LWAG Talks

A podcast by Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery

Episode 15: A Deep Dive with Ted Snell and LSAC

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LWAG Director, Professor Ted Snell AM CitWA, in conversation with members of the LWAG Student Advisory Committee Zahraa Al Taey, Brendan John Harry Dias and Victor Arul.

**NARRATOR:**

LWAG talks is Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery’s new podcast, bringing you insights and ideas with artists, curators, educators, writers, and more.

**ZAHRAA AL TAEY (MEMBER OF LSAC COMMITTEE):**

Good morning, good evening, good afternoon, wherever and whenever the time may be where you are at the moment. Brendan, Victor and I, Zahra, we're here today to speak to the director of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery at UWA. And we form the committee and we are part of the committee of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery Student Advisory Committee, and we're very honoured to be able to share with you some details about our Director’s live that you probably haven't been exposed to just yet, looking at his personal story, as well as his role within the gallery and some future projects. You know, if you want to hear about that, keep listening.

**BRENDAN JOHN HARRY DIAS (MEMBER OF LSAC COMMITTEE):**

Hi, Ted my name is Brendan. I'm a sixth-year engineering student at the uni and I'm studying Chemical Engineering. I was at the volunteer fair where I saw Megan and her stall for the Student Advisory Committee, I thought it'd be a good idea to look into things that are outside of my, because I'm part of engineering clubs and things like that. But yeah, I've been to the gallery a couple of times, and I enjoyed my time there so I thought it'd be a good idea.

**TED SNELL (LWAG DIRECTOR):**

That's fantastic, an engineering student, when they say, and how many engineering students are coming to the gallery? One anyway! (Laughs)

**BRENDAN:**

(Laughs) Yeah, that's a start, I guess.

**ZAHRAA:**

My name is Zahraa, I'm currently, I just finished my last unit in my bachelor's degree. I was doing a Bachelor of Biomedical Science majoring in Pharmacology and English and Cultural Studies. And I'm launching into honours in English in semester two. Basically I heard about the LWAG Student Advisory Committee when I was doing the employability awards, so that was a suggestion. So I thought why not? And I jumped on board.

**TED:**

Fantastic

**VICTOR ARUL (MEMBER OF LSAC COMMITTEE):**

Hi, I'm Victor. I'm in my third year of studying music. I'm going to my final semester, and I specialise in composition. I'm, I became interested in the gallery because my first ever performance of work of one of my works publicly was in the gallery. And after that, I just kept going to the gallery I guess. And I became interested in gallery and now I'm part of the committee.

**TED:**

Fantastic. Was that part of the *Momento Mori* project?

**VICTOR:**

No, it wasn't. I think mine was after that, yeah.

**TED:**

I'd love to talk to you about another project that I've been trying to get your lecturers interested in, which is to create music for the toilets, because our toilets, as you know, are pretty awful. And I thought, wouldn't it be great to have an audial environment that where that would make them a much more special place. So maybe we can chat?

**VICTOR:**

Absolutely.

**ZAHRAA:**

OK, I guess we'll start off by asking Ted to introduce himself to us, we know that you're the director of the UWA Lawrence Wilson Gallery. But is there more to you than meets the eye?

**TED:**

(Laughs) Well, yes, I hope so. I guess I've been involved in the arts pretty much all my life. I'm a writer, I am also, I have a studio practice. I won't say I'm a painter, because I understand what it means to be a painter. And it means to be very dedicated to spend a lot of time and to have a real commitment to your practice. And unfortunately, because of all the other things I do, I don't have that. But I do like to continue to work in my studio as well.

And I like to be involved in the community as much as possible, improving the situation, both for artists and for the community and its ability to be able to engage with art. So yeah, that's me.

**BRENDAN:**

We thought we'll start off by learning more about your personal story. And the first question we had is what are you interested in art in the first place?

