



INSIDE THE GALLERY PODCAST – MAY 2019

Transcript of interviews:

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Esther Anatolitis – National Association for the Visual Arts (election analysis)

- Tim Stackpool: Esther Anatolitis is the executive director at the National Association for the Visual Arts, which is the national peak body protecting and promoting the professional interests of the Australian visual and media arts, craft and design sector. Esther is on the line. Thanks for joining us.
- Esther A: Oh, you're welcome.
- Tim Stackpool: The association undertook some fairly aggressive advocacy in the lead up to the federal election and some hefty newspaper advertising as well, and it was urging voters to consider a party with significant and articulated art and culture policies. Given that, have you been dealt a bit of a blow with this election result?
- Esther A: Oh look, I think the election result is confusing not only for people in the art sector, but for our people across the country who were expecting the next government to take a really responsible approach to arts and cultural policy, to environmental policy, to employment policy around wages and fair pay, to a whole range of different things. And so I'm hoping that the successful coalition's campaign was about healing their internal rifts and sort of, you know, becoming a lot more focused on what they now need to identify as national issues, because being prime minister is not a popularity contest. Leading government is not simply about putting out, you know, some slogans. It's a serious responsibility and now we need to see the government taking that responsibility seriously.
- Tim Stackpool: And how does that reflect though particularly with you in the arts sector?
- Esther A: Oh look, I think it's, it has been, you know, a matter of really serious concern at the sectors we've been talking about for years and years that not only does the coalition not have a policy, but they have under the previous arts minister conducted the most destructive action against artists in the art sector that we'd ever seen in Australia. So to his credit, the former minister for the arts, Mitch Fifield, did his best to step back from that and returned some of the funds to the Australia Council. But then since that time, we haven't seen any policy developed. And this is an urgent situation, artists' incomes are declining, career prospects are declining. We do need the government to take the arts sector seriously and you know, we've yet to see once the new government is formed, who the next minister will be, but we're looking forward to speaking to that person at the earliest opportunity.
- Tim Stackpool: Yeah, certainly Arts Day On The Hill, for example, is a big advocacy push from NAVA, but that doesn't come around till August. If I'm right. Do you need to move before then?

Esther A: Oh absolutely. The August event is going to be the first as a, as an annual series of events that we've got some great funding source thanks to the philanthropy of Daniel Besen. We have funding to do this for three years. That's just one aspect of the work that we do to make sure that advocacy is really well connected, well organised and sustained. But yeah, great advocacy for the arts, even just a one off thing that we do around an election campaign or an annual thing. It's got to be ongoing. So we've got our advocacy toolkit that a lot of people used during the campaign. We'll be updating that to guide people on how to get in touch with MPs who've been newly elected. We've got a whole bunch of stuff that we'll be putting out in the next little while. Yeah, we just keep going and get on with it.

Tim Stackpool: Yeah. Looking from a government perspective and a national perspective as well, what does art bring to economies? How does an arts minister for instance, set their portfolio as a legitimate contributor to the country?

Esther A: Look, artists inspire us, connect us with our emotions, that the rigour and the work that artists engage with makes it possible for us to think about identity, think about culture and creativity, and of course we know that if you look at just the economy, the World Bank tells us that the skills that we need in the future and even today are all around creativity, innovation, critical thinking, thinking outside the box and so on. We know from figures that the ministry for the arts released late last year, that the arts and cultural industries contribute \$117 billion to the national economy.

Esther A: But if we look at that figure and look at the report that outlines where all that comes from, that figure doesn't actually include the sales of visual arts, that it doesn't include the commercial gallery sector, it doesn't include the economic value of exhibitions and artist run initiatives all over Australia, so that took a lot of work to do to make sure that the contemporary arts are well represented in that figure. The total contribution is well above \$110 billion, so we need the government to be aware of the contribution to the economy. The contribution that the arts makes to education, to community health and wellbeing, to mental health. It's quite extraordinary when we begin to think about and to consider all the ways in which the work of artists enriches our lives, our health and our communities.

Tim Stackpool: Considering those types of figures. What, why do you think the government has difficulty translating that into meaningful and worthwhile policy?

Esther A: I wonder whether arts policy, you know, just seems too intricate, too hard. There's a lot of great work that has been done by policy makers, researchers, academics. We, along with the Monash University's master's of cultural and creative industries, we presented a really great day called Australian cultural policy: the next decade in early April in Melbourne, which set out all the great work that people are doing to outline, you know, key elements of arts and cultural policies. So I think people often say, oh, we need more data, if we only

had data. We could make the case clear, but we are swimming and drowning in data.

