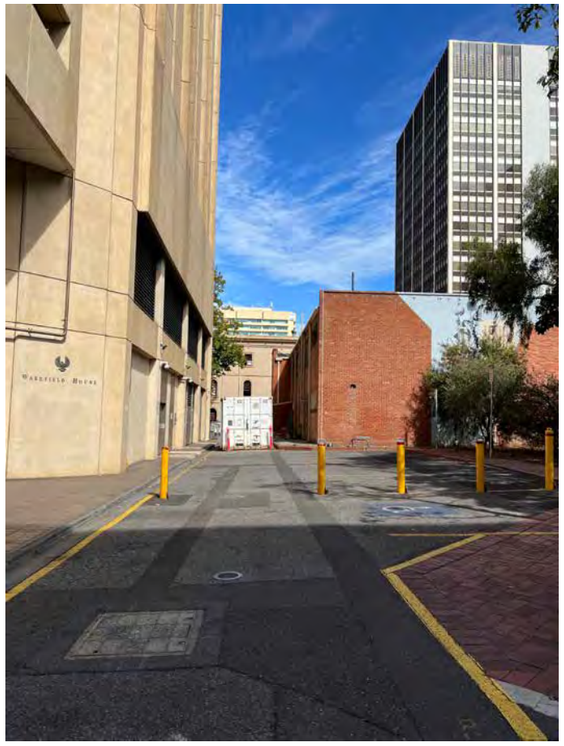
Reconceiving Rundle Mall in this way opens possibilities for the rest of the city. Not an infinite number of possibilities, however; any new public art initiative will benefit from having a clear focus. What we have in mind is this: in the central city of Adelaide there are a significant number of dead-end spaces – what Flynn is calling ‘stub’ spaces – that can be reclaimed and redesigned through landscape and art. Currently they can be described as throwaway places, with a few rubbish bins and typically one parked car. The City of Adelaide can commission suitable artists to look at each of these spaces and come up with a brilliant plan for reinventing them. The stub spaces will start to form a network of newly cool, formerly unloved spaces very close to all the action. Landscaping and seating will do their best to make them comfortable places to be, shaded from the sun and cooler in temperature. They can be mapped, and people will enjoy discovering them. Once discovered, people will tell their friends, and get in the habit of meeting in them and returning.

Left and middle:
Bert Flugelman
The Spheres, 1977
Mirror-polished stainless steel
4m (height) × 2.5m (diameter)
Rundle Mall, Adelaide
Donated by the Hindmarsh Building Society
to the City of Adelaide, 1977
Photos: Barbara Flynn

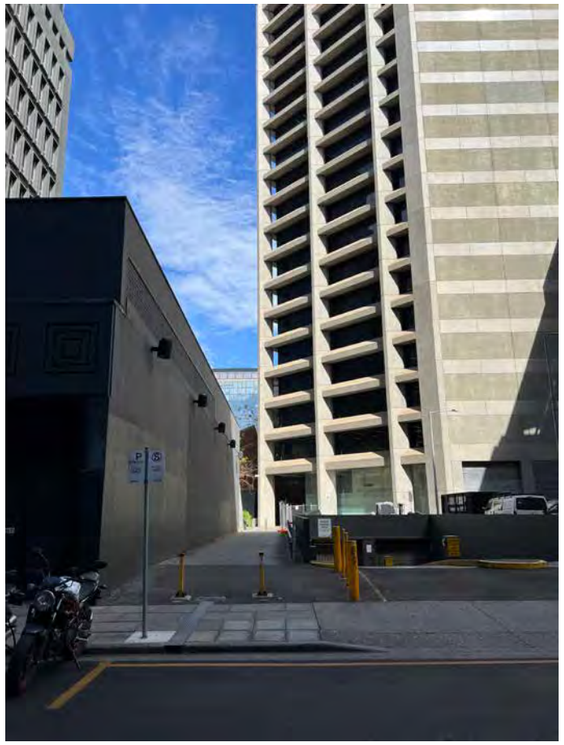
Right:
Bert Flugelman reflected in *The Spheres*

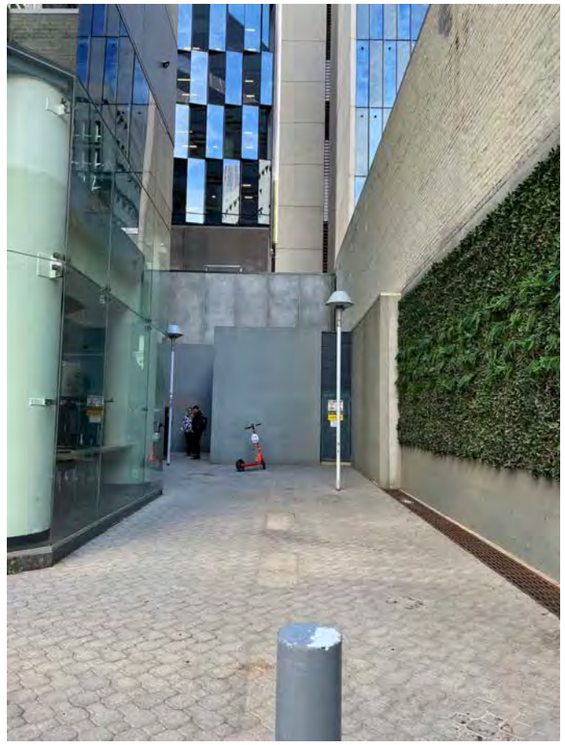
Flynn’s ‘stub’ spaces
Photos: Barbara Flynn, October 2023





Flynn’s ‘stub’ spaces
Photos: Barbara Flynn, October 2023





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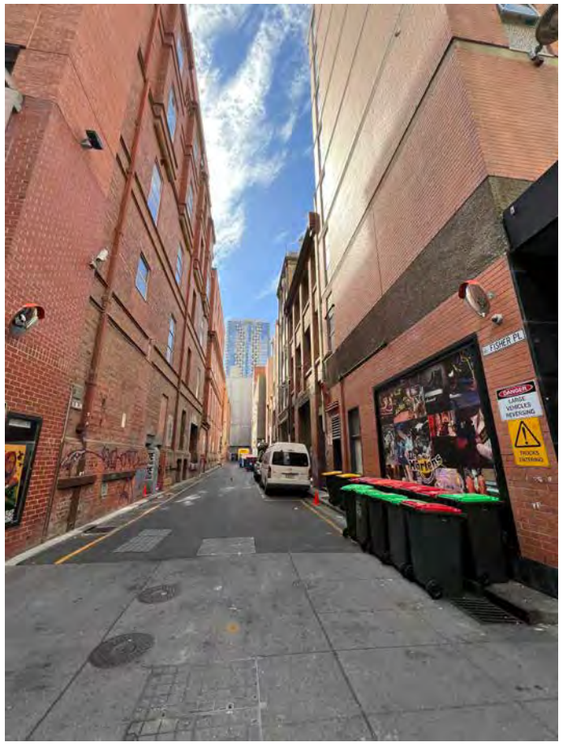

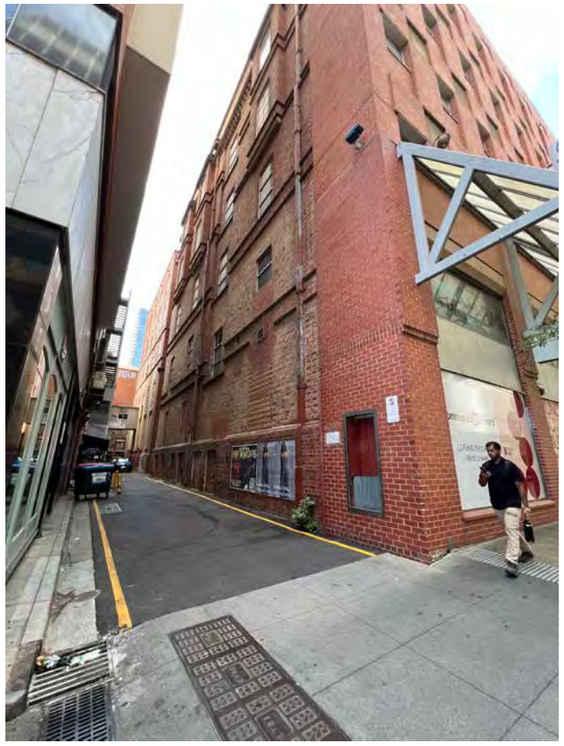

Flynn's 'stub' spaces
Photos: Barbara Flynn, October 2023

Flynn's 'stub' spaces
Photos: Barbara Flynn, October 2023

Implement public art that uses language and sound for a multisensory, total experience

Life in Adelaide before European settlement featured the speaking of Aboriginal languages, the passing of message sticks and signalling with smoke, and walking and reading the earth in ways that had been practised for millennia.

On Kaurna Day on 27 February 2024, Kaurna Elder Uncle Rod O'Brien was interviewed about the importance of reviving Aboriginal language. 'If you know the language better, you'll know the Country better,' Uncle Rod told the ABC. 'If you know Country, you'll care for it better.'[10] A fascinating program that invites artists to work with language and sound to evoke this history could be achieved with the guidance of a professional like **Daniel Browning** (Bundjalung/Kullilli, b. Southport, Queensland, grew up Fingal Head, New South Wales). Browning's achievements are many. He joined the ABC in 1994 after completing a Bachelor of Arts in visual art at Queensland University of Technology. As Editor Indigenous Radio at the ABC, he manages the longstanding flagship programs *Awaye!* and *Speaking Out* and presents *The Art Show*. His first book, *Close to the Subject* (Magabala Books), was launched in January 2024.

Browning was inaugural curator of *Blak Box*, an award-winning sound pavilion designed by architect Kevin O'Brien and commissioned by Utp (Urban Theatre Projects). With this project he realised several deep-listening experiences that amplified the voices of First Nations artists. These included *humechochorus* (2018, Barangaroo); *Four Winds* (2019, Blacktown); *Momentum* (2019, Barangaroo); *Seasons* (2020, 2021, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Melbourne); and the groundbreaking *PRECARITIES* (2022, The Cutaway, Barangaroo), a hybrid of live and recorded sound.