**TED:**

Brendan, I think the thing that unfortunately, it was being sick. Because I was quite sick as a kid, I had asthma and I spent a lot of time away from school and at home. And when I was at home, I just drew and drew and drew. And it was just a passion to record the world around me. And I turned my bedroom into a studio. And I managed to get, save up and I got a couple of tubes of oil paint, and I had some turps and some linseed oil. So it was an absolutely toxic environment. I can't believe my parents allowed it. But anyway, I created this little studio. And then when I think I was about probably nine, eight or nine, possibly 10, I said to my mother, that I, my mother and father, I really want to go to the Art Gallery of Western Australia. I really want to go there. It took a long time to convince them but on one Saturday, my mum said “come on, we're going to the gallery”, and I said “isn't dad coming?” “No, just you and me”. So we went in, and it was fantastic. You know, all these artworks that I've never seen before, including this fabulous Russell Drysdale of an Aboriginal boy holding a lizard, and it was on this vermilion red background and I thought it was just the best thing I'd ever seen. And my, my mum said, “well, would you like this little book? Because they're selling this little book for one and sixpence?” And I went, Oh, yeah, so I took it home. That was the beginning of my library, which now spreads over several rooms in the house, but I still have that book. And when I got home, my dad, I'm getting emotional. (Laughs) But my dad had maybe an easel, he’d stayed at home and work in his wood workshop at the back of the house, and he made this easel. So the end of that day, I had my first library, my studio was set up with an easel and I'd been to the art gallery and understood what, the fantastic potential of a space like that which could introduce people to the joys of, of the visual arts was actually like, so yeah, that was pretty special day.

**BRENDAN:**

Yeah, that's a great story. Um, I guess, so it was just the profound impact that art had on you that you felt that you could give to other people.

**TED:**

Definitely. Yeah. I mean, I think it's one of the things that has guided me, I've always thought, you know, I want other people to have that opportunity. It's, it's, I was very lucky, very, very fortunate. I had parents who were supportive. And I had the opportunity to go to places like the Art Gallery of Western Australia, funny and odd and weird in those days, because it was part of the old museum building on Beaufort street and it was a very odd little building, but nevertheless, it was full of all these incredible riches. So yeah, I think it has it has definitely been the motivating force of my life to make as many people as possible, to give them the opportunity to see art and to enjoy it and to think about it and for it to change their lives.

**BRENDAN:**

Yeah, that's great.

**VICTOR:**

Now we have an idea of like a beginnings with art and how this changed your philosophy in terms of your career was there like a breakthrough moment with art?

**TED:**

 Well, I did quite well in the leaving. That's what they now, what is now ATAR. So I did quite well. And I got a Commonwealth scholarship to come to UWA in fact, and I had had very good marks in certain subjects sort of quite to the top of the state. And I said to my mum and dad, I don't want to go to UWA because they don't teach art. So I want to go to Teachers College, because I knew I could do an art course. And my dad, I've never seen him so crestfallen. He was so proud that I got into UWA and just couldn't believe that I didn't want to go there.

So I did go to Teacher's College, I did do the art course and I became an art teacher.

And I decided that I wanted to continue studying that as soon as the course was over, because it was the government you had to go out into the country, generally speaking. And there was this absolutely horrible moment when they used to have an assembly at the end of the year and everybody would go up onto the and that'd be called up, you know ah, come up, you're going to (indecipherable), and you would burst into tears and fall about and people would take you off the stage. And I went no, I don’t want to do that. So I wrote to every private school in the state and said, if you want a young teacher who's very enthusiastic and will commit totally, I’m your man, and I'm pleased to say that Christ Church Grammar School said that was fine. So I went and worked at Christ Church, and continued and did further study. And then I got a scholarship to go to the UK. And I chose Birmingham because they had a very well-known arts education programme.

