



INSIDE THE GALLERY PODCAST FEBRUARY 2020

Transcript of interviews:

Matthew Sleeth – A Drone Opera

Assoc Prof Lizzie Muller – University of NSW

Joram Van Der Starre – The Art T Gallery

Matthew Sleeth – A Drone Opera

Tim Stackpool:

A Drone Opera, which according to originator Matthew Sleeth was always imagined as a sensory experience for an audience to encounter often abstracted ideas like total surveillance, military violence or our fear and fetishisation of new technologies. The two week installation of A Drone Opera at Lyon Housemuseum Galleries in Kew in Victoria is a cinematic installation of the work. It features two monumental 66 panel LED screens mounted on trusses and presented as sculptural objects, kind of evoking a rock concert with four speaker stacks to amplify the sound. The multichannel installation occupies the entire central gallery of the Lyon Housemuseum Galleries and is on show for a limited time from the 14th to the 29th of March. And Matthew is on the line using WhatsApp. Thanks for joining us on Inside The Gallery

Matthew Sleeth:

Oh, pleasure.

Tim Stackpool:

Now, A Drones Opera, there seems to be a lot of focus in the content on surveillance and technology and to a certain extent the fear that that can evoke. Was there a particular time in your history or in the history of the world that motivated you to create this piece?

Matthew Sleeth:

I guess the project has had a long history. It was originally a gallery project, an idea I was going to do with my gallery in New York while I was living there, and it really came more from an interest in camera movement, and I sort of became interested in drones through an interest in camera movement. A lot of our previous video works are about moving cameras around on motorbikes or steady cams, or other ideas, sort of a choreography of camera movement. But I've always been interested in the way the military co-ops technology or develops technology and its relationship to a civilian use of that. Also what it really means for all of us when everything's developed by the military, so the internet and drones, and radar, and everything else. So there wasn't really a real moment.

Matthew Sleeth:

The original project was a drone in a gallery. The gallery was going to let me put two canvases at each end, Claire Oliver in New York, quite a long gallery, and it was going to be a canvas at either end, and the drones would fly around as a performance for the opening night, and they would paint with paintball guns as you did it, and then the mess would stay up and this is a long time, maybe 2010 when it was still very new. We've got a long way down the track in it and then the gallery was told it was illegal and they weren't allowed to do that. You're not allowed to arm drones in America unless you're the government of course. So they were going to do it in Australia or I was going to do it as part of the new media festival here. And then we ran into the same problem. Slightly different problem, but around arming drones, and then it sort of morphed into more of a...

Matthew Sleeth:

This was sort of, again, more of a gallery idea that was going to have a band, that was going to have music. And then the narrative came from wanting to change it to a longer piece. So the person that ran

the new media festival that I wanted to do it at was Jonathon Parsons, who then became the director of Experimenta. He said, "Look, let's do it now, but let's do it through Experimenta." But it was going to be previously free, and so this one was, "Well, you've got to sell tickets and it's got to be longer." So I was like, "Oh shit." So I went away and thought, "What's the narrative that drives that and what's the way to contain the aesthetic? Can the formal elements that I was interested in and fuse them with the conceptual and narrative elements I was interested in."

Matthew Sleeth:

So the idea of surveillance, relationship with technology, and also military violence at the time was very prevalent. With Kate Richards and Jonathan Parsons and Robin Fox and Susan Frykberg, the composer came up with this idea of a triangle that would contain those ideas, and each point of the triangle would be featured in each scene, and all points of the triangle would be contained in each scene, but one would be privileged. So those three points would be this new reality of constant surveillance we're all under, and that was sort of around the time of Snowden and the revelations that actually everything was being collected, and the idea of military violence, and I guess that period that this was being developed, which was 2012, 13, 14, is the heart of Obama's drone program.