Who are the individuals who could be part of an initiative to rethink the role of language? Poets **Joel Davison** (Dhungutti/Gadigal, b. 1993 Sydney, lives and works in Melbourne) and **Jazz Money** (Wiradjuri, b. 1992 Sydney, lives and works in Sydney) are natural and effective cultural leaders and beautiful speakers of language. Davison brings a range of diverse and fascinating experiences to writing, having worked in horticulture and technology. He was co-writer and performer on Midnight Oil's track 'Gadigal Land', which won the Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA) Peer-Voted Song of the Year award in 2021, and he writes poetry 'to send a message about resilience in the face of colonisation'.[11] One of Davison's active concerns is the loss of language data sovereignty and the ethics of using AI to retrieve language. In all his undertakings, he has shown himself to be unfailingly sensitive and adept at working with people.

Clockwise from top left:
Daniel Browning, **Joel Davison**, **Jazz Money**

Look for effective ways to tell stories

What is the best way to tell the stories of this place? A possible precedent is the art of **Janet** and **George Bures Miller** (Cardiff, b.1957, Brussels, Ontario, Canada; Bures Miller, b.1960, Vegreville, Alberta, Canada; both artists live and work in British Columbia, Canada, and Berlin) whose method of telling a story is one of the most remarkable methods developed by artists. Works like *The City of Forking Paths*, a 2014 commission of City of Sydney and Biennale of Sydney that continues to be accessible to the public from a starting point at Customs House, are walks that people take with the aid of their devices. *Forking* is centred in The Rocks, Dawes Point and Millers Point neighbourhoods of Sydney. Cardiff directs the walk, instructing us to continue to navigate by our device, as performers and neighbourhood habitués from a range of historical eras emerge via our screen very believably from the space of the city directly in front of us.

This could be a way for digital storytelling, which people can access on their devices, to communicate the many histories of Adelaide. These are stories that might range from the experience of the first Europeans to arrive, to the first impressions of one of the city's Vietnamese residents, to the mnemonic experience of an Aboriginal person walking the city 2000 years ago.

Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller
The City of Forking Paths, 2014
Video/audio walk
Duration: 66min
Commissioned by the 19th Biennale of Sydney as a City of Sydney legacy artwork as part of the City Art Collection
Image: © Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller

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Opportunities and risks

Working with people, organisations and institutions is never risk free but public art rarely succeeds when artists are identified and commissioned, and make their art, in isolation. The ideas in this section involve a certain quotient of risk but will more than make up for any discomfort with the excitement and life they will bring to the city.

Proceeding with a clarity of purpose is the best way to avoid risk. Lord mayor and councillors will need to want to do transform the city with art and believe in the initiative. As a first step, the City of Adelaide would commit to the public art initiative and allocate a budget for it.

And then get ready for the ride: the public will object to spending money on art and say that funds would be better spent on education, health and transport. Globally, post-Covid we have seen many cities around the world attracting the ire of residents with initiatives to enliven streets. That's what people seemed to yearn for when the world was locked up, but enlivening is noisy and messy. Adelaide has also copped criticism just recently for creating what many residents saw as the monster that was the East End during the most recent Adelaide Fringe Festival. For any initiative to succeed, patience is a prerequisite – it may take as long as a decade to achieve results, and the accomplishments to come may be invisible for a while. This is all just part of doing something that is worth doing and of benefit to the public.

Investing thought and carefully conceiving a public art initiative are other sure ways to avoid risk. Relying on art experts to identify and select artists ensures the quality of the art that is commissioned and its relevance for the long term. The art that is realised may have its critics but there won't be a lot to say about artworks of integrity. An example is the panel of experts for the Brisbane Cross River Rail project discussed in Section 3 below, convened by Flynn in 2021 to make decisions on artists and evaluate their earliest concept designs.[12]

Candidates will be artists who possess an original vision and make exceptional art, unlike the art people see anywhere else. The challenge would be identifying artists of sophistication whose art would strike a balance between inspiring thought and being relevant to people, and being pleasing and joyous.

Placing confidence in the public is a given. There's no need to talk down to the Adelaide public. It is better to assume a public that is intelligent and able to handle complexity, which it is. By avoiding the superficial and without fear of art that spurs thought and reflection, the project will be rich and multilayered enough to hold people's attention, day in and day out, for years.

Even more difficult will be the discussion with councillors, who may have been personally invested in some of the artworks already in existence in the city. Some of these are not of the level of excellence and imagination the art initiative will aspire to. At the risk of sounding glib, the streets of the city are prime locations of great potential for art and not a zoo; it may be time to find new homes for pigs and pigeons.

Art, architecture and landscape architecture can create new spaces in a city, and new life can be breathed into the spaces created as they take on new functions. Public art today can become a location for activities that will make it actively used and central to the life of people.

These spaces can be places for yarning circles, and the practice of weaving and workshops to teach people weaving. Language can be taught, and immigrants and refugees welcomed. An enterprise like Arts & Cultural Exchange (ACE) in Parramatta, New South Wales, provides an example. In late 2023 and early 2024, Sydney-based Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones exhibited *Untitled (transcriptions of Country)*, a collaboration with ACE's Embroiderers Collective, which is made up of migrant and refugee women from Afghanistan, India and South Korea. Together they produced embroidered works depicting the plants that had been collected in Australia on the voyage of Captain Nicolas Baudin in 1804 and taken back to France. Testament to the skill and beauty the works displayed, they were exhibited at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (26 November 2021 – 20 February 2022) in conjunction with DFAT's Australia Now France program and the International Contemporary Art Fair. The exhibition returned to Australia for exhibition as the inaugural show at the revamped Artspace, Sydney (15 December 2023 – 11 February 2024).[13]

It's sometimes possible to secure empty retail spaces proximate to artwork locations which could become the location for the most exciting initiatives worldwide – initiatives like The World Around (theworldaround.com) – some of them looking for a permanent home or foothold in the Southern Hemisphere. The question to ask is what Australia does not yet have. Would Buchhandlung Walther Koenig, Cologne, Germany, be looking for an outpost? (buchhandlung-walther-koenig.de) Would the Basel art fair? (artbasel.com) A program of space sharing could be set up, for museums doing important and groundbreaking things that are based outside Australia in places like Jakarta, Singapore, Accra, Beirut, Athens, Berlin, Mumbai or Sharjah.

Recontextualising existing statuary

A survey of all the statuary of Adelaide is beyond the scope of this report. Many of the statues in Adelaide – an enlightened city from its very founding – are of distinguished Adelaideans who are memorialised, including joint Nobel Laureates Sir William Bragg and his son, Sir Lawrence Bragg; and August Wilhelm Pelzer, the first City Gardener in Adelaide.

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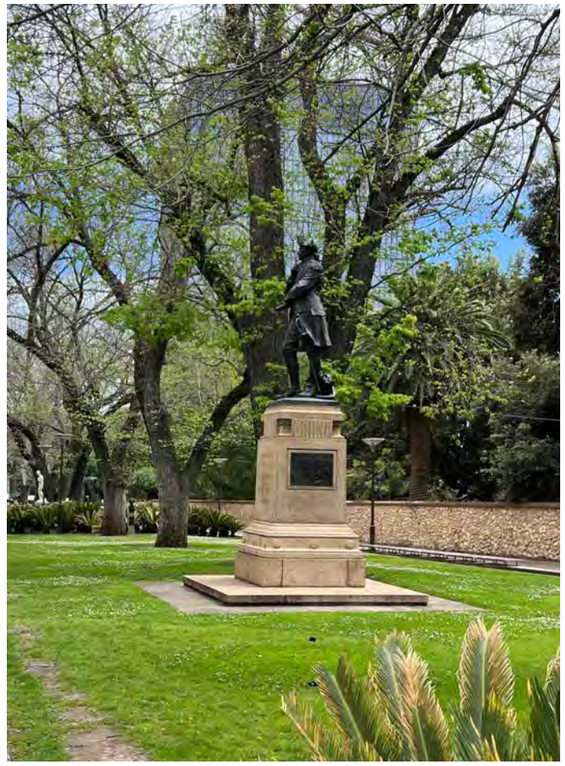

Left:
Busts of Sir William Henry Bragg (left) and Sir Lawrence Bragg (right)
Prince Henry Gardens, Adelaide
Gift of RiAus and the University of Adelaide

Right:
Statue of August Wilhelm Pelzer (b. Bremen, Germany 1864, d. Adelaide, 1934), first City Gardener of the City of Adelaide, 1899–1931
Gift of The Descendants' Group, SA German Association

Photos: Barbara Flynn, October 2023

Some of Adelaide's statues have been the gift of the people of Adelaide. Gifts by citizens need to be respected but even so, as time passes, it could be constructive to have a look at the statuary in the city. It's a complex topic because, while beloved by some people, statues can be triggering to whole groups of the population. Historians will likely know that many of them have been moved over time, suggesting there could be scope for new thinking about their future placement. Case in point: the research in 2022 of architects and urban planners Hill Thalis Architecture + Urban Projects that tracked how the statues of royals in Sydney's Shakespeare Place had been moved with some regularity throughout the decades. No one is looking to offend or demonstrate disrespect. One idea is to remove the bronze royals from their plinths by setting them on the ground (parkland or footpath) where they will be literally closer to us and more clearly on our (human) scale.

The statue on Adelaide's North Terrace of King Edward VII by Sir Edgar Bertram Mackennal (1920) looms over passers-by. Albert Edward (1841–1910) was King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions and Emperor of India from 22 January 1901 until his death in 1910. Would it be so terrible to remove his statue to our eye level?