Esther A: What politicians mean when they say that is, "can you make a more compelling argument?", the arts minister is already won over, that it's their parliamentary front benches, the treasurer, others in other portfolios, who need to be connected. And so that's where the sector, we need to focus our advocacy. We need to be speaking to our local members and do things like Arts Day on the Hill, we need a good national focus that gets the arts into the media, into the news cycle and top of mind for decision makers.

Tim Stackpool: Looking at what you do, I think it's all well and good to think globally, act locally, but Esther, given that work, how frustrating is it when you see other nations recognise what arts bring to their culture? We think about Spain and Italy and France for example, and then you have to turn around and look back at how overlooked the contribution art makes to this country. I mean, how do you, how do you stay sane?

Esther A: Oh, what a great question. Oh look, I think the global comparison can be deflating. You look at Spain, you look at France, where there is a great respect for the artist as a worker and there are ways in which artists are recognised in terms of, you know, guaranteed annual income in terms of tax and so on. You look at Canada where the budget of the Canada Council was doubled by the current government. And then of course you're going to look a lot more closely at New Zealand where there's a prime minister who has the confidence to speak publicly and constructively about what artists contribute, what artists do, what art does for all of us. So I think it would be great if our MPs would look at those global comparisons and really kind of step up and want to become leaders. We have this strange anomaly in Australia where on the one hand research from the Australia Council shows us that 98% of Australians participate in the arts all the time.

Esther A: You know, see art, read books, seen new work by artists, playing music, et cetera. But then there's a small contingent of the media who will come out with the sort of lazy journalism about attacking an artist when they've got a grant. But the project title sounds a bit strange, you know, it's very boring and very lazy. And often these are the same journalists who of course are taking their children to exhibitions, to performances, to movies, to making sure that they've got great Australian authors to read, that they're seeing the work of invigorating and inspiring artists in galleries. So I think we need to overcome that really boring or lazy attitude and embrace the people in our community who are the most inspiring, the most risk taking when it comes to creating our future.

Tim Stackpool: Do you think there's a bit of a concept that perhaps art is thought of being of the elite or the elite and perhaps that's a bit of a hurdle for government or ministers to overcome.

Esther A: Yeah, I hear that a lot. It's funny, because it's one of those preconceptions that really worries me because we look at the experience of the average artist. And again, quoting from the research in the Australia Council, the average Australian artist's income is declining. Then on the last study, the average artist only earned \$18,000 from their creative practice alone. That is below the poverty line. And the average amount that an Australian artist earned from all sources of income is only \$48,000 which is well below average Australian weekly earnings. We often say that artists are Australia's most overeducated underclass. This is very much not an elite activity, there at a small handful of artists to Australia who have done really, really well and who've got global profiles and doing really well in terms of the sales of work but unfortunately, the overall experience is just not that at all.

Esther A: And so I worry also that when we talk about elites, it's also not just about the economic experience side, it's also the way we talk about art, and I've met many arts ministers over the years where, I know that I have felt really nervous about coming to openings, you know, in case someone asked them about the work and they'd have to talk about it. And so there's that kind of nervousness too feeling like, you know, they won't know what to say. Of course artists and all of us welcome the most honest, the most heartfelt responses to people's work. And so I think there's work to be done in just connecting people with what arts experiences are and mean, and then reminding us that the overwhelming majority of Australia's artists are really just struggling to get by.

Tim Stackpool: Well, tough work for artists and tough work for politicians too I guess, but Esther, you and the team at NAVA certainly help guide the way. Thanks for that work you do on behalf of all those in the arts who listen to these podcasts. And thanks for speaking to us today on Inside the Gallery.

Esther A: Oh, thanks very much. Thanks for having me. Great to talk to you.

Tim Stackpool: That's Esther Anatolitis, the executive director at the National Association for the Visual Arts and very active, very busy with advocacy. There's no doubt about that. And if you'd like to learn more about the association or perhaps bring some more worthy attention to the arts, you can visit www.visualarts.net.au.