Matthew Sleeth:

And just always being aware of a society where we're always being watched. And then the third one was, drones are a great metaphor for talking about our relationship and our fetishization and our fear of all technology. I can remember at that time everyone... Drones were becoming more of a thing in the news as well, so you would hear all these things on the news about people being terrified of drones and drones were going to be watching us when we were sunbathing naked in our backyard. And that kept coming up.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah, I remember.

Matthew Sleeth:

It's so good to live somewhere where everyone's worst fear is they imagine themselves sunbathing in the backyard and there's a drone. So all those ideas converged and that time converged to be the beginnings of drones, the drone program in military violence, and the Snowden revelations that we're always been watched.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. So now you transformed that into a physical exhibition and installation. Can you describe what the visitor experience is when they come to see this?

Matthew Sleeth:

The first iteration of the project, when it was commissioned by Experimenta was a live performance. So it was in a theater and you would come in in the dark and you were placed in a cage and you would feel safety, essentially, but also to increase anxiety of the work, and you would watch the performance. And so that was with some amazing collaborators. I just knew I would never get everybody together again to tour, it was so hard with everyone's schedules even making that one season work. I also thought it was difficult and technically really difficult to do, and took a lot of trust from everyone involved. And we had

three amazing singers, opera singers who are professional opera singers who all had really packed schedules as well.

Matthew Sleeth:

So we made a decision that rather risk doing it again not in a way that we were happy with. We would make a video installation, that was how it lived on. An Experimenta were very supportive of that. So very early on, two years out, we knew we would do that. I had two feature films cinematographers, Sherwin Akbarzadeh and Dave McKinnar, that I'd worked with in the past had filmed everything from development rehearsals, dress rehearsals, all the way through to all the performances with multiple cameras as you would film a feature film. Just this was the set, they were the actors. But we were very determined that it didn't become documentation of a performance, that it was really actually a video installation that was the world of the drone opera.

Matthew Sleeth:

So the world that we created visually, the lasers, the music. So the video installation includes work from the development, from rehearsals, and things that didn't end up in the performance to be stuff that was part of the whole process. So it's really the video installation, the process of making that, and then we realized at the end was anything that was from the performance really took you out of that world, the cinematic world, so there's quite a lot of VFX to remove the audience, remove anything that is clearly theater.

Tim Stackpool:

Wow. Given the length of time that you put this together, are we talking about a development period of six or seven years? Is that how long it has taken to actually get to this point now?

Matthew Sleeth:

To this point, it's about that. It took two or three to get the live performances up, and that was 2015, and then just every year we would miss out on one grant. We've had six grants. It was also part of Arthouse's program, and that side of the Spartan program for us, and then every year it would...

Tim Stackpool:

Fall over, yeah.

Matthew Sleeth:

Fall over. So in the end Experimenta just came to the party and said, "Look, we'll just make this happen," and that's how it happened. And then it's taken five years to get it to this stage, I guess. I mean it was four, really, because it was Carriageworks last year.

Tim Stackpool:

Is this presentation the ultimate depiction of this piece of art? Do you feel now that you've completed it with this?

Matthew Sleeth:

Yeah, absolutely. The kind of idea of this thing, in a way, and how it was always meant to end. The reason it took so long was two reasons. One was it was really hard to edit and really hard to make

because there wasn't a narrative logic to it, where one thing caused the other. It is roughly the sequence that the performances were in and the scenes happened in, as such, but that's not exactly, not everything's in. There is a short film festival version that was at the Sydney Film Festival last year. So I really wanted to take it as far as I could to say... I'm never going to get a chance... It's unlikely I'm getting a chance to do a project where I'm going to be able to see what a work requires in front of a live audience and the way an audience responds with a body in space in front of them. Thinking about what that needs when you transform that to a gallery where you can walk around and you can come and go and you have multiple screens, and then thinking about the what actually does an audience need in terms of duration and narrative when they're in a cinema locked into a seat. So that was a really wonderful thing to be able to think about and experiment with.

