



INSIDE THE GALLERY PODCAST – APRIL 2019

Transcript of interviews:

Professor Mark Ledbury – Notre Dame

Vanessa Gillen – Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

John Klein – Artist Entrepreneur

PROFESSOR MARK LEDBURY – Notre Dame fire

- Tim Stackpool: First, we get to speak about the Notre Dame fire. As I mentioned in the intro, there was plenty of heartbreak at the site of perhaps the most famous cathedral in the world being consumed by flames. Worse still with thoughts of the priceless artwork contained within the cathedral, which raises amongst other things, the discussion of how priceless works of art should be exhibited and kept safe. Professor Mark Ledbury of the University of Sydney is a specialist in 18th and 19th-century European art. Being the director of the Power Institute, he enjoys the title of Power Professor of Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Sydney.
- Tim Stackpool: Professor, thanks so much for joining us.
- Mark Ledbury: Well, I'm absolutely delighted to be asked and I'm very interested to talk about Notre Dame.
- Tim Stackpool: Now, if it at all could be possible for the news out of Paris to get better, apparently quite a lot of the artwork from the cathedral was saved. And perhaps, only maybe up to 10% was lost beyond restoration.
- Mark Ledbury: It's remarkable in fact. The news that I heard by somebody who had been into the scene was that the three great rose windows are all substantially intact. One may need to have its glass taken out as a precautionary measure as they rebuild, but that's ... Those rose windows are some of the glories of Notre Dame and they sort of would be extremely difficult to replace, and that is just fantastic news. And, of course, the Virgin of the great late gothic stone statue, which is sort of carved out and said to also survive which is wonderful. Is a lovely late gothic statue, which everyone will probably know, sort of rather iconic of the Virgin and Child. The Child, obviously, as a [inaudible] holding the orb of the world. It's a beautiful and elegant piece, and it apparently has survived.
- Tim Stackpool: Purely by luck, I suppose that so many of the works and relics had already been removed previously because of existing restoration work.
- Mark Ledbury: Yes. Exactly, and because they of all the roof restorations ... I mean, we can't be entirely joyful about a terrible fire that ripped ... I mean the very sort of forest bolting, there's massive wooden structures of the roof that were ... I mean they were 13th-century beams in it. Not all of them original, but that has been destroyed and we can't ... We all saw the heap of charred remains of where the altar or the temporary altar was. That's a very chilling sight.
- Tim Stackpool: Yes, unfortunately, but the other thing we must remember is that the modern Notre Dame, if it can be called that, is a result of previous destruction and restoration over the centuries.

Mark Ledbury: Indeed, and a demolished church was at its heart. I mean there was a church on the site before the cathedral but also, I think we do well to remember that substantially the Notre Dame that we see now is a product of the extraordinary and sometimes criticised, but rather remarkable, renovation work that was done in the 19th-century by Viollet-le-Duc and La Sus, and that was done between sort of the 1840s and the 1860s. The restoration of those fantastic portals on the West front, most of that statuary was entirely destroyed either by the brutal need for the king brought in, in the 1770s, all by the revolution.

Mark Ledbury: It's so much of what we understand of Notre Dame is in fact ... You could argue that the greatest restorer of Notre Dame was Victor Hugo because his imaginative reconstruction of the importance and the pertinence of the building as a symbol of Paris and the spiritual strength and a sanctuary. That really set an imaginative campaign going, which led the 19th-century to sort of the 19th-century restorers to be so passionate. In a way, that has survived. I mean many people will know Notre Dame almost as an imaginative structure.

Mark Ledbury: You can ask many people, "Oh, you know Notre Dame?" "Yeah, I've been to Paris many times and I've ..." But then you say, "Have you ever been inside? Can you remember what's inside?" A lot of the people will not be able to give you a precise rendering of what's inside because Notre Dame for them is a kind of symbol before it's an actual structure. Now, of course, that doesn't mean that it isn't an absolute marvel of a structure. And thank goodness the great stone and lead and glass that has survived it all and it's marvellous.