Alexie Glass - Kantor – ArtSpace (52 Artists 52 Actions)

Tim Stackpool: We're going to chat with Alexie Glass-Kantor from ArtSpace, which has commissioned 52 artists across 31 countries for what's known as 52 Artists 52 Actions, and that's ArtSpace's ambitious year long, online project. It actually ran from January 2018 to January 2019, and it highlighted artistic practice across Asia. The project commissioned 52 artists to stage actions in unique locations in the region, and then share them with global audiences online.

Tim Stackpool: Now ArtSpace was always going to accompany the online component with a book, which has been published by Thames & Hudson, that's subtitled: Small Acts of Disobedience, but the huge, year long project has now grown even more. Alexie is the Executive Director of ArtSpace in Sydney. She's also the Chair of the Contemporary Art Organisations of Australia, and on the academic board of the National Art School. She's joining us on the phone. Thanks for your time on the podcast, Alexie.

Alexie Glass-K: Thanks for having me, Tim.

Tim Stackpool: Now this whole concept, it sounds huge. How did it all start? What's the idea behind 52 Artists and 52 Actions?

Alexie Glass-K: It is huge, Tim, let me tell you. It was an idea that I actually had five years ago, and I was thinking about how could we use online and new media platforms in a more effective way to think about how we could capture, create, and commission new content by artists in diverse locations, to think about the social, cultural, and political ideas of our times. ArtSpace is a fantastic organisation in Woolloomooloo, in Sydney. A beautiful building, great galleries, but a lot of our audience don't come to Sydney. They don't come to Woolloomooloo. A huge amount of our audience is actually online. A huge amount of our audience is by reputation or through the artists that we collaborate with.

Alexie Glass-K: What we wanted to do is we wanted to think about Australia's role in the region, and we wanted to think about the region in a radical way. We wanted to map Asia from Turkey through to Hawaii. If Asia is Turkey through to Hawaii, which is how I think of my Asia, then what does that mean in terms of our accountability, as social, cultural, and political citizens of the region? What's the role? What's our capacity to give back? How do we think about how we track the specificities of individual context in such vast a region, and actually create the space for artists to reach new audiences with the ideas of the place that they come from?

Alexie Glass-K: Yeah, 52 Artists 52 Actions, again as a crazy concept. We spoke with Instagram in New York, who crazily enough have a director of visual arts, which is not so crazy when you think about the fact that it's a visual platform.

Tim Stackpool: Good to hear.

Alexie Glass-K: Tremendous to meet with her and get their insights into how they think about creating new ways of creating content and commissioning work in that platform and that environment. Instagram is a good one for us because it's visually led, so images inside the square. In a sense, the kind of spoken word isn't the kind of primary force of how you communicate within that format, but the great thing at Instagram is that you can actually apply almost any language to the content or description.

Tim Stackpool: Sure.

Alexie Glass-K: You can use bilingual forms of describing projects, and what we decided to do was give an artist a week, starting each Monday, free reins to commission, create and produce their action. We had a long list of over 300 artists that we took back to 52. There were others from 32 countries across the region.

Tim Stackpool: Wow.

Alexie Glass-K: They came from Nepal, Hong Kong, Myanmar, China, some of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and we looked at gender diversity. We looked at cultural diversity. We looked at emerging and established artists. We wanted to put together a list of artists that was complicated and nuanced. We looked at activists, obviously who don't ascribe to themselves the title of artists, and those for whom the idea of being activists is a more lateral concept. We decided to also create, in tandem with the Instagram feed that launched in January 2018 and ran through to January 2019, an accumulative, online archive that documented the project in depth, giving the artists to have more capacity to have more documentation, more resourcing, and also that we could share with networks and colleagues. How can we share artisan ideas with a broader community as well? Then we partnered with Thames & Hudson to commission a publication at the end of the project, which would be an encyclopedia of artist action. That publication will be launched in July this year, in tandem with the exhibition at ArtSpace.

Tim Stackpool: Okay, so the Instagram feed already has all the works available to view.

Alexie Glass-K: Yes, we kicked off with Richard Bell, the artist from Queensland, who's currently in Venice, kicking up a storm with his chained up replica of the Australian Pavilion as a gorilla action with his tent embassy. We began with Richard, and Richard actually did an interview for the first week of 52 Artists 52 Actions with ICAN, who had just then won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work in trying to get countries to sign a nuclear disarmament treaty, and the last action a year later was an artist from South Australia called James Tylor, who comes from a

place called Kurna, in the top, southeast, I think, in South Australia. He's looking at indigenous plants and how to rejuvenate, replant and replenish the landscape. He is an indigenous artist as well. He was part of the really key collective in South Australia called One Sixteenth, so it was great to begin 52 Artists with Richard on nuclear disarmament and the history of unsanctioned testing in Central Australia, and to finish with new strategies that artists are leading about rejuvenating the environment and contributing back to community.