I completed that, came back to Western Australia, and on the boat coming back in fact, I came back on a on a boat, wasn't a luxury boat by any means. But I came back and I had sent an email. It wasn't an email, good grief, there was no such thing. I sent a letter to the head of the school at Curtin University, and it was WAIT at that stage, saying, I'm coming back and if you have a job, that would be fantastic. And when I got back, my mom and dad were waiting on the thing waving on a piece of paper saying I had a job. (Laughs)

So, I have been blessed and so lucky in so many ways, but that's how I, and then I decided I needed a further qualification. So then I later sort of enrolled in a PhD. But so that's my academic history in a very potted form.

**VICTOR:**

Great. So it's kind of a deviation from normal, doing a bachelor's degree and then going to postgraduate. I guess this leads to Zahraa’s question.

**ZAHRAA:**

What challenges or rewards did you face with that particular educational pathway that you decided to follow? And would you do it again, if you had the chance to?

**TED:**

Thing is, Zahraa, I've often thought of that. I wondered what it would have been like if I'd come to UWA, particularly in retrospect because I realised how much visual arts was going on here. How many really exciting, interesting lecturers, there were who were also artists. And at the time that I could have come here, it was a very exciting place UWA, and there was a huge increase in the facilities for the arts, the Octagon theatre was built. The New Fortune theatre had just been built as part of the new Arts Building. There was an exhibition gallery space in the Undercroft. I mean, if I'd come to UWA and gone through the normal route of doing, and probably being involved with the Guild and then going on to do a postgraduate qualification PhD, I don't know. Look, as it was, it was a strange circuitous sort of route. I needed to have a job. So I guess, the very first thing I wanted to do was to get some employment and earn some money. And I also wanted to go overseas. And so that was very important to me. So yeah, I don't know. I think every route you take has forks that you wonder what might have happened had you taken them. But you really just have got to keep going in the direction that you feel is right at the time. And there's no point in looking back over your shoulder.

**ZAHRAA:**

That's a lot of wisdom you've got there that you've shared with us as well, especially since a lot of our viewers are currently at that fork. And with the current situation, wondering how University is going to work out for them as well. But it's quite inspiring to see someone who's taken an educational pathway that's a little bit different.

**TED:**

Thank you.

**BRENDAN:**

So Ted, you mentioned that you had a scholarship in Birmingham, and then you returned back to WA. I'm wondering what it is about, is there something specific about WA that attracted you back to it, or was it just a logistical sort of decision that you had to make?

**TED:**

That's a very interesting question, Brandon. I ask myself that all the time because I have focused most of my scholastic academic career around Western Australian art and Western Australian art practice. Many years ago, Daniel Thomas, who was the curator of Australian art at the National Gallery of Australia, and then the director of the Adelaide Art Gallery, Art Gallery in South Australia once said that he'd gone back to Tasmania because it's really important when you're walking down a street to know which tree was there when you were a boy, and which house had been pulled down, and where that person lived. And I think I have that very much here in Western Australia. I like the sense of being rooted in this place. I like knowing what has happened in the past and I like thinking about how that might have influenced what's happening currently. So I came back because obviously, my parents were here, but I came back because this really was home for me. And I was born in Geraldton, in fact, and I when I go back to Geraldton and I have that, an even greater sense of rootedness. You know, I walk along streets that my dad would have walked along and I just, wow this is extraordinary, you know, this is, this is my place.

**BRENDAN:**

Yeah. So because of you sort of growing up here, really, you had a bond with just the, the region itself.

**TED:**

Yeah. And also the myths that grow around, you know, the place. So people say it's isolated, it's not isolated. There's so many benefits that come from being where we are one of them is an incredible sense of, of just getting out and doing it, you know, you have to do it on your own here because no one else is going to do it for you. So you really feel this urgency to get on and do things. And when your ideas come, you don't actually necessarily get them right from the horse's mouth. So you have to reinvent them for yourself to think about what those ideas might mean in your, in the context of who you are and where you are. And I think Australian, West Australian artists in particular, have done that for centuries and probably even longer because of course, Aboriginal people had the same issue. They were based here and ideas came in, but they had to make those ideas fit to this place.