Tim Stackpool:

Considering You know you are an artist and not necessarily a songwriter or a musician or known to be that, how did you come about getting the opera to come together in this piece?

Matthew Sleeth:

I'm not someone who has a lot of experience with opera. In fact, I hadn't been to one before this, but I knew I wanted to do something that had a human conductor of the emotion. So when we started developing the work, it was actually with ballet dancers and we were going to have dances and the drones. When we were doing development, it didn't quite work, and the the dancers in a way somehow did something very similar to the drones. So had the idea to try opera as something Baroque and intense and as full on as the drones and the laser sets, but a totally different emotional register. And that actually ended up working really well. So I worked with Susan Frykberg, which was a wonderful collaboration. She's a experimental musician and an opera composer from New Zealand.

Matthew Sleeth:

We came up with this idea that we would find the libretto from the actual drone pilots. So we found these CIA training videos of how you train drone pilots, these quite camp videos of actors pretending to be drone pilots in fake sets and stuff. It's actually really funny. A lot of the libretto is taken from the call and response way that drone pilots are trained and the kind of almost sporting kind of rhythms that they have. They almost sounds like sports commentators. So when they're talking about what they're saying, it's this kind of quite removed but almost war and the spectacle of it. And that's what's used through the libretto. And Susan's done a remarkable job. It's been a really amazing collaboration. I've really enjoyed it.

Matthew Sleeth:

So from a performance perspective, also on the last day of the exhibition, we got two musicians that are doing a response to the work. So with the gallery we were talking about how we might be able to incorporate live performance into the installation without maybe simply repeating some of the things that are already in installation, like the opera singing. So I asked two performers who I have a lot of respect for, experimental musician and guitarist Dave Brown, who performs under Candle Snuffer, and Nat Grant who's a drummer and percussionist to each come along with to a performance on the last night and respond with the video installation. So the video installation will be playing with its normal soundtrack and each of them will do a performance that is a response, either a noise guitar response, or a percussion response to the work.

Tim Stackpool:

And where do you take it from here, Matthew? Do you pack it up and put it away as part of something you've done in your life now or take it on tour even further?

Matthew Sleeth:

Yeah, this feels like the end for me. It feels like everything that I've wanted to explore in this and everything, all the ideas that we started discussing. I've taken as far as they can now and yeah, time to move on.

Tim Stackpool:

Well, it sounds like quite the job, Matthew, and congratulations on having the tenacity and the patience to get it to this point. I look forward to having a look at this and thank you so much for joining us on the podcast.

Matthew Sleeth:

Thanks. That was a lot of fun.

Tim Stackpool:

That's Matthew Sleeth talking about his drone opera underway at the Lyon Housemuseum Galleries in Kew from the 14th until the 29th of March. Head to lyonhousemuseum.com.au for more details.

ASSOC PROF. LIZZIE MULLER - UNSW

Tim Stackpool:

And we're talking about the federal government's vanishing of the art within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. No mention of the arts at all. That became official on February 1st and we discussed this on the podcast late last year, but what further impact can we expect from this and how are current students of the arts now managing their aspirations? Associate Professor Lizzie Muller from the University of New South Wales is a curator specialising in audience and collaborative cultures, and she joins us now via WhatsApp. Associate Professor, thanks for joining us on the podcast.

Lizzie Muller:

Thank you for having me.

Tim Stackpool:

Now in terms of your position on this, what's your take on the significance of removing the arts own portfolio and how will this affect the arts sector?

Lizzie Muller:

So for me, the removal of the name is a highly symbolic act, and of course, those of us working in the sector know that symbolism can be very powerful. I do think it's representing a broader view in the government that arts and culture are not a top line issue. And I think that that view has been reflected and been shown to us over the past couple of years as the kind of funding and public investment in the arts has been reduced, but also in a kind of a lack of any really coherent or strong policy around the arts. So in that sense, I don't think it should have been a surprise, though I know that many of us in the sector were very surprised that it was thinkable that the name could be disappeared in that way. But actually I think the signs were already there.