Alexie Glass-K: Everyone of the other actions in between was absolutely of its own form. It was a project that when we began, we had no funding for at all. We had to sell it around. We did an application to the Australia Council and we received feedback that the project only had 17% artistic merit.

Tim Stackpool: Okay.

Alexie Glass-K: We figured if the project had such a low score for artistic merit, we must be on to something. We actually opened a Kickstarter campaign in 2017 that enabled us to raise ... The bottom line for us was that we wanted to raise a \$500.00 artist fee for every artist participating in the project.

Tim Stackpool: Nice.

Alexie Glass-K: Artists working in the space of socially engaged and political practices could be remunerated for their labour, and so \$500.00 for an artist in places like Malaysia or Bougainville, or Pakistan goes quite a long way.

Tim Stackpool: Of course.

Alexie Glass-K: As it does in Australia, and we raised \$32,000.00, and then other partners came onboard to support the project, including universities, Thames & Hudson, and others. We were able to achieve this really vast and ambitious project, and nothing really like this has been tried before. If we'd known how much work it was to commission an artist to work in a remote location across Asia from Turkey to Hawaii before we began, we may have been a little bit more scared.

Tim Stackpool: Yes, I was going to say, it does sound like a curatorial nightmare, having to commission a new artist per week. Going back to the corporate side of this, because activism seems to be the core of what you're trying to achieve, or what you have achieved, but in terms of dealing with Instagram as a corporation, did they put any caveats on how this was to unfold?

Alexie Glass-K: They actually provided support for us, to make sure we wouldn't go through (difficulties), so they made sure that this project was actually scaffolded within a remit of projects, that they acknowledge as unique commissions within this space, and it meant that actually we weren't going to be subject to some of the same censorship that other users might be, which was great.

Tim Stackpool: Wow, great.

Alexie Glass-K: We were able to actually negotiate less censorship rather than more. Throughout my career, when I've worked across the region, I think you can collaborate with forms and structures of bureaucracy, power, both in the governmental and corporate sector to create different sorts of structures that might support the production of content that might sit antithetically sometimes with the espoused values of those entities, but if you work with them in a generative way to advocate for the value of expanding space for difficult ideas to be communicated in a meaningful and well contextualised format, then they'll generally come onboard to support them.

Alexie Glass-K: Also, you want to be aware that you're not ... We had to be aware of the various kinds of conditions of censorship. Instagram's not a great platform for users in China. We had artists from China, but they could migrate the content over to their platforms. We Chat, and we found that a lot of the artists have VPNs at home, so they could always look onto Instagram, because to work as an artist anywhere in the world and be connected to opportunities for exhibitions or participation in other context, you have to be able to at least email, so a lot of these artists actually have the kind of technology at home that enables them to bypass things that might otherwise block them. Then they would migrate the content they created for us into other platforms. We say our audience build, not just through Instagram, but across other online platforms, in different countries specific to the work of the artist's action.

Tim Stackpool: Yes, it's a great example of what can be achieved for the artists by incorporating so much of this in terms of the online space.

Alexie Glass-K: There's also the website. Filled with all the in depth content, so we do have the websites live.

Tim Stackpool: Okay.

Alexie Glass-K: That has in depth content that documents the projects as well.

Tim Stackpool: Were you surprised at all at some of the themes that were raised? I mean we can well expect it was the exploitation of women and children, and human trafficking in there as well, oppression of political ideas and views, religious freedoms being confined. Was there anything else that perhaps surprised you in terms of the subject matter that was raised?

Alexie Glass-K: Something I'm always interested in that I saw come through in this project, you know those are all, they are relevant, big things in the ways that you might predict that they would be communicated, in some cases were there, but then I think sometimes it's really interesting in the 21st Century, and something I talk about quite a bit in my practice as a curator, is vulnerability as a political act.

Tim Stackpool: Yeah.

Alexie Glass-K: How making yourself vulnerable or communicating your own uncertainty, or communicating not that you have a kind of binary position or the sanctimonious or kind of moral ground, the moral high ground, but instead that you feel complicit or otherwise kind of compromised yourself, where you find it difficult to articulate the truth of who you are, and how you find ways to do that.