Sir Edgar Bertram Mackennal
King Edward VII Memorial, 1920
North Terrace, Adelaide
Photo: Barbara Flynn

Globally, many interesting ideas for recontextualising the statuary of cities are under discussion. The vision statement of Monument Lab, the Philadelphia-based non-profit public art and history studio and a leading voice in how monuments live with us in public spaces, speaks of 'centring artists and local changemakers to collectively transform how monuments are created, interpreted, and experienced'.[14]

A new figurative sculpture by a representative of one of Adelaide's immigrant groups could be commissioned annually and launched in a festival atmosphere that will engender as much anticipation and fascination as Adelaide's Fringe Festival or the Art Gallery of NSW Archibald Prize. Borrowing from London's Fourth Plinth, the new work could be mounted in a fixed location, which would allow people to compare the commissions from year to year. Another precedent is **Simone Leigh**'s *Brick House* for The High Line which sat on another type of plinth, part of New York City infrastructure and monumental in scale.

Top:
Simone Leigh
Brick House, 2019
Bronze
4.87m (height) × 2.74m (base diameter)
A High Line Plinth commission
The Spur, 30th Street and 10th Avenue,
New York, June 2019 – September 2020

Bottom:
Katharina Fritsch
Hahn/Cock, 2013
Fibreglass
The Fourth Plinth Commission
Trafalgar Square, London,
25 July 2013 – 17 February 2015

Women luminaries too – like Dame Roma Mitchell AC, DBE, CVO, QC, Governor of South Australia 1991–96, Chancellor of the University of Adelaide 1983–1990, and Judge of the Supreme Court of South Australia 1965–1983 – are memorialised in the city's public spaces. In the world today it is often women who are re-examining the relevance and place of the monument in cities. Two examples are the commission for the façade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, made by Kenyan **Wangechi Mutu** (b. 1973 Nairobi, Kenya, lives and works in New York) and **Kara Walker**'s (b. 1969 Stockton, California, lives and works in New York) *Fons Americanus* for the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, London, in 2019. *Fons Americanus* was based on the Victoria Fountain in front of Buckingham Palace but took it in a very different direction to present the history of the slave trade and the interconnected histories of Africa, America and Europe.

Janette Moore
Dame Roma Mitchell, AC, DBE, CVO, QC, 1999
Prince Henry Gardens, Adelaide
Photo: Barbara Flynn

Top row, bottom left:
Wangechi Mutu
The Seated IV, 2019
Bronze
First Façade Commission, Metropolitan Museum, New York

Bottom right:
Wangechi Mutu
The Seated III, 2019
Wangechi Mutu at the Walla Walla foundry, applying patina to *The Seated III* in progress

Kara Walker
Fons Americanus (Fountain of America), 2019
Computer-milled cork, Jesmonite
Commissioned by the Tate Modern for the Turbine Hall, London

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In an interview on ABC News Breakfast on 7 December 2022, Clare Wright OAM, Professor of Public Engagement at La Trobe University, talked about the initiative that has seen three new statues of women erected in Melbourne to address gender imbalance. First Nations women and migrant women are among the persons being considered. Wright spoke of 'closing the respect gap' and achieving 'commemorative justice and equity' by starting to portray women in the city's statuary.[15]

Whether in a fixed or a roving location, for a bit of an update, it would be important to site the type of alternative monument we have in mind adjacent to the existing statues. Imagine commissioning a new collection of portrait busts by women artists working with the figure in innovative ways today. The art of Mutu and Walker, **Huma Bhabha** (b. 1962 Karachi, Pakistan, lives and works in Poughkeepsie, New York), **Nicole Eisenman** (b. 1965 Verdun, France, lives and works in New York) and **Francis Upritchard** (b. 1976 New Plymouth, New Zealand, lives and works in London) comes to mind.

If artists found bronze statuary too conservative a medium to work in, research shows that artists today are reviving the tradition of figure sculpture in a variety of materials, including wire netting, cement, glass-fibre reinforced concrete (GRC), polyester and more. Advanced technologies like hologram technology could be considered. Artists have made permanent works of public art composed of empty plinths with no statues (Theaster Gates, *Monument in Waiting*, 2020, Drexel University, Philadelphia). If the appetite for more radical moves exists, it might be good to see the more controversial personae – royals and the like – removed from their plinths so they're standing on the ground, side by side with us.

Huma Bhabha in her studio, 2020
Poughkeepsie, New York
Photo: Eva Deitch/*The New York Times*

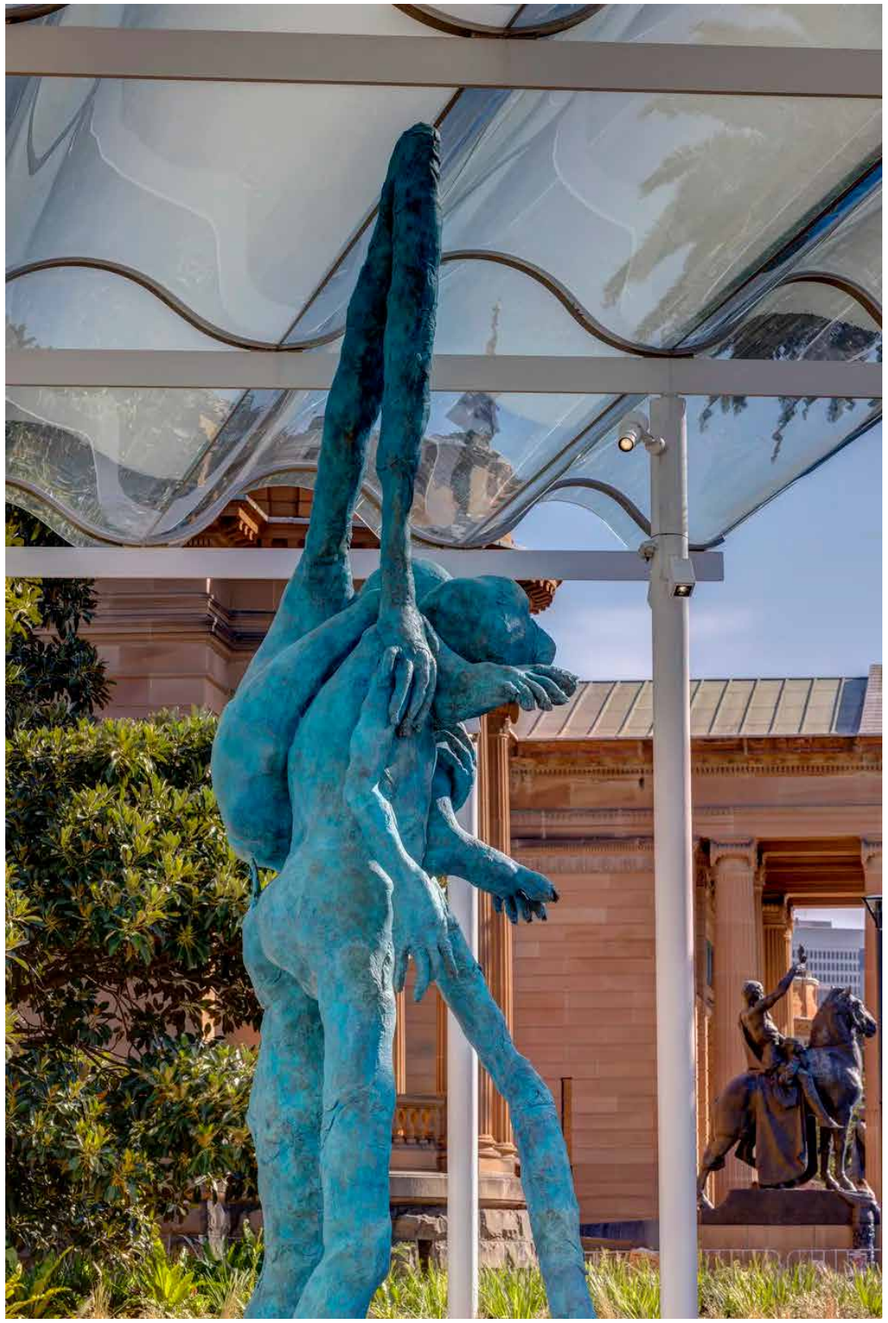
Huma Bhabha
We Come in Peace, 2018 (detail)
Bronze
3.7m (height)
Exhibited *We Come in Peace,* Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 17 April – 28 October 2018
Commissioned for the Metropolitan Museum's Roof Garden
Photo: George Etheredge/*The New York Times*

Nicole Eisenman
Photo: © Brigitte Lacombe

Nicole Eisenman
Reclining Figure, 2018
Bronze
88.9 × 101.6 × 47cm
Anton Kern Gallery, New York

Above:
Francis Upritchard
Photo: Brigitte Niedermair

Below:
Francis Upritchard
Here Comes Everybody: a – pet, in progress at
Fonderia Artistica Guastini, Gambellara, Italy
Photo: Daniel Mazza/Art Gallery of New South Wales



Francis Upritchard
Here Comes Everybody: a – pet, 2022
Cast bronze sculpture with patina
633cm (height)
Welcome Plaza, Art Gallery of New South Wales
Photo: Art Gallery of New South Wales

3
Approach

Ways to engage with artists

Talking with artists is the best way to start to describe and then fulfil the great opportunity Adelaide has. Flynn has already begun speaking with artists – to ask South Australian 'greats' Yhonnie Scarce and Lee-Ann Buckskin which South Australian artists they would like to see take on a gig for the city. Artists will always know who the most interesting artists are.

As the project gets underway, creating good working situations for artists is the most important factor in ensuring that art is exciting and meaningful to people. A curator is the interface between the artist, the City of Adelaide and other stakeholders. A curator's advocacy and capacity to solve problems as, and even before, they arise allows the artist to create their work unfettered, without having to deal with those issues.