Mark Ledbury: But I do think that we have to remember that cathedrals are constantly worked on and constantly under attack from flood or incident or fire even, and that it really, Notre Dame will be rebuilt in our 21st century way, hopefully, with the same kind of, and even greater, attention to detail than the 19th-century restoration. Of course, it will provoke many issues which will be familiar to museum and heritage people all over. What do you restore? Where do you restore back to? What is the Notre Dame we are trying to restore? That be the key questions.

Tim Stackpool: Art is all around us professor, but I'm wondering if after this, do you think there'll be a rethinking of where the appropriate place is to exhibit art and whether a centuries-old cathedral, for example, with its vulnerability should be considered as a place to house any kind of priceless and irreplaceable work?

Mark Ledbury: Well, I really, really believe that we should understand many of these artworks as part of their liturgical and multimedia environment and it will be a dreadful thing if we sort of gutted out of some sort of health and safety reason, the sort of spirit of cathedrals. Because many of those ... the beautiful artworks in wood and stone were created for liturgical reasons. They take part in the services to take them out of the great building container would be, what I think, be terrible. Even if we have to live with just the risk of vulnerability, which is of course, everywhere.

Mark Ledbury: In a way, this fire was terrible and I'm sure there are people that are asking questions about the safety of the work site, et cetera, et cetera. But actually, we forget in a way that destruction is everyday part of our understanding of monuments and that in the past few years, we've lost fantastic, equally ancient, equally significant monuments in Aleppo, in Syria. And that in the present Paris, they've lost an entire palace. The Tuileries Palace no longer exists, a victim of the great upheaval of the 1870s. The Hôtel de Ville, just near the cathedral, it's in a complete reconstruction of the medieval Hôtel de Ville, which was entirely destroyed also in insurrection. I think that, in a sense, artworks bear witness to human struggle, to human bloodiness, to human warfare, but also to the accidents and the inevitabilities of contingency in life. I don't think we should try to spare art from all contingency. I really don't.

Tim Stackpool: Sure, but even given all of that, what do you think would be the greatest loss suffered by this fire?

Mark Ledbury: I'm a historian mostly of painting and some great 17th century paintings, which were given by guilds to the church in the 17th centuries, a result of the kind of competition and as sort of which on May Day every year, they're known as the Mays of Notre Dame and they represent the acts of the Apostles, some of them. There were 12 in the church and I suspected, unfortunately, if the fire didn't get them, the water that was sprayed all over to douse the fire, would have done some bad. I don't think, while I've been mostly very optimistic, there are things that I do regret. Some really genuine and important parts, the history of Notre Dame as a working church that will have been lost.

Tim Stackpool: So coming back, looking at it from a modern perspective though, and I'm not suggesting you're any type of building safety specialist, but are you just as surprised as many of us that there weren't better fire mitigation processes in place?

Mark Ledbury: Look, to be really honest, I couldn't comment any kind of authority on ... It's easy to say after the fact, "Well, you should've done this." I suspect that things were in place but that accidents are ... you're never having them until you're having them really, as I think as, to quote Winnie the Pooh, whatever. You don't really know how to prevent every sort of accident. But, of course, people will be looking into this.

Mark Ledbury: I mean what I would say is that France is beautifully equipped because it has a national system of training five-year training schemes of conservators. They all go to the (conservation school) and they train up for many years. They have a competitive entrance system. So there will be artists and restorers and people skilled in the kind of techniques that are able to really apply themselves to a fantastic sort of mitigation of the damage.

Tim Stackpool: Sure, and given that, I guess there's no better place than Paris for such a disaster to occur, if I can put it crudely.

Mark Ledbury: In some ways, yes. The French have not neglected the importance of artisanship and they have a very good and systematic approach to conservation and heritage. Now, different authorities may be slightly better or worse as all of this, but I have great faith in the ability to produce, you know ... Viollet-le-Duc, however criticised he was, sort of a genius in some ways, historically informed, practical, thoughtful, architectural restorer. I bet you there are those in the 21st century who are his equivalent and they may be currently thinking about how they're going to help.