Alexie Glass-K: A really great artist called Reetu Sattar, from Bangladesh, in her week spoke about her guilt at not being the kind of mother that she should be in Bangladeshi culture, but also wanting to be an artist, and was that decision a selfish one, she used to make something as oblique in that context as contemporary art, and what's her responsibility as a mother, as a citizen, as a member of her family and her community, but also her need and her desire, and her want to participate in a larger discussion. One which she's largely not meant to be seen, to be participating within, in the way in which she does. She made a series of very intimate photographs about her own guilt and shame about motherhood.

Alexie Glass-K: I think other artists took positions, you know, Deborah Kelly did a really hilarious one during international, the week of International Women's Day, where she just made a series of collaborations with groups of community participants to create stickers about something that women might be angry about in Sydney. They ended up making a sticker campaign about Man Spreading on trains. This sheer kind of tripod anxiety that comes from trying to get on there.

Alexie Glass-K: The Bondi Junction to Martin Place at 5:00 p.m. on a Wednesday, so quite intimate forms of protest, and then your bigger picture ones. It was great to see how artists brought to bear kind of intimacies, you know, but how they also told their own story in a particular way. Then how other artists then, of course, are dressed in much more direct ways, the kind of more direct concerns.

Tim Stackpool: It's an insanely diverse collection of works that you've put together. Where do you go from here? What does ArtSpace do next in order to match the reaction that you've seen with this project?

Alexie Glass-K: Well with this project, what we actually decided to do was we had decided emphatically at the outset that it was only ever going to be on Instagram online, and in the publication.

Tim Stackpool: Of course.

Alexie Glass-K: Then, because nothing if not contrary, then we decided to do the show at ArtSpace, so the show here at ArtSpace is widely diverse, and was quite a big thing to corral into a format that could be negotiated by audiences, that could be performed by audiences, and so we'd love to see all your audience kind of

come and join us for the show. We will be having a conference and a symposia in July, over the 18th to the 20th of July.

Tim Stackpool: Right.

Alexie Glass-K: We will be flying a number of the artists in from different countries across the region, to take performances, talks and lectures, and we're partnering with Asia Link and the Asia Society on that symposia to talk about what are the political implications of Australia, describing itself as part of a region as vast as Turkey to Hawaii. There are political and economic, and cultural implications of that kind of positioning. That's a great way, and we'd love people to come and join us for that.

Alexie Glass-K: We're always just running a huge program down here across studios, international partnerships, collaborations, publishing, exhibition making through our galleries and our ideas platform, as well as regional. It's just not an Australian show, it's hitting the road to 23 regional venues now, over the next two years.

Tim Stackpool: Beautiful.

Alexie Glass-K: It's a show with 19 artists looking at the upcoming Cook Anniversary and the language of Australian Nationalism. Yeah, and in September, August, we go on to our next show, which is a commission with an artist called Mel O'Callaghan. We partnered with Confort Moderne in France and the Museum of Contemporary Art & Design in the Philippines to commission a film, a regional film and a performance work looking, it's called Centre of the Centre. Mel travelled to the centre of the Indian Ocean with a Yale University research facility to find points in the ocean where new life is being created. If you go 12 miles down to the centre of the Indian Ocean, I'm assured that you will find hot air vents that come from the Earth's core that's venting subarctic water, and at that point scientists are finding new life on Earth.

Tim Stackpool: Gosh.

Alexie Glass-K: We're really excited about that project.

Tim Stackpool: Wow, of course.

Alexie Glass-K: That show will also happen in the Philippines and in France. We try, with our shows as much as possible, to tour them. We're not just Australian, going to venues across Australia and every state and territory now, through to something like Mel O'Callaghan, which will also tour, through to a show like 52 Artists 52 Actions, which has migrated through Instagram, online, and upcoming publication, an exhibition and a symposia, so there's lots of different ways for people to engage with what we do.

Tim Stackpool: Yes, well congratulations, Alexie, with all of that. Really appreciate your time, and thanks for joining us on Inside the Gallery.

Alexie Glass-K: A pleasure, and hope to see you soon inside the gallery.

Tim Stackpool: That's Alexie Glass-Kantor from ArtSpace, talking about 52 Artists 52 Actions, an expansive endeavour by any measure. Take a look at www.artspace.org.au and the exhibition in Sydney runs through until the 4th of August.