If competitions are run, artists need to be paid a fair fee. As Curatorial Advisor to the City of Sydney for the City Centre in 2013–20, Flynn recommended that artists each be paid A$20,000 for submissions that would include giving over intellectual property, and would provide a complete description of their concept and all the detail of how the work would be made, who would make it, in what timeframe and at what cost. Flynn sought permission from City of Sydney procurement and wrote 800 personal emails to artists relating to the City Centre projects for George Street and the east–west connections that cross George Street. Flynn did this in one month working solo. It was a huge effort intended to demonstrate courtesy and respect for artists, and it worked: the number of submissions typically received by the City up to that time was 25; this time, 700 submissions by artists representing 25 countries were received for the City Centre project. (The July 2013 City of Sydney media release is included as an appendix with this report.)

When it comes to commissioning artists, these simple guidelines can be applied.

- Commission artists who identify with Adelaide and South Australia.
- Commission emerging artists.
- Avoid commissioning artists who have already been tapped to work in the Adelaide public domain and who have works nearby.
- Or, do the opposite. By creating concentrations of art – like those that have put other cities on the map, such as Bologna with its Morandis and The Hague with its Mondrians – Adelaide can commission works to build on the most significant art commissioned for the city to date, by artists Bert Flugelman and Yvonne Koolmatrie. Visitors seek out cities that are the most important repositories the world over of the art of notable artists.
- Ensure that Aboriginal Traditional Owners, knowledge holders, Elders, family members and the artists direct, endorse and own the projects by First Nations artists.
- Participate with the intent that any non-Aboriginal person working with a First Nations artist is prepared to drop the Eurocentric/colonial lens, slow down, and make space in the process to wait for direction and decisions to be made by community.
- Understand that art may not be the priority – addressing other more pressing needs of the community may be the priority. Can this project accommodate those needs?
- Make space for cultural practices.
- Leave the city in a healthier state than how you found it.
- Bring the sites to life, building in activations that can be ceremony, performance, digital works, and either temporary or permanent, and understand that the metric for success is the community embracing the design and art outcomes achieved, and knowing they belong to Country. Design inputs are meaningless unless the community is there to bring them alive.

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Integration and delivery

One of the annexures to this report is an indicative program document that Flynn is happy to share for the purpose of this project, that she has applied with success in the 29 projects for the Australian public realm she has overseen since 2006.

Public art projects should provide satisfaction and meaning to the professionals who make up the teams; otherwise, if the art is not meaningful to them, how can they be assured that it will be meaningful to the public?

The term 'integrated' is used a lot. When public art is fully integrated it looks as if it belongs there. It is the opposite of the public art we see that looks random and out of place, as if it has been dropped in somewhere without any thought for its environs or physical context, or for the values of the place it is in. Integrating art doesn't mean decorative interventions like wrapping utility boxes with colourful designs. There's a place for everything but what this report has in mind is art that is more rigorous, substantial and sophisticated. It is good for art to be accessible, but let's not underestimate a public that can understand messages and forms of art that are complex.

One way to achieve art that looks 'right' is by starting the process of identifying and selecting artists early enough to allow for integration to occur. All the design disciplines need to be carefully coordinated with public art from the earliest stages of the project.

Working closely with the artists, who have the final say, the team can identify a new bespoke fabricator for every project, finding the right maker to fit the vision. Every artist true to their vision will propose to work in a new and distinct way. Such individuality is critical to ensure the artworks created for the project will look like nothing else.

Projects can benefit from being documented as they are being developed. If the project chooses to source artists Australia-wide, why not invite one or more of Australia's leading chroniclers to be involved to create a record for posterity? Mervyn Bishop (Murri), Brenda L Croft (Gurindji/Malngin/Mudburra), Jo-Anne Driessens (Koa), Barbara McGrady (Kamilaroi), Rachel Perkins (Arrernte/Kalkadoon) and Warwick Thornton (Kaytetye) share a profound, lifelong commitment to telling the stories of their subjects. They shoot from an insider's place. Community trusts them.

Strategies for engagement

The advice is to talk with people, everyone, at all levels, from new migrants to the movers and shakers of North Adelaide. Communicate how exciting this will be.

People sometimes assume that art is opaque, overcomplicated, inaccessible or, worse, silly and not to be taken seriously. In this context, engaging individuals to lead the project who know art best practice, and who can communicate simply and clearly, is key.

Selecting at least one world-renowned artist

Celebrity is unavoidable in today's world and it appeals, if clandestinely, even to diehard intellectuals. A strategy of the City of Sydney has been to rely on private development companies to foot the bill to commission world-renowned artists such as Olafur Eliasson and Jenny Holzer.

Engaging with government

Flynn's colleagues within the City of Adelaide are the best judges of how engaging with government can proceed, and have already organised sessions to introduce Flynn to their colleagues and share ideas.

An idea that is being discussed would see commissions of First Nations art that could be realised under a joint venture of the City of Adelaide with the Lowitja Institute, in honour of the great Lowitja O'Donoghue, who died on 4 February 2024.

It may sound naive, but sharing may be the best approach as we think about how to include government and institutions.

No individual is a miracle worker, but it can be helpful to deploy an individual who sits outside of government to be the communicator.

Engaging with institutions

Flynn doesn't now and hasn't ever lived in Adelaide, and acknowledges how annoying it can be for someone from the outside to visit a few times a year and make recommendations. That being said, Flynn has visited Adelaide regularly through all the years since 1997 that she has lived in Australia. Like Council's own Jennifer Kalionis and Jade O'Donohue, she has also enjoyed longstanding relationships with the curators of the Art Gallery of South Australia and the Samstag Museum.

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Engaging artists and experts to advise

Flynn can suggest the model of consulting with expert colleagues as she, architects Hassell and the public–private partnership PULSE did so successfully for the Cross River Rail project (CRR), Brisbane (crossriverrail.qld.gov.au). Guided by an advisory group comprised of a First Nations curator, museum deputy director and performing arts professional, CRR broke new ground by commissioning 13 Queensland-based First Nations artists to work in 14 artwork locations in four new stations in central Brisbane.

Incentivising policies for public/private partnerships

Success stories of engaging with the private sector

Sydney is arguably the leader in art-in-architecture projects worldwide due to the vision of the City of Sydney, which requires development companies to make a contribution to art and culture above a low threshold of building investment of $10 million. In the last decade there has been a large volume of construction underway in the city, which has translated into many public artworks that have been realised since the start of the policy in 2012. The policy has created many parallel opportunities for creatives. Australia-based and international artists have benefited greatly from the opportunities that have been created and the curatorial sector has expanded as professionals have entered the field to coordinate the projects underway.

In the City of Sydney, the policy is not legislated, and the amount of a contribution is negotiated by the City on a case-by-case basis. Taking 1 per cent of total building cost as a guideline, the City often secures a larger percentage contribution for art. As a rule, a greater contribution for art has been required by the City for projects such as Quay Quarter Sydney by AMP Capital, in parts of the city like Circular Quay that are considered critical to realising the City's urban planning objectives. (The Quay Quarter Sydney project saw the artworks by Jonathan Jones and Olafur Eliasson mentioned on pages 7, 16 and 32, above, realised in the period 2015–22.)

The Sydney model has seen the city transformed by architecture and public art within the relatively short span of a decade. It is a model Adelaide can adopt. A promising sign: according to the City of Adelaide, some companies in Adelaide are leading the way by already reaching out. Companies need to be guided by a policy and curatorial expertise, and monitored by an enlightened oversight panel. Outcomes can otherwise appear random and uncoordinated and be of a level of quality not commensurate or useful to what the City of Adelaide wants to achieve.

Contributions from the Adelaide-interested high net worth sector

The argument is made above for the sort of government initiative that has been shown to be essential to achieving wholesale change in another Australian city. As a supplement to what the City will fund and provide, art for the Adelaide public realm can be pitched to art-interested individuals and private art collectors in Adelaide. The most plausible scenario would see art collectors with a strong interest in a particular artist persuaded to contribute support to their public project.

There are pitfalls: donors who aren't interested in the process but only the product. And why would someone assist the City in realising an exciting new collection of art for its public realm? What would motivate them when there is no benefit to be gained other than the satisfaction of knowing one has helped, possibly to change an artist's life and the trajectory of their career?

Convincing arguments can be made for altruism – for contributing funding to the City public art initiative without requiring much back. 'The fine art of giving', an article on philanthropy that Flynn wrote for *The Australian Financial Review Magazine* in June 2008, included suggestions for ways to contribute altruistically that are still valid today. It is included as an appendix with this report.

Donations of art are rarely of the level of quality the City will want to require and are discouraged. The way for the City to maintain control of quality is by commissioning art itself and by maintaining oversight of artworks commissioned by others in, for example, the property development sector. The City of Adelaide Council can form a panel comprised entirely of art experts to evaluate every such project. The panel can seek the advice of the City's internal infrastructure personnel on matters relating to delivery. City personnel will have no vote; in order to function to its full potential, the panel must be allowed to proceed unfettered, applying the extraordinary art expertise of art specialists that it will bring to its judgements.

Bloomberg Philanthropies' Public Art Challenge

The City of Adelaide is an ideal candidate to apply for support through the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Public Art Challenge. The website for the program describes the initiative as one that 'invites mayors and artists to submit proposals to receive up to $1 million in funding for innovative public art projects designed to address local challenges' (bloomberg.org/arts/supporting-public-art/public-art-challenge/). Eight cities were beneficiaries in 2023 when a great diversity of proposals were funded, ranging from projects that focused on climate change, equity, food insecurity, gun violence, homelessness, public health and city revitalisation.

Kate D. Levin is Principal of Culture and Cultural Asset Management for Bloomberg Philanthropies. Speaking in Sydney, under the auspices of the Committee for Sydney, in March 2024, Levin spoke about a London project that asked how you create a neighbourhood with culture at its centre. From the ground up, she said – 'not like an asteroid of fancy people that has hit your community'.