Tim Stackpool: Do you have equal faith in President Macron's promise to rebuild the cathedral within five years?

Mark Ledbury: (Laughter) ... We know how long projects take and we know that the first rule is those projects are unlikely to only last the short space of time. I think Macron's five-year promise is almost ... it's wishful thinking. But in 15 years, I do suspect that the cathedral will regain an enormous amount of its luster.

Tim Stackpool: Professor, thanks so much for your time on the podcast.

Mark Ledbury: Not at all. Great speaking with you.

Tim Stackpool: That's Professor Mark Ledbury of the University of Sydney giving us us perhaps a more optimistic take on the fire at Notre Dame. If you ever get the chance to see the professor give a public presentation on his specialties, I thoroughly recommend you take the opportunity.

VANESSA GILLEN – Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

- Tim Stackpool: And we're off to Cairns. The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, referred to locally as CIAF. It celebrates 10 years this year, and Vanessa Gillen is the general manager of the fair. Thanks for joining us, Vanessa.
- Vanessa Gillen: No problem. It's nice to be here.
- Tim Stackpool: Now, these three days of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, they are huge, in fact you have a little bit of news regarding the three days. But first of all, tell us what we can expect?
- Vanessa Gillen: Well, this year is our 10th anniversary which is such an amazing milestone for the event, which began from government in 2009 as a very small thing and is now features about three, four hundred dancers, performers and artist every year, and hosts about 50 thousand people through the event over a period of about three or four days. This year we just decided that we are going to officially say that the event is a five day event, which it really normally just the art fair itself and the art market open over three days. But prior to that we built a plethora of lots of information fair and exhibitions and all sorts of other events surrounding the original art fair.
- Vanessa Gillen: So, for example, this year in 2019 we have an art symposium which is going to be a fascinating day looking at artists and art and the culture of Far North Queensland and Queensland and the Queensland artists specifically as an art movement. And that's going to be on Wednesday 10th. We've now decided, okay, we're going to officially say that we open, it'll be from the 10th to the 14th of July 2019.
- Tim Stackpool: That's great news. And, it means the whole event has continued to grow over the four years that you've been at the helm. But, do you think even with the extended dates, you're still cramming a whole lot of stuff in?
- Vanessa Gillen: Yeah. There's so much that goes on because, as I say, we started as an art fair but one of the things I've learned from living up here, and with my colleague who's the artistic director Janina Harding, is that our culture, Indigenous culture is not just about visual art, it's about everything. So that's the wonderful thing is that we are able to bring to people all the music, the traditional dance, contemporary dance, film, theatre, music, song, everything. And we've got a really special event for this year, for the 10th anniversary which we've never done before. And actually hasn't been done in Queensland before, which is a ... it's a big choral production, as in choirs not coral off the Barrier Reef.
- Vanessa Gillen: And so, we have gone out into various communities across both the Cape and the Torres Strait, and it will be about a hundred singers on stage on the Saturday night of CIAF, who are going to perform. So there's a group of

Aboriginal singers from the [inaudible] communities from Hope Vale, [inaudible] communities from Yarrabah, Mossman Gorge, that area, who are all going to come together. And they're going to sing in their languages.

Vanessa Gillen: Then we have two islands in the Torres Strait who are going to be singing in their languages. And then, all of them come together to sing some songs in probably English or a language that they choose that they will share. I think it's going to be amazing.

Tim Stackpool: That certainly sounds lovely. I think you're right, just looking at the events and describing the event as an Aboriginal art fair only, it does injustice to the entirety of the culture. But there are so many facets that you need to curate, how do you demarcate that, how do you cross over between the different disciplines of Aboriginal culture at this event?

Vanessa Gillen: The curation that we do is really in relation to the art. So we curate in the art fair itself in the sense that we try and define the work that is the best work, I guess. And we work each year, during the time that we're not producing CIAF we're working closely with art centres and artists to guide and direct a little bit on where they're going. So that they might be developing works in ceramics or they might be developing work in photography. We do try and help guide a little bit, and part of that has been we introduced the CIAF Art Awards two years ago, so this will be the third year.