**BRENDAN:**

I like that the region itself has contributed so much to, you know your identity.

**VICTOR:**

So you somewhat alluded to this before, but to what extent has artistic flair expanded beyond the visual arts because obviously, you have a large influence on the visual arts.

**TED:**

Probably not that far, but I'd like to think it went further. My son is a musician and, and manages bands and is based in Los Angeles. So that's, that's some sort of dipping my toe in other areas. I was involved in the theatre company in Western Australia for a while. I tend to, because I was on the Australia Council for the Arts. I was the chair of the Visual Arts board. But part of the conversations that we had every day when we had board meetings was about of course, all of the arts and how all of the arts are affected and impacted by government policy, by current situation. So it was wonderful working with some extraordinary people who were really key figures in their own arts disciplines. So I have, I guess, been involved at a, at a national level at a more broader base. But I've also understood that my area of expertise is really in one area and I should keep, I shouldn't be just speaking out on larger topics just because I have the opportunity to. I should, I should keep my, my commentary to those things that I actually do know something about.

**VICTOR:**

Makes sense, thanks.

**ZAHRAA:**

Well, we definitely know that art has flowed through your veins, and it's definitely been passed on in the family, which is something to be proud of as well. It's been lovely hearing about your personal life. But we did want to ask you a little bit about your role within the gallery itself. So what sort of responsibilities do you possess in relation to the gallery in terms of your everyday sort of going about being a director?

**TED:**

I think the main thing is to make sure that the team is all working closely together and trying to achieve the goals that we have set ourselves. We're a very small team, everybody has their own area of expertise. And we need to make sure that we reach out and achieve as much as possible for the university, for our local community, for the students, for the staff on campus. And that's not an easy task, particularly at the moment in the current situation that we're facing. But it's never been all that easy for the arts. So, my responsibility is really to make sure that we have a fantastic and vital programme of exhibitions, that we link into the teaching and research life of the university, that we reach out to the broader community so that we opened our doors to our expanded community, to provide some access to the incredibly rich and vibrant visual arts of Western Australia. And a very important area is that we also reach out to students in high school and also primary school. And we have a really important component of what we do, one project called Art in a Box, we send that out to schools because a lot of kids don't get the opportunity to come into the gallery. So we put art in a box, literally, send it out to schools so that kids can unpack it and have the experience of working with actual artworks within their classroom. So, so yeah, I'm it's a, it's a wonderfully rich role that I have. And I'm very, very delighted and thrilled to have it on. So I must say I feel very, very fortunate.

**ZAHRAA:**

That's fantastic to hear. And I love how you focused a lot on community engagement as well, as well as work within the gallery itself, which is lovely, and making sure the community in WA is very interconnected.

**BRENDAN:**

Yeah. Thanks for telling us about sort of what your responsibilities are as a director. What would you say that you get the most enjoyment out of in your role?

**TED:**

The best thing always is working with artists. That great excitement about working in a gallery is that you can give us the opportunity to showing their work to a wider audience. And every artist is different. Every artist has a fantastic idea about what they want to do, what they have done. Talking to them about their work, talking about their aspirations and how they would like the work presented. It's just the best thing. There's nothing better than going into an artist studio and have the incredible privilege of them showing you what they've been working on. And then discussing how is the best possible way of presenting that to an audience. Nothing beats it.

**VICTOR:**

I'm sure that many students listening to this. So for them, why is the gallery important to them? Why should they come to the gallery in your opinion?

