



SA Press Club  
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I'd like to commence by acknowledging that we meet here today on Kurna Land. This is more than an acknowledgement; it is recognition that for our society to flourish creatively we need to embrace this country's unique cultural and spiritual origins.

Today I am going to talk about;

1. The artistic revolution under way at the Art Gallery of South Australia
2. Why the city needs a world class contemporary, art centre
3. And how art can be part of the plan to create a more ambitious, confident and progressive Adelaide

What if I told you that I run a business? A business with assets worth over 1.3 billion dollars. One that employs 315 people and last year alone engaged with more 500 suppliers. The business has 800,000 customers per year and one third of those customers are tourists. Business partners include major organisations in Europe and throughout Asia.

It may be surprising to you to hear the art world described in these terms but the business of art in the twenty first century is potent and can make a significant difference to our cultural, economic and social well-being.

I'd like to start with my own story:

When I was teenager, I went to the Art Gallery of NSW to see an exhibition called *Gold of the Pharaohs*. I wasn't there as part of art excursion. At the time I didn't even know that art was for me. I was there because I was a history student and I loved history...I wanted to be an archaeologist! Maybe I watched too many Indiana Jones films?



While at the Art Gallery I saw a remarkable exhibition – it was like a window into another world. It provided a sensational portal into the past - into how people lived and what they believed in. It seemed like another world to me and I was drawn to it. I could see how art was this amazing time capsule that could take me to all these different places.

Art became this magical thing that could transport me to any place in the world.

My story is not dissimilar to those of hundreds of thousands of people who walk through our doors each year. Art gives us possibilities.

Let's begin with a look at how art has captivated other people's attention.

Take the world's best-known museum, the Musée du Louvre and its new regional second site, Louvre-Lens to show more of its collection. This new museum signals the realisation that a collection means nothing if left dormant in the basement.

Right now, the Louvre is re locating its Paris-based collection, some 220,000 works, and 200 kilometres north to Lens in the Calais region. This former coal mining town where the last mine closing in 1986, was known for one thing only – it boasted the tallest slag heap in Europe! The Mayor of the city has described the new gallery as a life line for the post industrial city. Lens and its new Louvre costs 150 million Euros to build and has forged a creative future for a region that has faced grave economic and social challenges.

Projected attendances for the Louvre Lens were at half a million– this was exceeded exponentially with almost one million visitors to the site in its first year. Keep in mind that this is a region whose entire population (including Lens) is around 250,000 people.

Imagine what this meant for the local economy – measure this in bed nights, cab fares and restaurant dinners...More significantly, the transformation in the sense of confidence and pride in this region is palpable. The Louvre now truly does belong to all of France. When I visited in 2015 I was one tourist among many, in a region that has never been identified with tourism.



The Louvre Lens phenomenon is but one example of several international cases of political and economic support for art led renewal. There is yet to be a compelling Australian case study for a public museum ...this case study needs to happen here in Adelaide.

Why do people want to visit art galleries? There has been a global upturn in art gallery visitation. We are not immune from this but we must not be complacent and assume it will just happen for us here in South Australia...we need to be creative agents of change and make it happen.

In 2010, 420,000 people visited the Art Gallery. I am happy to announce today an 86% increase with almost 800,000 visitors to the Gallery in the last year.

Let's look at that figure. Almost 230,000 were tourists from outside the state. This growth has been brought about through a national approach to programming and home grown offering – we are not in business of importing creativity.

With the support of private giving, from the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation and the Balnaves Foundation in particular, we have ramped up our Children's and Family programming now involving more than 90,000 children annually.

Young families now represent our single largest demographic. In 2010 it was the over 55s. Today it is our young audiences who occupy the line share of our visitation. We haven't lost contact with our over 55s – they've grown in number too.

Our major exhibitions have explored everything from Britain's favourite artist Turner to French Fashion, Aboriginal art from the desert and cutting edge contemporary art. There's one thing we cannot be accused of – and that is an artistic bias!

In 2013, 90,000 people visit Turner from the TATE, a curatorial partnership with the world's busiest Gallery – the Tate in London. 36 % were interstate tourists



Our flagship contemporary art exhibition – the Adelaide Biennial attracted 20,000 visitors in 2010. Earlier this year the 2016 event exceeded 220,000 visitors. 55,000 were from interstate. Our inaugural TARNANTHI Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Art involved 23 venues around the city, involved 1,000 artists and introduced 310,000 people to Indigenous art. The Gallery now runs the biggest Festivals in the festival state.

But art isn't always about numbers.

We come to art to find a sense of poetry, a sense of history, a sense of emotion as well as provocation...a sense of ourselves.

In a world of uncertainty and calamity, art can remind us that we are human.

In fact art may be the most human act of all.

It arouses our humanity...it calls us to action.

One example of this is the work of Belgian artist Berlinde De Bruckere whose work *We are all flesh* is comprised of two entwined horses hanging within the gallery.

This lightning rod has generated so much public debate both in and beyond the Gallery walls that we are reminded of art's power.