Levin and Flynn are friends from the 1980s when Flynn lived in New York. The two had a chance to talk before the start of proceedings, when Flynn described the work she was doing with the City of Adelaide. As the talk got underway, Levin spoke of Bloomberg's focus on the less obvious, smaller cities, which would suggest Adelaide has a chance. Afterwards, Levin picked Flynn out of the crowd and told her to be sure to stay in touch about Adelaide.

Notes

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1 Danièle Hromek, 'Defining Country', *Designing With Country*, Government Architect New South Wales (GANSW), Sydney, March 2020.

2 Lawyer, academic, land rights activist and Indigenous community leader Noel Pearson delivered the first of his 2022 Boyer Lecture series, 'Who we were, who we are, and who we can be', on 27 October 2022. See www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/boyerlectures/who-we-were-who-we-are-and-who-we-can-be/14095284.

3 Pearson, 'Who we were, who we are, and who we can be'.

4 Dillon Kombumerri, in First Nations Competency Crash Course, Seminar 3: Connecting, Designing and Engaging with Country, Australian Institute of Architects, 17 November 2022. Kombumerri, a Yugembir descendant from Queensland, is Principal Architect, Office of the Government Architect NSW.

5 See PlanSA, Planning and Design Code, https://code.plan.sa.gov.au.

6 City of Adelaide, *State of the City: 2023 Update*, 2023, p. 13, https://meetings.cityofadelaide.com.au/documents/s11851/Attachment%20A%20-%20State%20of%20the%20City%20Report.pdf.

7 SA Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 'South Australia population and migration', 2023, www.dpc.sa.gov.au/responsibilities/multicultural-affairs/population-and-migration.

8 City of Adelaide, *State of the City*, p. 4.

9 The work has been polished three times since it was first put on view in 1977: www.adelaidenow.com.au/messenger/city/an-adelaide-man-is-spending-two-months-polishing-rundle-malls-balls/news-story/3653528a08d91da95a4722ad3320149d. A cleaning with a chemical solution was overseen by art conservation company Artlab Australia in 2014: www.weare.sa.gov.au/news/2023/q4/meet-the-team-who-help-maintain-the-malls-balls.

10 Uncle Rod O'Brien, interviewed by Charles Brice, ABC News channel, 27 February 2024.

11 Rachael Hocking, 'The story behind the Gadigal poetry on Midnight Oil's latest track', NITV, 7 August 2020, www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/the-story-behind-the-gadigal-poetry-on-midnight-oils-latest-track/b0mxmhah3.

12 The panel members were Charlotte Day, then Director, Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA) and since named Associate Director, University Museums, University of Melbourne; Hannah Donnelly (Wiradjuri), then Producer, First Nations Programs at Information + Cultural Exchange, Parramatta, since renamed Arts & Cultural Exchange (A.C.E.) – in May this year Donnelly assumed the Co-Artistic Directorship of Utp (Urban Theatre Projects), Bankstown; Wesley Enoch (Noonuccal/Ngugi), Indigenous Chair Creative Industries, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), and a commentator, playwright and director for the stage who was Artistic Director of Queensland Theatre Company (2010–15) and Artistic Director of the Sydney Festival (2017–21); and Bruce Johnson McLean (Wierdi people of the Birri Gubba nation of Wribpid), curator and former Assistant Director, Indigenous Engagement, at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

13 See Palais de Tokyo, 'Jonathan Jones: *untitled (transcriptions of country)*', 2021, https://palaisdetokyo.com/en/exposition/jonathan-jones/.

14 Monument Lab, 'About', 2022, https://monumentlab.com.

15 ABC News, 'Video: Melbourne to commission three new statues to address gender imbalance', 7 December 2022, www.abc.net.au/news/2022-12-07/melbourne-to-commission-three-new-statues-to/101742064.

Appendices

Methodology

Process of commissioning works of art

Artist identification and selection criteria

The success of a public artwork project is ensured by artists who are capable of making art that is:

- excellent in quality, relevant, exciting, innovative and original
- unique to Sydney and the site, and
- timeless in artistic content and durable (with a lifespan of 25 years, in the case of permanent works).

These criteria will help us evaluate the artists under consideration:

- standards of excellence and innovation
- the integrity of the work
- relevance and appropriateness of the work to the context
- consistency with current state and local planning, heritage, community and environmental policies
- consideration of public safety, and the public's access to and unfettered use of the public domain, and
- consideration of maintenance and durability (25 years).

Artist pool

The artworks commissioned will be only as excellent and exciting as the pool of artists we start with. Artists will be considered who are:

- based locally, nationally and internationally
- representative of a mix of generations: emerging, mid-career and senior artists
- representative of equity, diversity and inclusion, considering artists who are relegated to the minority, of outsider or fringe status
- capable of connecting with people, including the community at large, Stockland, the art advisor, architects and larger design team, and
- comfortable with the vision articulated.

These artists:

- may belong to special interest groups, such as
  - Aboriginal artists
  - the national groups that make up the population of Sydney

and will

- work collaboratively with one another, the community, Stockland, the art advisor, architects and the larger design team
- communicate effectively, and
- be able to meet the allocated budget and delivery program.

Project delivery

The process of commissioning and delivering public art is dynamic. Every artist and project is unique, and the process of commissioning public art can be as complex as building construction.

Flynn has developed the ability to foreshadow and plan for the possible eventualities and has documented them in the Barbara Flynn Pty Ltd template artwork contract that she has developed across several realised Australian public art projects. The artist contract sets out all stages of conceiving, designing, fabricating, installing and approving artworks. It is a flexible document that is updated by Flynn to incorporate new experience gained following the successful completion of every artwork project. It is redrafted by commissioning entities to suit every new artwork project.

Future ownership and care of works of art

Commissioning and owning art brings with it obligations for care and maintenance that are reinforced by Australian moral rights law.

Who is going to own, maintain and care for a permanent artwork over its 25-year lifespan? There are different structures for ownership that conform to the industry standard and are defined in the template artwork contract. Clauses 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 of the contract set out the obligations of ownership. Clauses 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 set out the procedures to be followed in the event of a change in ownership.

As a guide for how to maintain and care for the art, the template artwork contract requires the production of a maintenance manual by the commissioned artist. Maintenance is best undertaken by trained specialists accustomed to handling, caring for and conserving works of art, for example, the sort of trained specialist personnel working in art museums.

Program

The following table sets out the milestones of a public art project.

1 Initial stage

Stage	Project milestones
Site analysis, curatorial research, articulating the vision and approach, determining the possible locations and types of public art, artist identification	Advice of art advisor
Contracting of art advisor	Execute art advisor's contract
Refining the discussion of the possible artists matched to sites; selection of artists to invite to a competition or to direct commission	Convene sessions of design team comprised of the client, art advisor, architects
Template artwork contract provided as a starting point for contracting the nominated artists	
Preliminary budget discussions with nominated artists	
Reporting to City of Sydney as the consent authority	

2 Commissioning of artist stage

Stage	Project milestones
Draft provisional cost plan in consultation with the selected artists, to be approved by an art-experienced quantity surveyor, and monitored and updated by the quantity surveyor and the art advisor as artwork concepts and materials are further specified by the artists	Site visits and artist briefings by architects and art advisor Start discussions among artists, engineer and lighting consultant Ongoing briefings of artists by art advisor and architect Research and vetting of materials selection, considering longevity and safety
Development of artwork concept proposals by artists	
Recommendation of art advisor and acceptance by client of artwork concept proposals	
Ongoing reporting/presentations to the consent authority	

3 Creation of artwork stage

Stage	Project milestones
Finalise and execute artwork contracts	
Design development	
Commissioning of prototypes	Prototyping
Construction documentation	Reconfirm costings
Identifying possible fabricators	
Tender	
Engagement of successful tenderers	
Finalise artwork lighting design	Ongoing lighting design with input from the artists and art advisor
Prepare DA documentation	
Ongoing reporting/presentations to the consent authority	

4 Fabrication and preparations for installation

Stage	Project milestones
Fabrication	Fabricate artworks
Artwork light fixtures secured/ delivered	
Preparations for transport	
Site preparation	Site preparation signed off by art advisor and engineer

5 Final delivery and installation stage

Stage	Project milestones
Transport to site	Deliver and install artworks
Installation	
Maintenance manual	Complete maintenance manuals by artists
Inspection and acceptance	Mandatory site visit by artists for final inspection and acceptance
Defects rectification	Rectification of any defects by artists
Signage, promotional material, catalogue	Signage, drafting of promotional material and any artwork catalogues or brochures by art advisor with the input of the artists
Artwork photography	Photograph the artworks

6 Launch

Stage	Project milestones
Launch	Launch with artists and art advisor in attendance (mandatory)

_ STORY BY **BARBARA FLYNN**

_ PHOTOGRAPHS BY **PHILIP GOSTELOW, DAVID MATHESON, JESSICA HROMAS** AND **JIM RICE**

THE FINE ART OF GIVING

Collecting has its satisfactions but perhaps the greatest of these is giving it all away. Putting individual works or great collections of art into the public domain is an act of enlightened citizenship, and the fewer conditions placed on the gift, the more enlightened that act is

VHS VIDEO BY FISCHLI AND WEISS. 'THE WAY THINGS GO' PURCHASED IN 1987.

THERE WERE plenty of delicate issues on the table when art patron John Kaldor and long-standing director of the Art Gallery of NSW (AGNSW), Edmund Capon, sat down to discuss a gift. What conditions would apply to Kaldor's donation of 260 works of international contemporary art? Would it be accompanied by a suitable endowment? In the end, it took three years to negotiate. When the gift – valued at more than $35 million – was announced in April, it became the single most valuable to be made to an Australian museum.

It's hard to imagine august art institutions in the position of kids in a candy shop, but even the trained professional can be seduced by the generosity of a luscious gift – despite the fact that, across the ages, the history of donations is littered with failures, all of them revolving around the challenge of providing for the upkeep of the bequest. This has made self-discipline one of the most important skills in the director's kit – manifest in the resolve to hold fast to the museum's priorities when looking a gift horse in the mouth.