**TED:**

Many years ago, when Alan Robson was the Vice Chancellor at UWA, he always used to say if you've come to UWA and gone away with a degree, you, you really haven't taken advantage of all the options that are there. If all you get is a degree, then you've missed out. And I think one of the things that we give to people, because there is a gallery on campus, is incredible breadth of experience of knowing what the world is and how the world is interpreted by different people, and the great richness of opportunity that is there. So the visual arts and music and theatre, the arts in their broadest form, give you a new dimension on the world and enable you to see not only your world differently, but the world from other peoples’ perspective, to give you that sense that how you will engage with other people. We have a wonderful colleague called Sue Boyd, who was the ambassador in Vietnam. And she tells this amazing story about some businessmen who came up to Vietnam and said, “Would you introduce us to the local business people?” And she said, Sure. So this guy came up and she organised the dinner and they're all sitting around the table. The first thing they said was, tell me about your family. So he said I have a child. I have two children. Oh, you are blessed and the son Oh, this is wonderful, and your wife Yes. And your parents?” “My father's dead” oh we’re so sorry. And my mother, my mum's great. She lives on her own. We see her, you know, at least twice a year. She's very healthy about 90. Yes, she's cool. She's good. All of a sudden, how could this? Why would they? Why would they want to deal with somebody who's such a monster and deals with his mother in such an appalling way, for a culture that really respects the elderly? This was a complete disaster. If that chap had] watched any Vietnamese films, if he'd looked at any paintings, if he'd looked at photography in Vietnam, if he'd seen anything to do with the culture of Vietnam, he would have known that was not the way to get into an engagement with a group of people who have a deep respect for, for their elderly. So, I've told that story on numerous occasions, just because the at the most basic level if somebody says, “Look, I'm a business student, why on earth would I be interested in the arts?” That's one of the reasons to be involved, because your business is going to go down. Nowhere if you don't understand the culture of the people that you're working with, and the best way to understand the culture of your colleagues is to be able to share that experience by looking at the art that that has nurtured, that is nurturing their culture.

**VICTOR:**

That mantra, you mentioned about going beyond the degrees to in UWA. And yeah, so I guess what you're saying is that the gallery provides a wide range of perspectives of humanity and through this we can understand and relate to a wider array of diversities in humanity, and thus we can relate and communicate better with other people.

**TED:**

Indeed. Because I think there is this area of respect. I mean, if you go into a gallery and you see the work, you say now I still think I understand and you respect and you have an understanding of where that person is coming from. So it's not just because I realised that it might have just sounded a minute ago that it's a very manipulative way. That you know, you look at somebody's culture, and then you work out how to do business with them. I don't mean that at all. What I mean is, there is a respectful relationship, if you understand the culture of another individual, and you know where they're coming from, and how they're seeing the world that enables you to have a deeper and a richer experience with them.

**BRENDAN:**

And art is sort of the only real, really real way to do that you can't read scientific literature or articles or you know, just learning about the people themselves, you really have to learn about who they are as a culture through their artistic exploration.

**TED:**

Absolutely. And what it does is it builds empathy. And I think empathy is the most important human emotion and the more empathy we have, the greater chance we have of making the world a better place.

**BRENDAN:**

That's an interesting discussion to be had about that, for sure.

**ZAHRAA:**

I'm sure art will continue to be relevant in every time and place. The more we think about it, and the more we immerse ourselves in art, I feel like the more we find out about how much it just benefits us, so much more than just viewing an image or a piece of artwork. And that brings us to our next question. What exhibitions do you believe have been the most popular so far with students? Is there any that sort of comes to mind straightaway?

**TED:**

We did have an exhibitION which I mentioned before, when Victor was talking to me about the music that he composed and played in the gallery, we had an exhibition called *Memento Mori. Memento Mori*, as you, I'm sure you know is that it's about thinking about death. So remember, we will all die. So be aware of the world that is your life as it is now and but always be conscious that it will end at some point. So we had an exhibition, we had a group of students from the school of music who all composed a piece of music, which we played in the gallery space, and we recorded it on a CD which was available that people could buy. We had this amazing video by a Russian group of artists called AES+F called *Allegoria Sacra* which was about, it was a really a sort of an allegory based on a 15th century painting. And it was the most extraordinary, beautiful visual experience. You walked into the gallery, and on 16 and a half metres of wall, there was this huge, bigger than life size tableau playing out, it was really amazing. And then we had other works by other West Australian artists in the other galleries. And that did draw an enormous group of students who I think probably had never been to the gallery before because the experience of standing in that space, listening to that music, being engaged with those ideas, obviously the big ideas life and death and how you cope with the space in between really did have a fantastic impact.