Vanessa Gillen: And so, we have an award for excellence, we have an award for photography. New this year is a 3D award for sculpture because we're conscious that a lot more artists are now dealing with and working in ceramics. And then, we've got an innovation award, so that's exciting to see artists that are working in other areas like Ghost Nets and things like that where it's an unusual medium that they're working in.

Vanessa Gillen: I guess as far as the music and the dance and things, we don't curate it in a sense other than making sure that we have equal Torres Strait Island and Aboriginal performance so that everybody gets an opportunity. It's both cultures, and I guess that's what's unique about being up here in Far North Queensland as a state that we do actually have both these very strong Indigenous cultures.

Tim Stackpool: So calling this event an art fair, do you think that falls short these days? Is there any talk of renaming the event to better described what actually happens?

Vanessa Gillen: We have talked about it, but I think we're going to keep it because everyone ends up knowing ... I mean everyone calls it CIAF anyway, so whether it's the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, or the Cairns Indigenous Art Festival, it's known fondly as CIAF and so maybe it doesn't matter, because people know that it is just more now than the visual art.

Tim Stackpool: Vanessa, there's always plenty of artistic temperament, if I can put it that way, to deal with this when you're putting any sort of creative purpose together, whether it's an event or an exhibition or a celebration of culture. But in a practical sense, have there been times for you, under your watch, where the politics, for want of a better description, has become strained? Have you had to tread lightly at some point?

Vanessa Gillen: Look, and I don't know that it ever gets like that. We just have great relationships with the art centres and the artists and the councils. There's never, ever been an issue or anything. I talk about it as such a joyful opportunity to work in this field where you have a group of ... so if you're working with artists and performers, so it's the happy side things. That's the positive, that's what we're all about, so I've never felt a sense of any of that politics or any of the having to deal with any of that negativity.

Tim Stackpool: It's terrific to hear that, Vanessa. And moving on, have you generally seen a change in the overall local attitude to Aboriginal culture in Cairns, perhaps due to the event, the recognition that's received due to this fair?

Vanessa Gillen: Yeah. I do feel that there has been a change. I guess I approached CIAF as a way of educating people. Prior to my job here at CIAF I actually managed the Yarrabah Arts Centre which is just outside of Cairns, and it's the biggest Indigenous group in Australia, the biggest Indigenous community. I worked over there for three years and ran that art centre, so I had that understanding of what it's like to work with the artists and producing the art and coming to CIAF, and people's expectations of what Indigenous art was in Queensland. We'd have a lot of people who would turn up and say, "Where are all the dot paintings?" And that kind of thing because they're thinking of Northern Territory, Western Australian art, and Queensland art is really different.

Vanessa Gillen: I always then, when I started four years ago at CIAF, felt that CIAF is an important platform, both for the artists but also for visitors to understand that Indigenous art from different regions varies hugely. And you look at the Torres Strait Islanders, well their main skill, and it's incredible work that they do, is in lino print. Now, I've never seen anyone else in Australia do the kind of lino print work that they do. So I think CIAF has become a really important platform for that education, and you then see the uptake from people.

Vanessa Gillen: We have a group of collectors and curators who come every year. The kind of work that gets bought and collected in all the main institutions is absolutely fantastic. You get all the curators and all sorts of stuff, it's also gone on to have big international exposure, exhibitions all over the world now. And all of that's actually come out of that exposure at CIAF.

Tim Stackpool: The choral presentation that you mentioned, obviously a must see, but is there still something in the art or the culture or a performance that you'd love to bring to the event but has still eluded you?

Vanessa Gillen: Yeah. Absolutely. For me, it's sculpture. I'm a Sydney girl originally, so Sculpture by the Sea has always been something that I wanted to create here, and we were going to call it Sculpture on the Inlet. We did actually apply for funding for this year and didn't get it. That is still eluding me, but we'll get there one day. Yeah. Still to come.

Tim Stackpool: I think that would be great to see. Now, before we wrap up, just give us the details again for anyone wanting to come along to the event?