Tim Stackpool:

And so overt, in a way, too. Although the government has said that it's business as usual. It's just a change in the name. But are you taking that just as lip service?

Lizzie Muller:

Oh no, I think I absolutely agree with them. It is business as usual. And I think business as usual, in this current set of government priorities, is not great for the arts. So I think that businesses usual, as it has been performed and demonstrated over the last few years, shows a kind of a lack of interest in what culture can do for society and how culture contributes to the broader public. And I think also a lack of an understanding, sadly, of the great importance of investing in the cultural sector and the returns that you get from that investment. So I think business as usual is probably a really great way of putting it. I think what that signals is unfortunately there's going to be an ongoing lack of the kind of brave, fresh, innovative thinking that is always needed in cultural policy.

Lizzie Muller:

So, and we know that when governments put culture at the heart of their agenda, we see really exciting and innovative new ways to support the arts emerging. And those ways don't necessarily need to be more expensive. They just need to reflect the changing world, the role that culture can play in helping societies adapt to that changing world. And when we see those kind of exciting policies coming out from governments, we also tend to see an upswing in cultural activity and a great increase in social well-being, but also in the kind of perception of that country overseas. So we know that it's also really great in terms of our international profile. So very sadly, I think it will be business as usual. And I think that that's not great, either for the arts nor for the broader society.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah, that's a great way of laying it out on the table. But is the arts, to a conservative government, somewhat of a threat? I mean, why is there a lack of interest? Why is there a lack of support?

Lizzie Muller:

That's a really huge question and probably a bit beyond, to some degree, the scope of our conversation. We could go on about this for a long time with a gin and tonic in the pub. But I think it's not so much a question of threat, although I think there are probably lots of people who'd have opinions about that. I think there's an idea and there's a rhetoric of practicality and efficiency, which I think needs to portray the arts and culture as an indulgence or as a luxury item. And I think that that need, that rhetorical ideological need is not reflected in the evidence that we have for what the arts and culture actually do, practically, for the public.

Lizzie Muller:

So we actually know that the arts and culture contribute a great deal, both in things that you might consider their intrinsic worth, but also in terms of other measurable qualities like quality of life, mental health. So there's lots of good evidence that already exist that there are fantastic practical outputs. It's not just a luxury item. But I think it's important for this government's argument-making to suggest that the arts is, yeah, somewhat of an extra, an optional extra.

Tim Stackpool:

If we think about a discussion I had with members of the MEAA in December's edition of the podcast, talking about figures where the arts sell more tickets than sporting events in Australia. The arts employs more people than the mining industry. Do you think there's often a mistake, there's somewhat of a misunderstanding of what the arts represents within society and perhaps how ingrained it is, how embedded it is in everything that we do?

Lizzie Muller:

I think there absolutely is, and I think that there is data to support that. And I know that the Australia Council recently released research that showed that although... and I think the numbers are right... that 98% of people report being involved in some kind of an artistic activity, like their kid's going to play in orchestra, or they're listening to a classical music, or they've read a book, or been to the movies. At the same time, they will also report a belief that the arts is not for them. So interestingly, there is a kind of, I don't think that the misapprehension sits only with politicians. I think that the reason politicians can get away with the rhetoric of arts as an optional extra is because the sector itself has probably not done a good enough job of communicating with the public really clearly about the value of arts and culture, in a way that the public can hear and believe.

Lizzie Muller:

So I think that's the crucial thing. And so I think if there are any lessons to take home from this moment, beyond just kind of railing and being cross, one of the big lessons is really to start listening to the public and hearing what they say about their own impressions and perceptions of the sector, of the arts, and what it means to them. Because I think if we can start to hear more clearly what the public is telling us, we can actually improve public relations, if you like, so the perception of the sector, to create, really, a more accurate understanding of how valuable and how powerful the sector is.