What is a museum looking for when it becomes the recipient of a private collection? First, the art must substantially enrich the museum's holdings. Second, the museum will need to make sure the value of the gift exceeds or at least equals the cost of accepting it. Rule number three – planning how the museum will finance the upkeep of a gift and maintain its visibility – is the one least followed. Yet it is the most critical, according to National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) director, Gerard Vaughan.

San Francisco-based collectors Pam and Dick Kramlich have assembled the largest and most-definitive collection of contemporary time-based media works of art. They have redefined the role of serious collectors by developing a conservation archive as well.

In an ideal world, museums would have the leverage in their negotiations to require collectors to provide lavish endowments. But the discrepancy in buying power between museum and collector is great and, more often than not, it will be the collector calling the shots. Whether this is positive or negative for art depends at least as much on the ethical make-up of the collector as on that individual's level of discernment, or 'eye', as it is known in art circles.

Sydney collectors Simon and Catriona Mordant have funded acquisitions for institutions such as the AGNSW and Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) without asking for curatorial control. They know that museums are often given works they don't want and will have to pay to keep, and have developed a more responsive mode of giving, jumping in when directors have identified something they want but cannot afford.

Sometimes this has been in partnership with other collectors – for instance, with Geoff and Vicki Ainsworth to purchase an Anselm Kiefer painting for the AGNSW in 2006. The painting dates from 2004 and is titled: *Von den Verlorenen gerührt, die der Glaube nicht trug, erwachen die Trommeln im Fluss* (roughly *The river drums awoke, touched by the lost who didn't carry their belief on wings*). Catriona Mordant says they want "to put something back to enrich the cultural fabric" because they have benefited from living in Australia. While they have no desire to set up their own museum, they are enjoying giving their art away during their lifetime: "We'd like to see Sydney change while we're still alive."

More often, the norm among collectors is the stipulation that collections retain their identity, thought by many of them to be most effectively achieved by keeping the art together and continuously on view. The Kaldor gift is complemented by the 2007 pledge of $4 million by other gallery supporters, the Belgiorno-Nettis family, which will go towards the conversion of existing storage space at AGNSW into a new, dedicated John W. Kaldor Family gallery for contemporary art.

Robin Wright, head of San Francisco's MOMA acquisitions committee, says museums may not want certain types of art that are either "too quiet" or harder to engage with – for example, ephemeral art, which forms a significant component of her own collection.

LAWRENCE WEINER: 'DUST AND DIAMONDS LEFT UPON THE SURFACE OF A SHEET OF GLASS', 1991. CHAIR IS BY ROY MCMAKIN; TABLE TOP: KATHARINA FRITSCH; 'MAUS (MOUSE)', 1998.

Endowing a collection

The word in collectors' circles in the US is that $US300 million is the minimum level of endowment required to ensure a healthy future for a donation or private museum. Funds need to be well invested, and the foundation or institution well managed or the money could run out. Further, collectors setting up private museums have no special immunity from future financial failure. Many such museums have been established without provision of an adequate endowment – "pure folly" is the view of one Australian museum director.

Unlike public institutions that are bound by public opinion and the legal conditions of some bequests – often costly and unpopular to break – selling art (termed deaccessioning) to finance an institution or acquire other art is an option more easily accomplished by private museums. In one instance, Michael Buxton's plans – already well advanced – to build a museum in Melbourne include the provision to review and possibly sell the work of an artist at regular intervals as a matter of policy, both as a means of financing the museum and to keep the collection "tuned up" and "fresh looking".

There are risks, however: historically, it has been controversial when high-profile collectors have sold works, provoking speculation and often sending a shudder through the artist's market. But as Buxton puts it, if he owns the work why can't he assert his right to sell it?

Mark Fraser, who is working on the establishment of collector David Walsh's museum, the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Hobart, says that an individual as idiosyncratic as Walsh should probably have his own museum. But many museum professionals would caution the maverick: There is a useful system of checks and balances in public institutions, which will scrutinise every item in a collection that is being offered for donation. Specialists will get involved, and the relative quality and significance of the gift will be evaluated.

New York benefactor/collector Werner H. (Wynn) Kramarsky explains that in most American museums the board of directors or trustees must approve acquisitions and deaccessions. He says, "The oversight by many individuals has salutary consequences." (Deaccessioning can be a drawn-out process, involving consultation with the heirs of the original donor and the requirement to replace the work with one of the same type and period.)

There is no such system in place to evaluate the holdings of collectors starting their own museums. In Australia, where many such museums are just opening, we are yet to see how exceptional they will be in terms of quality.

Capon says collections of the magnitude of Kaldor's need to retain their identity and their logic, which he describes as "a cohesion of the inscrutable". He acknowledges that the Kaldor works will require maintenance down the line, but upkeep would have been an issue only if Kaldor had bequeathed his collection *in situ* in his Sydney home. Housed at the AGNSW any outlays would fall "well within the bailiwick of what the gallery does already".

COLLECTIONS ARE time capsules – think of the works belonging to fashion-retail giants Marc and Eva Besen that are now housed in their TarraWarra Museum of Art in Healesville, Victoria – and the wish to keep them together to evoke an era or communicate a particular vision, is often the strongest desire of the potential collector-donor, and the most frequent deal breaker. At one extreme, New York publishing magnate and former ambassador to the UK, Walter H. Annenberg's 2002 bequest of more than 50 works of impressionist and post-impressionist art to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art set the benchmark for the number and stringency of conditions stipulated. Valued at about $US1 billion when the gift was first announced in 1991, the terms of the bequest included a prohibition against excerpting any of the works to show them in other contexts, and a requirement to hang the works in a particular order, in perpetuity. Admittedly, even considerably less onerous stipulations are generally not in the best interests of a museum, since often the works in the collection will be of variable quality. Most museums won't even have adequate exhibition space to comply.

So museums prefer to pick and choose. Some Australian museum directors have succeeded in doing so, including Gerard Vaughan, whose arrangement with Melbourne collector Joseph Brown allowed the NGV to select from among a collection of Australian art amassed by Brown over more than 60 years in his capacity as gallery owner, connoisseur, scholar and practising artist. (Prior to making his gift to the NGV, Brown had donated more than 450 works to public galleries in Australia over 40 years.) Brown wagered that allowing the NGV to select what it wanted would ensure its strong interest in the works. He turned out to be correct, and works from his collection are on permanent view at the Ian Potter Centre, NGV Australia at Federation Square.

Vaughan describes the NGV as "the only truly encyclopædic collection in Australia" and sees collection building as being "about depth and breadth". By forging an alliance that both satisfied the benefactor and allowed the NGV to engage in æsthetic cherry-picking, he expanded the museum's holdings and gained unrestricted access for his curators – and, above all, public access – to significant Australian works.

Another unique holding, the collection of Perth residents Sir James and Lady Sheila Cruthers, was gifted to the University of Western Australia (UWA) in March this year. Since its inception in 1974, the collection had grown to include 400 works of art by 155 women artists dating from the 1890s to the present. According to son John Cruthers, himself a collector and Sydney-based art adviser, members of the Cruthers family had become familiar with the inner workings of the university over the years in a variety of roles ranging from undergraduate to committee member to deputy pro vice-chancellor (a position held by Sir James in the 1990s), making UWA the logical recipient of the collection.

Furthermore, UWA was the sort of smaller institution where the collection would be widely shown, used and made available for the greatest impact. Cruthers says the collection was driven by his and his parents' enthusiasm and "what we liked". It has a number of themes, such as self-portraiture, the body, and the environment, and over the years the family was not averse to selling art by men to finance the purchase of art by women. The Cruthers Collection posits an alternative history of art, and is the sort of highly personal and idiosyncratic holding that fares well in a university gallery such as UWA's, where it is one of a number of donations including the distinguished collection of Australian art assembled by Joe and Rose Skinner.

Sometimes the total package is so exceptional that the mandate to keep it together is understandable. Over 30 years, San Francisco-based collectors Pam and Dick Kramlich, like the Besens, have assembled a time capsule without parallel: in their case, the largest and most definitive collection in existence of contemporary time-based media works of art. Pam Kramlich describes the earliest works in the collection as literally "representing a point in time that is gone". With uniqueness comes value – and also the responsibility to preserve DVD and video works that can disintegrate or become obsolete (and unshowable) over time if not properly cared for.

In addition to giving works of art to New Art Trust, which has three institutions as its beneficiaries – the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Tate in London – the Kramlichs have funded the development of a whole support system in the form of an archive for the recording of details relevant to the works they own as well as the methodologies and practices required to conserve them. Their dedication and the level of art professionalism they have enabled have redefined the role of the serious collector. They have been living in Shanghai since January and observing the booming art market in China; they own a work by 27-year-old Yang Fudong. The move brings Dick Kramlich closer to the China operations of New Enterprise Associates (NEA), the venture capital firm of which he is co-founder and senior partner, with art a "happy by-product".

It would follow that the larger the gift to a museum – and the greater the endowment – the more say a collector/benefactor would and, reasonably, should have. Collector and former board member of a Cologne insurance company, Udo Brandhorst, gifted a collection of 800 works of contemporary art to Bavaria state in 1999 – including 90 by Andy Warhol and the most important holdings of Cy Twombly's works in private hands. It has worked well for all parties.

Brandhorst assembled the collection over more than 40 years with his late wife Anette. For him, a main objective was to secure the state to act as public-sector partner to provide a new building as well as administer the museum, slated to open in 2009. Brandhorst has provided for the ongoing needs of his foundation, which is allowed to spend the return on equity of €120 million ($203 million) each year (which works out to between €2 million and €4 million a year). In return, Brandhorst will take a semi-active role, participating in the discussion of how the museum will be installed and how the artworks will be presented. As Brandhorst told the magazine *Weltkunst* in 2005, "Who knows the collection better than I?"