David Williams – The White Rabbit Collection (A Fairy Tale in Red Times)

- Tim Stackpool: The White Rabbit Gallery is iconic. Owned by Judith Neilson, the gallery exhibits selections from her collection of 21st Century Chinese contemporary art. It is one of the largest collections of its kind in the world, and actually thinking about it, it might be the largest private owned collection of Chinese contemporary art.
- Tim Stackpool: The White Rabbit celebrates 10 years this year. Now, the collection can be seen elsewhere, as the NGV, the National Gallery of Victoria, presents A Fairy Tale in Red Times: Works from the White Rabbit Collection. It includes pieces by 26 Chinese artists, curated by the White Rabbit Gallery's own David Williams, who joins us now on the podcast via WhatsApp.
- Tim Stackpool: David, thanks for your time.
- David Williams: You're very welcome. Thanks for the invite.
- Tim Stackpool: Now, David, the notion of this exhibit, actually taking items from an existing collection and then repurposing them, I guess in a way, and taking them to Victoria to a larger venue. How did that come about? Who approached who?
- David Williams: Well, it happened the middle of last year. Tony Ellwood from the NGV was visiting the gallery, and he came with the purpose of telling us about the winter masterpiece series, which obviously is focused on Chinese art, with the terracotta warriors, and also other work, and showing their artwork again.
- David Williams: They had an idea for an exhibition that was going to be using works from their collection, photography works from their collection. He suggested the idea of maybe borrowing some works from the White Rabbit to form a dialog with their works, and so that was sort of July, August of last year and you know that was a very casual chat, and I started putting together a list of works of mine that worked with what they were hoping to show. And then we went down in December, sort of, just for a casual chat to talk about what we've been thinking, and during the course of the day our involvement grew into the show that it became, so yeah it was quite organic, and its approach of just blending a few works to this terrific show with 28 artists now, so it's amazing.
- Tim Stackpool: It most certainly is, David, but that's a pretty short timeline. Did the whole thing become a little bit daunting?
- David Williams: It, no, it wasn't, because it's such a good opportunity and the spaces that the NGV have are so different to the White Rabbit Gallery itself, so to be able to work within rooms like those was really exciting, and it was a quick turn around. We've sort of been working on a number of shows in advance, so this was kinda of borrowing some works from that from future shows and putting them together with all the favourite works as well. So, it came together quite easily, it

was a really nice process. In December, when we came back from the visit I put together a really long, long list of works I thought would work really well, and then I went down in the beginning of January and had a discussion with their team and then came back and sort of put a short list together and an exhibition plan, and that's it, it came to that, it was a really great experience to tell you the truth.

Tim Stackpool: And was there very much discussion between the pieces you wanted to include and the pieces they wanted to include in Victoria, or did they give you carte blanche and away you went?

David Williams: Yeah, it was carte blanche. So it was really amazing Simon Maidment came up, they senior curator from NGV came up to Dangrove, which is the collection warehouse, just after we've been done in December and had a quick look around and we just sat down afterwards and it was amazing to just do whatever you want and there were there to help facilitators and, you know, it was amazing, and we only had one request Tony indicated pieces that he particularly liked and so we put that in as well, and basically that was it. So, it was just a really process, you know, we had obviously gone through the long list of things. There was some works we picked out when it was just going to be one show, and they stayed it was Zhu Jinshi's Ship of Time, which is amazing work, so they were really keen to get that and the few of the bigger works that had been shown in Australia, it was just a great experience putting it together.

Tim Stackpool: And how did you manage having to move those pieces so far? I mean, I'm guessing that many of them had only ever been seen and shown at the White Rabbit Gallery, and was it nerve wracking at all for you to load them up and have them transported all the way down to Victoria?

David Williams: Yeah, it was, that was all down to our collections team who did a remarkable job, so once the show had been finalised, you know, it was a big job for them putting all the works together, you know a lot of the works hadn't been shown before. One of them actually, virtually, came straight from China to the NGV, we had been in Sydney, but works like Zhu Jinshi's Ship of Time, we were going to have it in one of our shows about a year ago, but it was pulled at the last minute for space reasons. And so, for them to go down, and it was their time installing the work along with the artist's brother who came out to help them install. So, yeah, I think it was very daunting for them, they did a remarkable job, it was semi-trailers going up and down between Sydney and Melbourne for about two weeks. And then they went down to help unpack and all of that sort of construction work and things, so yeah, huge job for the collections team, but I think they enjoyed it as well. I hope they enjoyed it as much as us, it was such a great time to work with another gallery, especially someone like the NGV, it was a rewarding experience for everybody. You know Judith's thrilled with the exhibition and that's important so.