Lizzie Muller:

And then hopefully, in the future, politicians won't be able to get away with this kind of a move without the public standing up and saying, "Hang on, we need arts, we need culture in our lives." Because that's really, I think, the important way to counter problems like this, at political level. I know that lots of people have done stuff in terms of advocacy with the government, but unless the public is standing up for you as well, I think that advocacy is never going to be able to achieve what we want it to achieve, when there are ideological problems.

Tim Stackpool:

And indeed, the public does participate. Think about Adelaide Festival, Fringe Festival, Sydney Festival, Sydney Biennale this year as well in March. I mean, there's great participation in all of these things, but as you say, it's kind of like people misunderstand that this is the arts, or art is not for me. And yet, still participating in comedy festivals around the country, and going to see bands. Even at that level of appreciating the arts, it kind of still gets lost on the population psyche.

Lizzie Muller:

You're absolutely right. So the public are participating in droves. So that kind of suggests that there are plenty of really good, high-quality, brilliant art experiences out there and available. So why is it that that perception kind of still persists? And that may be in the way that we talk about the arts. It may be, and I think this is really interesting when talking on a podcast like this, it may be that, in terms of the media, we're not doing a good enough job of really talking to people about art and about what's happening in the art world. I always think to myself, when I listen to kind of daily news, how you wouldn't get through a day of listening to news without hearing an update on what's happened in sport, but you're rarely going to hear an update on what's happened that day in the art world.

Lizzie Muller:

And as you say, I think people often kind of portray it as it's either sport or art. And I don't think it's that way at all. I think sport and art sit really brilliantly together as important things that humans do to build community connections, to create better, more mentally healthy societies. So I don't see us, in any way, as in competition with something like sport, but I do think there's a lot to learn there about how we can present what we do as part of the fabric of daily life.

Lizzie Muller:

And I think, sometimes, people get persuaded by the idea of marketing art like it is a luxury item. And I think even some of our galleries and kind of top-end art experiences use that as a way of kind of making people feel like this is a treat, or a special occasion. And certainly, some of the prices of top-end art experiences, which suggest that they are luxury items. So I think that there is actually a lot that the

sector can do to make itself more accessible to people, and to really start to confirm that idea that art is part of daily life in the same way that sport is.

Tim Stackpool:

Now you are an associate professor at the University of New South Wales. You have students coming through various art courses who are faced with this situation of there not being a dedicated arts portfolio. How are you approaching that as an institution and how are you dealing with students' mental health in response to that?

Lizzie Muller:

For me, one of the things I notice is the generation of students who are coming up currently through the Masters of Curating and Cultural Leadership, for example, are really inspirational in terms of what they see as the opportunities and the potential for themselves to lead, even as very young practitioners, even in their early twenties. So actually I think it's more a question of what we've got to learn from them than what we should be teaching them. One thing I really notice about kind of our most recent graduates and current students is they don't wait around to be given a grant. They don't wait around to be given a legitimate position of power within the arts world. If they see an opportunity, if they think something should be done, then they get up and do it. And that includes things like generating new arts critical platforms, kind of online places to discuss art, generating new venues, building the kinds of infrastructure they need.

Lizzie Muller:

I think there's always been a tradition of artists run initiatives, but this generation really seem to be, often, I think, quite fearless in terms of just putting themselves out there. And of course, they have now a whole new raft of digital tools that allow them to make connections internationally, directly with audiences, which I think has energized that generation. And I also think that this generation of arts practitioners are inspired by, or kind of working with, quite often, the emerging generation of environmental leaders. So we can see that also in the environmental movement, young people are really kind of leading new thinking, new ways of making their voices heard because they are perceiving a lack of leadership or a bit of a void, a vision. And so I think that there is something that this generation can teach us about just saying, "Right, the government's not supporting us, they're not helping us out. We're going to stop asking or being reliant on their support, and instead to start generating the initiatives that we need to generate ourselves."