**ZAHRAA:**

It kind of reminds me of a particular unit I did at UWA, where we looked at love and death in the Renaissance. It sort of brings those vibes of the two main concerns I feel for humanity that continue to be entrenched and thematically produced in artwork. It's interesting that that particular one was interesting for students who most people believe are at the very beginning of their lives. So I find that quite ironic.

**TED:**

But think how many skulls they have on their T-shirts. (Laughs)

**BRENDAN:**

Yeah, that was uh, thanks for telling us about you know, what you sort of, what you do with the gallery. What you enjoy about what you do at the gallery and what you feel the students who attended together have enjoyed the most as well. We'd like to now talk about sort of your, the future of the gallery and your future plans as well. So first off, the gallery has had a massive refresh with respect to the website that people are able to access. So what are your thoughts on it? Or do you have any comments? On the new website?

**TED:**

Look, I mean, we'll all look back on COVID-19 with different, through different lenses and, and it will be a horrible period to remember as it has been, but we'll also hopefully, we can use this opportunity to look at what are the positives that have come out of it. And I must say one of the positives that have come out of the Lawrence Wilson has been the incredible increase in the amount of digital material that we've now got up on our website, thanks to Megan Hyde, who is our extraordinary Audience Development Manager. But we have now got a new website. It's refreshed and it has a lot of digital content, so that people who can't get to the gallery are able to see the fantastic exhibitions that we have, the talks that have been generated through them in public programmes and the activities that have gone on in association with that exhibition programme. A couple of years ago, we did a few things digitally. And it was amazing how many people wrote in not, not a lot of people, but a few people who had never been able to get to the gallery because of the mental health issues or physical things. So that sense of accessibility was all of a sudden changed because of the digital material that we were able to provide for them. So I think that online stuff has been fantastic. And I, and we have done an enormous work. There's been an enormous amount of work done in that area, and that's very exciting. In terms of how COVID-19 will affect us in the long term, I'm really hoping that we will allow as an opportunity to rethink what we've been doing. Now there's been particularly in the arts around the country and particularly in the visual arts has been this idea that anything that comes from outside is instantly valuable, important and necessary, and has to be given absolutely forefront. All of the resources and all of the energy and commitment so the big blockbuster exhibitions that come to galleries. Anybody who's from overseas immediately gets a huge exhibition budget. And I'm hoping that we now say, now hang on a second, we can rethink that. We have fabulous artists here. We should be promoting local artists to a local audience. Yes, of course, we don't want to put our heads in a bag and say that nothing exists outside. But we are so connected now, through the internet and through all the other forms of communication. We should take this opportunity of saying we perhaps need to focus a little bit more locally and to use this opportunity to say this is really where we should put our energy.

**BRENDAN:**

Yeah, I think that that sounds like a good idea. I also, yeah, it's really cool that you know, we have the internet and we have digital technology that in it, like how much worse might things have been if we weren't able to connect to the way we have been, so much during this time when we haven't been able to, you know, connect physically. So, yeah, I actually don't know where that idea that's going exactly. (Laughs).

**TED:**

It's so interesting. The arts are always the very first area to be cut, because it's people's, you know, the casual, the funding that they have, which is not committed to everyday life. So immediately it cuts, but also government funding is cut. No one went to concerts, no one went to the theatre, the theatres and galleries were closed. So all of a sudden, we've cut the arts to a level which is appalling. But we all know that the one thing that we need in a time of crisis is a sense of reassurance, of connectedness, of engagement, and that's what the arts provide. So it's always a critical time. Moments of crisis are a critical time for the arts. I think the arts have done extraordinarily well in this moment. And I think that we've made a contribution to that through the work that Megan's been doing, through the, through the website and through the online materials. And I hope we can continue to do that. And I hope that people will understand that the arts and not just a good weather, fine weather, you know, good times investment, they’re an investment we need to make all the time.