Vanessa Gillen: Sure. It's CIAF, CIAF.com.au is our website. We officially launch our program on Thursday 2nd May. There's three ticketed events, so that's our opening night, the fashion and the big choral production which is called Cultural Heights, they go on sale on 3rd May. But, the rest of it is free, and I guess that's a great thing about CIAF is that most of it is a free event. And for those people that are listening, do come and immerse yourself and just learn and share because it's really extraordinary experience.

Tim Stackpool: Vanessa, thanks so much for speaking with us on Inside the Gallery.

Vanessa Gillen: Thank you so much. Bye.

Tim Stackpool: And as Vanessa said, if you want to check out those dates or head up to Cairns for the Indigenous Art Fair, it is a great event, take a look online at ciaf.com.au.

JOHN KLEIN – Artist Entrepreneur

- Tim Stackpool: Entrepreneurship in art. It is a tough subject to navigate as sometimes being creative and making a buck out of it can be viewed as being a sell out, I guess. Nobody wants to be a starving artist, and if you can create an income out of your creative expression then so be it. Recently while following a number of artists on Instagram, I was taken by the work of John Klein. The prolific and extensive nature, not only of his art, but also of his extended reach, his various facets, and the way he brings his images to the market, actually. Worthwhile having a chat, I thought. John, thanks so much for joining us on Inside the Gallery.
- John Klein: Thank you very much for having me.
- Tim Stackpool: The past 12 months for you as an artist just seem to have exploded. Give us a bit of an idea of what's been happening.
- John Klein: I've been doing a lot of things actually. I've been doing a lot of group shows at different galleries across Sydney. I've been entering a lot of art prizes. I've also moved into a slightly new direction in that I'm now creating repeat patterns, and I'm licensing my work. That's something completely new and different for me. I've actually got a business coach who's helping me with that side of things, because it is really quite new. I'm trying to get my head around how to make that business model work, I suppose. Most artists are not very business savvy, but I like it to have both sides working, both the creative and the business side. If you want to try and survive, you obviously need to make money. That's kind of important. Yeah, that's kind of what I've been doing.
- John Klein: In terms of group shows I to exhibit quite a bit with a gallery in Northbridge called Gallery 307, which is a great little gallery there. I've also exhibited at the Milk Factory in Bowral, which is also a lovely, lovely gallery down there. Right now, I'm exhibiting at KAB Gallery in Terrigal. I'm also exhibiting in Gallery 307, so it's all happening.
- Tim Stackpool: It certainly is, but previously you have been a finalist and a winner in a few competitions?
- John Klein: Yeah, I've been in quite a few prizes over the years. I've been in the Mosman Art Prize a couple of times. I've been in Hunters Hill Art Prize, Lane Cove Art Prize and so on. Also, last year I was in the Kennedy Prize in Adelaide, which is kind of almost equivalent to their Archibald Prize. It's kind of their most prestigious prize in Adelaide. I also was a semifinalist in the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize, which is the richest prize out of all the prizes in Australia. I think it's up to \$150,000 now. That's a really tough one to even reach that sort of finalist stage. That's been pretty good. The Archibald, I have not cracked yet. I have actually entered it five times. This is the fifth time that I've entered. This year, I have

painted Nancye Hayes, who is a musical theatre legend in this country. She's been working in since the 1960s. That was an amazing experience for me. I've always admired her as a performer, and it was great to have that opportunity to paint her. She was pretty happy with the painting, so that means I'm happy. If your subject's happy as an artist, you're happy.

Tim Stackpool: John there seems to be a certain level of ambition there. I'm wondering if that has intensified over the past few years?

John Klein: Absolutely. I have painted all of my life, however, I didn't actually start to show my work until 2012. It's quite late in life, actually. The last couple of years, absolutely, it has ramped up big time. It's become quite a passion for me and pretty all consuming. My father actually was an artist and he studied at East Sydney Tech, which is now the National Art School in the 1930s. I guess he instilled in me a love of art. My son's actually just completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Honours actually, at Sydney College of the Arts. I think he's also very creative. I guess it's in the genes in the family.