EVEN IN the face of such stellar examples, some collector/benefactors take a hard line against the requirement by some of their peers that donations stay together. In their view, such a requirement is always untenable and neither quality nor quantity will mitigate this. One loses all liveliness and sense of continuity, whether it's 40 or 400 works of art, unless other works are integrated and drawn in around them, they say. In some instances, museums may have to knock back collectors who set overstringent conditions, with the best managed among them retaining a relationship with those collectors, in the hope of being able to work together in future.

Many collectors who don't strike a deal start private museums. The chief curator of the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, Gary Garrels, says that though the private museum trend may have accelerated in recent years, in the US, at least, "this is proportionate to the number of new public museums opening in cities everywhere". Founding one's own museum is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the history of collecting includes many examples of collectors who have set up museums when they couldn't make it work with existing ones.

Two of them – Norton Simon and Armand Hammer – established museums in Pasadena in 1975 and in Los Angeles in 1990, respectively, in the aftermath of failed negotiations with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). The museum was in the news again in January this year when American collector Eli Broad announced he would be keeping his collection in a private foundation that makes loans to museums, rather than donating it to LACMA. Broad's reason was that no museum could commit to exhibiting a significant portion of the collection permanently. LACMA director Michael Govan put on the best possible face, commenting in *The New York Times* that, "from the public perspective, I don't think most people care when they walk in the door whether the museum owns the works or not, as long as they don't lose them".

Broad's significance as a collector is such that Govan would have had little choice but to accept his terms. The Broad Foundation has more than 1,500 works, of which 600 were bought in the past two years. The $US56 million (about $59 million) Broad Contemporary Art Museum was funded by Broad to serve as the centrepiece of LACMA's redesigned campus on Wilshire Boulevard. The Renzo Piano-designed building contains about 5,400 square metres of gallery space and opened in February this year.

Govan is a member of the US museum-director elite, and was reportedly hand-picked by Broad to lead LACMA following a successful tenure as director of Dia Art Foundation in New York. Govan's achievements at Dia included the successful financing and establishment in May 2003 of the massive museum Dia: Beacon in upstate New York, for the exhibition of artist-designed installations and site-specific works of art such as Richard Serra's three earliest *Torqued Ellipse* sculptures.

So why do collectors tend towards the more traditional approach, pooling resources by donating to one of the existing museums? One reason, according to Glenn D. Lowry, director of New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), is the satisfaction and sense of security engendered by seeing one's art, "at home with other great works of art, in an environment centred around them". National Gallery of Australia director Ron Radford agrees: existing museums have administrative, curatorial and marketing mechanisms in place, ensuring that the private collection donated to a museum "will be seen as part of a greater whole and be admired by more people".

People may visit the private collections that have been set up as destination museums, but will they visit again? Public museums encourage regular visits. According to the NGV's Vaughan, "Untold millions will see the Brown collection." Not every private collector has the wherewithal to set up as lavishly as Eli Broad, by showcasing a singular collection comprised of 'name' artists in an iconic building. Lowry says MoMA looks

Australian collectors

While it is the art collectors outside Australia who generally invest in collections of greater monetary value that are more frequently gifted to museums, Australian collectors such as Michael Buxton, David Walsh, Simon and Catriona Mordant, and Corbett Lyon are the ones coming up with some of the most exciting collecting models. And it's not just about putting pictures on walls. Ten years ago, Adelaide collectors Rick and Jan Frolich identified art school students as a constituency that needed a leg up, and have been funding them in the years since to put bodies of work together at the critical point in their careers after graduation.

There are other alternatives to collecting-as-trophy-hunting. Brisbane collector Paul Eliadis helps artists to reach a broader audience by funding publications about their work, while Sydney's Andrew Cameron funds the Art Gallery of NSW level-two Contemporary Projects Space. For some collectors the main game is to create the largest possible audience for art.

When John Kaldor's $35 million contemporary art collection was gifted to the Art Gallery of NSW in April this year, it became the single most valuable donation to be made to an Australian museum.

Donating to an existing museum gives the satisfaction and sense of security of seeing one's art "at home with other great works of art".

JEFF KOONS, 'WHITE TERRIER', 1991; UGO RONDINONE, 'NO 210 (SIEBTEFIJUJZVEITAUSANDUNDJULI)', 2000.

to private collectors to complete its holdings: "The aggregate of what collectors can do is more substantive than what institutions can do."

In another gambit, a museum may want to acquire art out of the exhibitions it programs as a way of documenting its history. In a recent example, a trustee of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) stepped up to purchase one of the major works in the Olafur Eliasson show that originated in San Francisco and will travel to Sydney's MCA in late 2009. A museum will always want that highly coveted Anselm Kiefer, Cy Twombly, Jasper Johns or Jackson Pollock, which in today's market can only be bought with private support.

On the other hand, perhaps a more grassroots way for a museum to get what it wants is to buy in areas associated with 'new practices' when prices are still affordable. SFMOMA, for example, has expanded the photography collection that was started in 1935 (the same year the museum opened), with the benefit of curator Sandra Phillips's expertise and direction, and the engaged involvement of a group of collectors excited by the new medium and canny enough to be buying the best examples available.

As Capon recognises, a collection as significant as John Kaldor's can also be used as a bargaining chip to entice government to allocate the funds required to remedy any number of long-standing ills – such as the chronic lack of storage space – which aren't in themselves line items glamorous enough to attract substantial or enthusiastic support. With the Kaldor collection, the AGNSW gained, in Capon's words, "the most important collection of late 20th-century avant-garde art in Australia" and state financing of a storage facility on land owned by Arts NSW (formerly the NSW Ministry for the Arts).

OBVIOUSLY THERE is competition between museums for the better collections: when rumours began to circulate about the Kaldor gift, some were surprised that the works weren't going to the MCA, a museum dedicated entirely to contemporary art. In 1995, Loti and Victor Smorgon gave their collection, comprising 154 works of art from the 1980s and '90s, to the MCA. Kaldor supported the MCA for many years, including a stint as chairman from 1997 to 2002. Jeff Koons's floral sculpture *Puppy* from his collection stood in front of the MCA on Sydney's Circular Quay in 1995-96. Collecting and benefacting are highly competitive pursuits and Kaldor's AGNSW donation could well have a spillover effect for the MCA as other collectors target it for the next spectacular gift.

In New York, London or Berlin, a panoply of museums is the lifeblood of the city, but in smaller centres there is not as much in the way of private art holdings to go around. So in smaller communities, the city benefits from having one well-endowed museum. Tony Ellwood, director of the Queensland Art Gallery and its impressive recent addition, GoMA (Gallery of Modern Art) understands the appeal of contemporary art to Australians, who are at ease with current design and æsthetics, perhaps especially in Brisbane, which he terms "a new place, immersed in the new".

In terms of what private collectors might want to give to the museum, he says quality isn't the issue since "it's not hard to buy well if you're directed by one of the big-name [commercial] galleries". Not everyone would be quite so generous. More frequently overseas observers will say that commercial galleries tend to be focused on the sale – at the expense of quality. But according to Ellwood, collectors with the nous to combine substantial holdings with loyal relationships with the institutions tend to have access to the key works of indisputable value to rival the museum's. And this, in turn, can only work to the museum's advantage.

Robin Wright, head of SFMOMA's acquisitions committee, is a serious and committed collector of contemporary art. She says museums may not want certain types of art that are either "too quiet" or harder to engage with – for example, ephemeral art, which forms a significant component of her own collection. And size does matter: over the years, the buying habits even of collectors as sophisticated as Anette and Udo Brandhorst changed with the realisation that the large works they might acquire would ultimately be shown to best advantage in museum rooms of generous dimension.

Directors of the major museums have big spaces to fill and, in Australia, it is still the case that these are often the only such spaces in any particular city. Internationally, the balance has shifted with the advent of so many collectors setting up their own museums and building them to spec to take works of any size. Judging by collector behaviour at the art fairs, what is indisputable is the attraction of XXL. At last December's Art Basel Miami Beach, for example, American private collectors snapped up the largest works in the opening hours, including Andreas Gursky's *Cocoon*, which was allotted its own wall at the Matthew Marks Gallery booth and sold for $US900,000.

With the rapid rise of values in the contemporary art market, one would think it would be harder than ever for a museum director to persuade collectors to donate. If the work you had appraised is worth twice the value six months later, why would you let it go? At those sorts of prices, why wouldn't you just pay the capital gains and sell the work at auction? For most collectors, the higher the value of the work, the harder it will be to give it away.

In some highly refined models, both collector and museum

House museums

A number of significant art collections have been established as house museums. These days, they are subject to a new kind of scrutiny, as the high cost of upkeep has made what were once such desirable gems untenable for museums to retain as part of their holdings. Apsley House in London, which was the residence of the first Duke of Wellington and bequeathed in 1947 by the seventh Duke to the Victoria and Albert Museum, proved too costly to keep and was transferred for administration from the V&A to English Heritage in 2004. Similarly, the Barnes Foundation in Pennsylvania – created by Albert C. Barnes with a patent medicine fortune and home to one of the world's largest collections of impressionist, post Impressionist and early modern paintings – came close to bankruptcy in 2002. It petitioned a local court for permission to amend the laws so that it could move the collection to a new site where it would attract more visitors and financing.

Dedicated collectors such as architect Corbett Lyon and family in Melbourne, and Rich and Lenore Niles in San Francisco, are building new houses that will incorporate 'museums' – at home. Rooms or whole floors are being given over to state-of-the-art presentations of the works in their collections. The Niles may exhibit their own art on the ground floor or invite students in curatorial programs to organise shows. As Rich Niles says, "So it's not really a private museum as much as a public-program art space. Since we collect art by women artists only, it will be our intent to show only art by women." Lyon speaks of "museum fatigue", and says he learned from the smaller scale of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice and the Herzog & de Meuron museum for the Goetz Collection in Munich how satisfying it could be to view art in a more intimate setting. This suggested people would come to see a highly personalised, non-survey type of art collection that revealed the passions of the collector. But how will these houses be funded in the future, once the benefactors/founders are dead? And will the founders of today's generation of house-museums find existing museums reluctant to accept their gifts of houses plus art? The Nileses say they wouldn't expect a museum to accept a gift of anything but the better pieces in their collection.