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. Well, you sound pretty positive. Associate Professor, it's been lovely to speak with you on the podcast and thanks so much for making the time.

Lizzie Muller:

Thanks very much. Great conversation.

Tim Stackpool:

That's Associate Professor, Lizzie Muller, from UNSW, talking about the vanishing of the arts within the federal government's portfolio restructure.

JORAN VAN DER STARRE – THE ART T GALLERY

Tim Stackpool:

We move now to the business of art and private galleries with Joram van der Starre who has taken the courageous move of establishing a gallery and studio in Sydney's Entertainment Quarter, which is housed in the same precinct as Fox Studios in Moore Park, and that's situated in Sydney's eastern suburbs. It's a bold leap in the current economic climate, but Joram has the confidence to make it work. I caught up with Joram at his Art T Gallery and began by asking him how he came to this point.

Joram van der Starre:

What led me to come here, I studied graphic design because I thought art is not a commercial way to make a living. When I moved to Australia, I started my own business doing graphic design, my wife already owned a PR company, and over the years we decided to join forces with me working backend in the PR company. A lot of clients we've worked with were in the art industry. We worked with Craig Ruddy before and after he won the Archibald. We've done projects like Vivid Sydney, Chinese New Year, and as a result I feel I know the art industry, and with my kids getting a bit older and me having to head space again to start painting again and follow my passion, instead of just doing what I need to do to make living, I decided that I've now got the time and head space to pursue my art career.

Tim Stackpool:

And why did you choose this particular space here? It almost looks as if you've got three shopfronts here on Bent Street at the Entertainment Quarter.

Joram van der Starre:

The reason is foot traffic. The Entertainment Quarter is a precinct that has been dead for quite a few years and it's starting to pick up with the types of restaurants and places that are moving into the space. And I wanted a space that's accessible for the everyday person. A lot of the galleries cater specifically to the elite art market, and what I wanted is an accessible art gallery where the everyday people can wander in and have a look around, and if they fall in love with a piece of art, can buy it.

Tim Stackpool:

There is more than just the gallery space here though, as I said, the studio space is here too. How many other artists do you have working with you here?

Joram van der Starre:

At the moment we've got three other artists. We're looking for two more arts to join the space. So, the way I've set it up, I've set up the art gallery as a not-for-profit, with the idea that setting it up as a not-for-profit and making it as a vehicle for different artists to establish themselves, to be able to regularly exhibit and put their work out there and at the same time have a space to work from. So that's why we keep overheads to a minimum by not having to pay staff to mind the gallery and by using resources from all the artists involved to run and make the gallery successful.

Tim Stackpool:

And in terms of the other artists that you would like to attract to the workshop, I mean, who would that be?

Joram van der Starre:

I am really looking for artists that can see the opportunity and have the business mind to think, "All right, I'm going to jump on this. I'm going to use this as an opportunity to make it happen." Because I find that a lot of the times people are good at what they do but they're not necessarily business people. I think at the end of the day it's about creating opportunities for yourself and not waiting for others to make it happen. And that's why I've set up this space and that's why I'm inviting other artists to join me in creating those opportunities. By sitting back and making the most beautiful art, when you're not reaching anyone with that art, you're not going to be successful. By waiting for someone to discover you, you're fully depending on other people to make your success. And I think what it comes down to, it's about creating your own success, creating your own opportunities. And that's what I've set up here and that's what I'm trying to create a platform for other artists to join with me.

Tim Stackpool:

I'm seeing different forms of media here, paintbrush work and also ceramics, is that the type of art that you're seeing is popular with the foot traffic that's coming through?