Tim Stackpool: Now, in terms of your maturity, and you mentioned that it wasn't until you were older that you began showing your art.

John Klein: Yes.

Tim Stackpool: Do you think that assisted you in terms of your greatest success and your greater relevancy recently in the market?

John Klein: Yeah, I think that's probably true. In previous roles I've worked in marketing and I've worked in the arts. I worked at NIDA for five years, for example, looking after the marketing of NIDA, and the Opera House, and various other arts institutions. Having, I guess, the sort of the marketing skills and the arts administration skills certainly have helped me to market myself as an artist.

Tim Stackpool: Would you have done as well as you feel you've done without your business coach?

John Klein: I think having a business coach for me, and specifically for art, has been very important, because he's encouraged me to explore other ways to, I guess, not to say it as a dirty word, but to monetise the art. By that I mean, licensing of images and then using elements from paintings to create repeat patterns. Obviously when you do a painting and you sell it, you've made your money on that one sale. If that image is then able to be licensed for other purposes, then obviously you can continue to drive an income from it. That's kind of really important, I think, for sustainability, being an artist and actually trying to pay bills, and so on. Yeah, that's it. That area has been growing for me.

John Klein: I'm collaborating at the moment, with a Biopack who have created an art series of compostable takeaway cups, which is pretty great. There's a really lovely

environmental message there. They've combined art, which has a bit of an environmental theme, onto a compostable takeaway cup. That was a really nice project that I've been working on, and my artwork will be seen on that later this year. I'm also working with another company called The Artist's Label, who work with artists to create scarves. They work with artists all around the world and create this amazing collection of scarves, which they change seasonally. That's another project I'm working on. There's lots of little projects like that going on in the background.

John Klein: I guess the other thing that's coming up for me later on this year, doing an exhibition at ARO Gallery, which is in East Sydney, just behind the Sydney Museum, Australian Museum actually. I'm doing, it's called Culture Crash, and it's an exhibition with two other artists, Gabby Malpas and Mellissa Read-Devine. The whole theme is around the merging of East and West. In my work, I'm looking at that through contemporary still life. The other artists are also looking at similar things, but in their own style and looking at their own different subject matters. I went to China last year and I found a lot of inspiration from the art and particularly the ceramics and things that I saw there. In this exhibition, which is on in October, November, a lot of Chinese ceramics will be coming through. I'm kind of blending those with Australian flowers and also Australian birds. It's interesting combination of themes.

Tim Stackpool: Yes. It seems you have pulled a few of your disciplines together.

John Klein: Yep.

Tim Stackpool: You have so much coming up, but what is your nirvana, what's your golden goal? What would that be?

John Klein: Look, I suppose, the Archibald's the big one. That's the one that gives you the kudos. That's the one that helps elevate you in the eyes of the general public, and also the art community. Obviously, I'd love to be hung in that exhibition. I guess that's something that I'm striving for. It's a bit of a lottery. They get about 900 entries roughly every year. They hang maybe 40 maybe 50 at tops. The odds are not great. However, hopefully one day I'll get hung in that show. I suppose that would be something that I'm definitely striving for. I think just to continue to work, and to have people appreciate what you do, and actually buy your work, actually appreciate it enough to part with their money to purchase a work.

John Klein: I think that's extremely gratifying, because as an artist, if you're in your studio working, it's quite a solitary occupation actually. The only time you're showing your work is when you do an exhibition or I suppose in interacting with people who've come to the exhibition. If you're getting great feedback and if people actually purchase the work, well, that's extremely gratifying. I guess that's something that's important to every artist.

Tim Stackpool: Well John, it's been great to hear about how you approach your art. Thanks for your time and I certainly hope with so much coming up that you get enough sleep.

John Klein: (Laughter)...It's a bit like that. I actually like painting at night too, so yeah, more sleep would be good. Yeah, it's great to chat with you today, and thanks very much for having me on your program, and good luck with it all.

Tim Stackpool: If you want to take a look at the loads of John's work, head to johnklein.com.au, that's Klein spelled K-L-E-I-N. That's johnklein.com.au.