The Melrose Wing where the work now hangs is the most visited piece of real estate in the entire Gallery. Prior to the installation of this work only 20% of our audiences visited the Melrose Wing, today 80% of our visitors engage with this space.

This powerful work – like 98% of our collection - was funded by 23 passionate art loving individuals.

For every dollar that the state government provides we have been successful in matching it...and often exceeding it. I am happy to announce today that in the last financial year, the gallery has raised a record \$ 11.6 million from private giving.

Private philanthropy has been critical in building our collection and developing our audiences.



I have another announcement:

After completing a recent valuation, we can announce that the collection is valued at \$1 billion dollars. That's one billion dollars - the state's largest single asset. 98% of the collection has been gifted to the state from private individuals and families.

With a collection of 42,000 works of art and a gallery bursting at the seams, the current situation means that only 1.5% of the collection is visible at any given time. The Gallery is ripe for a rethink. This value is inert unless we act to make it work for the state. Let's make \$1 billion work for South Australia.

Imagine the potential for education, broad community engagement and year-round entertainment if the collection, currently inactive in storage, was made visible, accessible and useful.

Adelaide would be home to a new twenty-first century cultural destination where the narratives of Australian cultures – including Aboriginal, European and Asian cultures – could be experienced and shared.

Thousands of works of art, previously unseen or rarely circulated, could be exhibited and accessible to the broadest audience. At the moment, our collection sits in an anonymous storehouse that the public can't visit... I think that's a huge missed opportunity.

Imagine a collection representing the history of our civilisation working to make South Australia a magnet for education, entertainment and cultural tourism.

And I've got a deal for you - we don't have to buy it or make it, it's already here.

Art collections play a key role in defining and communicating who we are in the world but when hidden from view, their capacity for communication is at best limited. The best collections in the world are those with well-trodden pathways to their door. The best collections are those with contemporary currency.



This reimagining of what collections can do when liberated from storage has only just begun and Adelaide can lead the way. As a small and extremely liveable city, with a reputation for brave artistic statements, Adelaide's dream of art and culture-led renewal can be a reality.

Furthermore, Adelaide's strong tradition of cultural philanthropy creates an ideal environment for such innovation and for the forming of private and public partnerships.

This is the creative vision of Adelaide Contemporary.

The Art Gallery has proven its capacity to present the most compelling artistic programs; to significantly build new audiences; combining 'cutting edge' with excellence. Our ideas are home grown and we are the leaders in this State.

So what is Adelaide Contemporary?

It is more than a second site for the Art Gallery of South Australia.

As its name suggests Adelaide Contemporary encompasses contemporary art.

But more than that, it is about a contemporary attitude to art, education and entertainment – one that encompasses Aboriginal Australia and the state's collection.

It is a contemporary approach to defining a truly authentic cultural identity built from our own 135 year cultural legacy.

This city has done an excellent job of hosting and developing events and festivals with intense bursts of activity. To truly make a national and international creative impact we need a new permanent cultural anchor for the State.

Providing constant daily activity, 365 days of the year, nurturing regular visitation, attracting businesses like restaurants, cafes and hotels and driving economic activity...Adelaide Contemporary can do all of this and more.



The union of contemporary art and urban renewal has been a resounding success in bringing about economic and cultural transformation. Internationally, there are specific examples but ours is unique to our history and it plays to our strengths....and our intellectual ideas will drive it.

I think this state needs important symbols of progress for its own wellbeing.

We are all weary of listening to the fact we've got our unemployment rate growing and negatives about industry closures...and the clichés of propping up failed endeavours...

In Hobart at MONA (the Museum of Old and New Art) the private vision of David Walsh has led urban renewal through art. Within four years Walsh's vision has become one of Tasmania's major tourist attractions, providing extraordinary impetus for the State's economy.

While MONA is distinctly one individual's vision, Adelaide Contemporary is no carbon copy of what we've seen elsewhere. It is a bold idea, 135 years in the making that belongs to South Australia, collectively.

Adelaide Contemporary is also an "energy pill" – the medicine that the state needs to rediscover its confidence.

Immediately this project will create at least 1,000 construction jobs. In the medium term it will attract small businesses and a new tourism infrastructure.

In the long term it will create an important new tourist destination; an icon for the 21st century and a potent symbol of the state's future...one that is accessible to all of the community, every day.

It will encompass nationally and internationally significant projects, aiming to attract 500,000 in its first year, building a strong tourism cultural anchor ...one not seen in Adelaide since the inception of the Adelaide Festival.



There is a multitude of entrepreneurs, artists, designers and thinkers who are waiting to take risks and a project like Adelaide Contemporary will motivate them to commit to be more ambitious. Adelaide Contemporary will inspire people inside and outside of the state to think differently...to be optimistic.

We are not being greedy – this isn't a land grab. This is about putting our assets to work. The weak minded would think about flogging them off. Let's be courageous and make \$1 billion work for South Australia.

We want to create an environment where we might nurture the most creative here. Let's fast forward 20 years and imagine what Adelaide Contemporary has achieved.

Economic impact, creativity, cultural capital and most importantly confidence.