Joram van der Starre:

It's very wide and varied. Ceramics is a no-brainer and because it's low entry and it's a way to get people into the gallery, and at the same time we've sold things from small little original works to larger paintings and all of that stuff. I think it's important to be able to cater to wide range of people and a wide range of interests because a lot of people are intimidated by art galleries and by only having \$10,000 plus works, you're cutting out a whole range of people that would be interested that have wall space that they want to fill up, but that's would not necessarily walk into an art gallery because they feel intimidated. Even here, we've noticed that people standing at the door and you have to tell them, "Come in, come have a look around," because there is that perception of art is for the elite and everyday people feel intimidated. And that's what I'll try to create with this gallery by putting it in this location, by providing a different range of things to sell, from pottery to cheaper prints and the more expensive artworks.

Tim Stackpool:

The point that you just made about add being for the elite and trying to get people to come into the gallery, I mean it really is a type of inherent problem, maybe that the whole art industry, if I can call it that, seems to suffer from. You say putting your art gallery here is to try and overcome that here in the Entertainment Quarter, but are there any other strategies that you think you may employ in order to try and touch people when it comes to not only presenting art to them, but also selling art to them? Have you got any other ideas in terms of perhaps your approach or your marketing?

Joram van der Starre:

Well, that's where my PR background comes in. Having run a PR company for the past... the business is 20 years old now, I've got the experience to reach out through mass markets. And a lot of times it's too expensive for artists to pay for a ongoing PR campaign. It's the same for gallery owners with the margins, with the rents, with all the other costs of running an art gallery, it gets put to the wayside and if there is a great opportunity there to reach a wider markets with the right messaging.

Tim Stackpool:

I always say it doesn't matter what business it is, but in this case you could be the best artist in the world, but unless people know your work then it's lost, it's never seen. So, marketing is important, irrespective of whether you are an artist or whether you are a dealer or whether you are a car mechanic. It doesn't really matter.

Tim Stackpool:

We've just recently seen in the news about a major German grocery store setting up in Australia and then pulling out before they even opened up a store because they don't see the economy as being very buoyant, they don't have a positive outlook as to where Australians can and if they can spend their money. Is this the right time to be opening yet another art gallery in such a prominent space, opening another studio up when people don't seem to have the money to spend, when people, as you say, step back from art because they see it as elitist? Do you have a different mindset to the rest of the art world in terms of making this step?

Joram van der Starre:

I really believe that it's more about seizing opportunities when they come up. It's been about a year and a half in the process of securing a space here in the Entertainment Quarter. And economy goes up and down, it goes in waves over the decades and all of that stuff, but I don't think necessarily a time when the economy is a bit slower is a time to not take risks in business. It's about taking calculated risks, looking, all right, if it doesn't succeed, what am I meant to lose? And by setting it up in such a way that it is low-risk venture by having studio space that you rent out to artists, by having a gallery space that's meant by artists, you keep the overheads low and it's a low-risk strategy in order to try and establish yourself.

Tim Stackpool:

Normally we would see spaces like this in Sydney anyway in places like Marrickville, for instance, or Sydenham. This would be viewed as being fairly high-end and fairly prominent, have you really mitigated the risk by coming to such a high-profile spot?

Joram van der Starre:

I think part of the problem with the places like Marrickville, art is slowly moving out further and further from the suburbs where people have money to spend on art. And by having a gallery space in a prominent spot that is easily accessible, that is central, that's got other things going on, so you've got regular foot traffic from music concert to sports games, you have a whole other demographic that normally wouldn't trek out to Marrickville, try to find a parking spot 10 blocks away from the space where they're planning to look at art. So, that creates an opportunity to reach out to far larger market than the traditional spaces.

Tim Stackpool:

Well, Joram, I applaud your entrepreneurship. I hope the venture goes very well and congratulations to the other artists who've already moved in here. And thank you so much for speaking with us on the podcast.

Joram van der Starre:

My pleasure.

Tim Stackpool:

That's Joram van der Starre talking about his recent established Art T Gallery at Sydney's Entertainment Quarter, and there's more details, of course, at www.arttgallery.com.au.