RENDERINGS OF THE NEW LYON HOUSE MUSEUM. COPYRIGHT: LYONS/NICHOLAS LING.

will be motivated by an overriding concern for the welfare of the artist. Starting with the purchase for $US175 of a drawing by Jasper Johns from the artist's first show at Leo Castelli Gallery in 1958, distinguished New York collectors Werner H. (Wynn) and Sarah-Ann (Sally) Kramarsky have formed a top collection of American drawings over the past 50 years. It encompasses examples from both superstars and lesser-known artists as well as abstract, conceptual and minimalist works of art that Hammer Museum director Ann Philbin says "both require and reward close looking".

Drawing is known to be a medium particularly close to an artist and, initially, Wynn Kramarsky expressed his discomfort at the thought of acquiring something so intimately "part of an artist's life". Once an artwork is acquired, Kramarsky continues to try to help the artist through a variety of strategies such as collecting their work in depth and facilitating connections to the art world. He holds the artwork in trust – caring for it and not selling it during the artist's lifetime – then considering the right match of artist and institution. Since 1971, the Kramarskys have donated more than 1,700 drawings to 52 institutions in the US, including 20 colleges, universities and institutions that have strong teaching components – representing a contribution without parallel to the study of drawing.

AMERICAN COLLECTORS and museums in cities endowed with one or more robust institutions have developed symbiotic gifting relationships to the benefit of all parties: collector, museum and community. Collecting has become one of the tools of enlightened citizenship; today, in New York as well as cities such as Seattle, San Francisco and Dallas, collectors have developed a code of practice which puts the institution first, while managing, more or less, to hold egos at bay.

Like Sydney's Mordants, such collectors won't insist on giving things to a museum that it cannot readily display. Museums want the best work by an artist, and, if they're supported by such community-minded collectors, they will be free to hold out for the best work by a Matthew Barney or a John Baldessari, wherever it might be found. In the most successful relationships, collectors will see themselves as custodians of works of art and become adept at thinking in the museum's best interests.

In one example, Deedie Rose, a board member of the Dallas Museum of Art, was aware as she started to collect in the area of postwar Latin American art (a specialisation outside the interest of most museums) of just how greatly her activities would enhance the museum's collection. A recent large gift to the Dallas Museum by the Roses and two other collector couples, the Rachofskys and the Hoffmans, stood out in another respect, as a significant local donation in an age when many American collectors have succumbed to the lure of the Tate and other museums outside the US.

Wright says intelligent collectors will manage to strike a balance between functioning independently and allowing themselves to be influenced by the vision of a particular museum. And where all the boxes are ticked, a sort of glorious momentum will start to build: sometimes, even artists on the museum's wish-list will jump on board too, allowing price concessions or donating works of their own themselves.

But as Wright emphasises, there needs to be leadership – individuals like her mother, Jinny Wright. She led the way, collecting contemporary American art when no one else was interested, with purchases of Willem de Kooning, Philip Guston, Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock in the 1950s. In Seattle, Jinny Wright spearheaded a capital campaign for

JOHN YOUNG, THE PERGAMON ROOM, WINTER', 2004.

Sydney collectors Catriona and Simon Mordant have funded acquisitions for the city's major institutions without asking for curatorial control.

the Seattle Art Museum that raised in just seven years an astounding $US1billion from 40 collectors to acquire 1,000 works. Sure, there's money in Seattle, but there wasn't always as much in the way of resources as there is now: collectors such as Jinny and Bagley Wright have had to pay their dues, collecting and benefacting for years without getting anything back in the way of endorsement or public acknowledgment.

Edmund Capon says what a museum director is really looking for in a private collection is the person – "someone with the belief to do it". That is, to do something great. He says it's "not just about giving the money to buy this or that. J. Hepburn Myrtle, Sydney Cooper, Laurence G. Harrison, Kenneth and Yasuko Myer, Edward and Goldie Sternberg, Mollie Gowing, Margaret Olley, the Ainsworths, the Mordants … take those names out of it and there's nothing."

He adds that, in the rare instance, a particular gift can be so significant as to change the whole policy of the museum. This was the case with James Fairfax's extraordinarily generous gifts since 1991 of European Old Master works, which Capon says "defined and gave a purpose to a part of the collection that was moribund. Had Fairfax not done what he did, we would have had no choice but to abandon this period of art."

According to Gerard Vaughan, acting in the museum's best interest does not have to mean disappointment for the benefactor. "It's best to be very frank," says Vaughan. And one can say no. Initially, the NGV had to decline the gift of Joseph Brown, on the basis that it wouldn't be able to show the entire collection on a permanent basis. The deal was struck only after the collector agreed to give a large number of works of art – including 100 paintings and sculptures and about 50 works on paper, from a total collection of nearly 500 items.

Perhaps the best type of donation involves collectors who

"Had James Fairfax not done what he did, we would have had no choice but to abandon this period of art."

combine an eye for quality, magnanimity, and a quotient of concern and respect for the institution so abiding that it enables them to give the works and let go. As Jinny Wright says, "I think the Seattle Art Museum will show a lot of what we've collected, but you have to trust the art, since the museum won't and shouldn't be bound in any way." According to Edmund Capon, it has been the people "who have demonstrated faith in what you're doing who make all the difference", their belief being "hugely underwriting of the director's role".

He sees that sort of faith and commitment as being subtly palpable to the public, going so far as to say that it is the strength and evidence of his benefactors' belief in the institution that gets people through the doors. "Why do we like particular museums around the world, the Frick [New York] or the Norton Simon?" he asks. "Because they still retain the passion of the personalities that so generously fashioned them."

How many of us have had our lives changed in the process of looking at a work of art? Such vivid personal experiences underline the fact that important works of art should end up in the public domain where everyone can see them. Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's *Warlugulong* (1977), that early drawing by Johns, Twombly's best paintings, late Warhol – an artist's best works belong to the public.

It's a sentiment that people in Australia are onto – the conviction at this stage of a small core group. But this group will need to grow to have an impact. They can experiment by giving up on using art solely for personal gain and putting it first by giving what they have to the public. They can pick the eyes out of the best and make a cult out of giving. ■

Barbara Flynn is a Sydney- and US-based contemporary art adviser to leading Australian corporations and private collectors.

Media Release

Tuesday, 2 July 2013

Extraordinary possibilities for art in the heart of the city

The City of Sydney will invest more than $9 million over the next 10 years in public artworks that will breathe new life into streets, squares and laneways across the City Centre.

Renowned international curator Barbara Flynn has prepared a new public art plan for central Sydney, which could see a spectacular artwork span the length of George Street and sculpture gardens created in some of the city's best-loved public squares.

"The transformation of George Street into a light rail and pedestrian boulevard gives us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reshape the heart of our city and introduce important new public artworks," Lord Mayor Clover Moore said.

"We have the chance to create magnificent public spaces filled with art of the highest quality that can act as a constant source of inspiration for our residents, workers and visitors.

"The City will bring the work of some of the best artists and designers from across Australia and the rest of the world to Sydney for a series of significant new permanent works as well as innovative temporary programs.

"Barbara Flynn's ambitious proposals for George Street and the squares and laneways that surround it are exciting and I look forward to seeing these ideas take shape over the next few years."

The draft City Centre Public Art Plan identifies a series of major projects to be funded by Council over the next decade. Ideas for artists to develop include:

- Returning **George Street** to its former glory as the city's central spine. Ideas include an artwork spanning the length of George Street, animating the voids between buildings with site-specific artworks, and placing art up high to make it more visible;
- Activating the **east-west connections** that cross George Street at intersections like Park, Hunter and Bridge streets with large-scale gateway installations or artworks covering entire building façades;
- Reimagining **Sydney's public squares** with elegant and peaceful sculpture gardens in popular spots like Barrack Street and Regimental Square, offering pedestrians an escape from the hustle and bustle of George Street; and
- Continuing the City's **laneway revitalisation program** with both permanent and temporary works, encouraging Sydneysiders to explore the fascinating stories behind these hidden nooks and crannies.

The plan also presents a range of ideas the City could pursue in partnership with cultural organisations and private developers, including:

Media Release

- Joining forces with cultural institutions to create **performance artworks** to activate major streets and squares during light rail construction;
- Giving Martin Place a new lease of life as Sydney's outdoor 'lounge room' through a new **city-to-city art exchange** with major cultural capitals like London, Paris, Beijing and New York;
- Establishing Sydney's first official **artist-in-residence program**, which could include some of the world's best-known artists and designers, alongside promising local practitioners; and
- Working with **private developers** throughout the city to ensure that major new developments meet design excellence standards and incorporate high-quality public artworks wherever possible.

Barbara Flynn is a Sydney-based contemporary art curator and advisor with more than 30 years' experience including owning and managing galleries in New York, overseeing the private collections of major Australian corporations and curating public art projects.

Most recently, she was responsible for the artist selection and implementation of large-scale artworks at some of Sydney's most spectacular new developments, including 1 Bligh Street and 8 Chifley Square.

Barbara was appointed as the City's curatorial advisor for the City Centre in December last year, and has spent the past six months consulting with international experts, City Design staff, the Public Art Advisory Panel and the Design Advisory Panel to develop the plan.

"Art has an important role to play in giving artists a voice to effect change," Barbara said.

"This plan proposes working situations that will benefit all artists regardless of their cultural background, whether they are based locally or elsewhere, and a structure for artists to collaborate in.

"It also sets a framework to enable the Council to achieve a singular group of meaningful, relevant, and future-oriented works of art."

For more information, visit: cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/cityart

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city of villages

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Tsunami 1.26 Janet Echelman Sydney 2011

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