Tim Stackpool: And just on that, you mentioned Judith Neilson, and I'm just wondering in terms of the work you do and obviously you do work well together, but do you have to

step back and think when you're looking at art or curating art, and what would Judith think in this situation?

David Williams: We have big discussions, you know, before we went down to the NGV we had a lot of discussions about the works, but Judith's incredibly supportive of everything you do, and she just lets you fly and go other details of why this and this. But, all the works are from the collections so she, you know, obviously has a passion for anything that's selected, they're all, she doesn't have a personal favourite, but they're all her favourites, they're all her babies so to speak. So, she's just happy to have it shown and, you know, to a much wider audience than we could with White Rabbit, and our space is limited compared to what the NGV can offer.

Tim Stackpool: Sure.

David Williams: So its an amazing opportunity for the collection to be shown to such a huge audience and she's just so super excited about that.

Tim Stackpool: It is a very unique space, unique gallery, the White Rabbit, I'm just wondering when Judith acquires the artworks she sees how it may display in the White Rabbit Gallery, but how is it different when you take it to a different space? Like the National Gallery of Victoria?

David Williams: Yeah, it's quite amazing, when we see them in China they're often in studios and then to see them in the gallery, they tend to have a totally different feel and it's often quite surprising. So, seeing the works in we had already shown in the White Rabbit in a different space was really interesting for me as well and how they work in a different space, it was really interesting so you know, it was such a good experience, you know, I gave my ideas for the exhibition plan to the NGV, the curatorial team and the exhibition design team.

Tim Stackpool: Sure.

David Williams: And obviously they're much more aware of how the space works and things like that, so they did some fine tuning after that because they're so much more aware of how people move around the gallery and things like that, and even those things make a difference in how the work's viewed, you know, how people, where they are and where they stop at things and we've got a few works that we have shown 'Billennium Waves' which is a beautiful video work, and it looks amazing in a big space and I'd always wanted it there, to see it in a big space because when Judith and I first saw it in China it was in a museum which was almost like the size of an airport hangar, and it was intense, it was so, so beautiful, it was staggeringly beautiful.

David Williams: And then when we showed it at the White Rabbit, obviously space is limited, so we couldn't possible hoped to replicate that, but you know we did some things

with smoke and mirrors, and you know it was still really effective. But, yeah, great to see it with the Ship of Time in a big space again.

Tim Stackpool: Now having done this and taking such an extensive part of the White Rabbit collection and putting it into another venue with a whole lot more space, do you think this opens the door of opportunity for you to do more of that sort of stuff?

David Williams: We certainly hope so, you know Judith has always been very keen to lend to other institutions and it's been done on a smaller scale in the past, just you know, singular works or a handful of works going, we got a lot in New Zealand at the moment actually. But to have it all in show would be incredible, some of our more popular shows would be great to take around and just introduce to a new audience for the White Rabbit, and hopefully get people interested to come up to Sydney if they're interstate and have a look. I think, you know, the beauty of the show that's on at the NGV at the moment it's going to speak very well with the shows we will be having at the White Rabbit at the same time, the current show is very much about younger artists they're showing at the NGV, so it's a really nice discussion point. Then in September, we're having our 10th anniversary year this year, which is why the NGV worked really well as well. And so, in September our show will be, a sort of, a walk through of the first 10 years of the collection so it's very different again to what's being shown at the NGV so I think both these shows have a really nice style of, with the NGV shows, which is great.

Tim Stackpool: David, look, you have done a lovely job, the show in Victoria, A Fairy Tale in Red Times, is just superb. I certainly recommend anyone to go and take a look at it, and we really appreciate your time on the podcast.

David Williams: Thank you very much for your time.

Tim Stackpool: And that's David Williams from the White Rabbit Gallery, talking about A Fairy Tale in Red Times, currently underway at the way at the National Gallery of Victoria. It runs until the first week of October, if you need details you can go to the gallery's website: NGV.vic.gov.au. If you want to take a look at the White Rabbit Gallery itself the website is: whiterabbitcollection.org. And just quietly, the handmade dumplings from the teahouse there, are particularly recommended.