**VICTOR:**

Those are some great points touched upon, how you're happy about this online engagement and how it will improve accessibility but at the same time, I'm sure you're, you're desiring for, you know, face to face events to come back.

**TED:**

Victor, I think one of the interesting things about digital is, it always drives visitation. And they discovered years ago that if you put something out online or you, you give people access to it in a book, they will turn up to see it. Years and years ago, one of the very cleverest things that the Art Institute of Chicago did was to give licence to reprint any of the artworks in their collection without a fee. And so if you said you wanted to put an artwork by Seaurat up on the on the web or publish it (indecipherable) in a book, they would just send you high-res copies of photographs and say go for it, but just acknowledge where it is. The Art Institute of Chicago has this massive visitation because people want to see that painting by Seaurat or that painting by Goya because that's the one they remember in the book. So I think we'll find that people will want to come onto campus to see and to experience and engage with the actual artworks, much more so than they would have previously even.

**VICTOR:**

I guess in relation to that. Are there any future endeavours of the gallery that you're especially excited for?

**TED:**

Oh well the next exhibition is always the most exciting (laughs). And we've got a fantastic series of exhibitions, two exhibitions which are looking at queer culture. In Western Australia, one is a historical work actually by a young, Melbourne based artist called Drew Pettifer. And he's exploring *A Sorrowful Act* where the very, very the first recorded trial for homosexuality in Australia, which was done on a Dutch ship in 1627. And the two boys who were found guilty were put on separate islands to die. So it's a terrible story. And he's created an exhibition which documents the story. The other exhibition is *HERE&NOW20*, which is curated by Brent Harrison, and he's looking at contemporary Western Australian queer artists, and what they're doing, how they're creating their work in relation to the situation that they're experiencing currently. So they're pretty exciting exhibitions that bring up a lot of very current issues, and are very important for the student audience. We've got the LGBTQI+ Working Group, working with us, as our campus partners. So yeah, it's always the current exhibition. That's always the most exciting.

**VICTOR:**

Awesome. Definitely wouldn’t want to miss that.

**ZAHRAA:**

Quite recently, we were also saddened by the news of the passing of Ross Seaton. What has he contributed to the gallery? And how do you think creating a digital exhibition of his work is going to have an effect on the community itself, especially the Nedlands community as well.

**TED:**

Oh, Zahraa, that’s… Ross hasn't really done anything in the gallery up to date, we've been working with him. I've been working with him for a period of about four years. When I say working with him, for the first two years, it was simply going up and him turning his back on me and me walking away, and it took a long time to actually get him to communicate. And then towards the end of his life, he was very excited about the idea of us, showcasing his work. Unfortunately, of course, he died before we had a chance to show him the work in the gallery or indeed to talk to him really at length about his work. But what surprised me is, as you say, the local community, I put up a little post, a little vale Ross on Instagram. And there were something like 100 and something hits, a hundred and something comments and about 500 hits within a few days. So many people knew about Ross. His presence changed the world for them, the fact that this guy existed was important to them. And so I think it's going to be wonderful to be able to give them a little bit more information about Ross and to tell them how he was hoping to find the algorithm that would link all the information in the world together and give us a sense of why we are, who we are - not a bad effort for a guy working in Nedlands, solving the great question of who we are, why we are and why we're here. (Laughs).

**ZAHRAA:**

We're just really excited about the prospect of creating his exhibition digitally as well. Because I'm, to my understanding, I don't think he was expecting it to be digital either.

**TED:**

No, he wasn't. And in fact, we were we do have some of his works that we would have shown. But of course, the gallery had to be closed, it will be closed for about five months in fact, by the time it reopens again. And so we look, we missed the opportunity to actually have a gallery space for him. So we are going to have to present it digitally. We are looking at some other options where we might find another venue to show some of the work, which I'm hoping will come off but yeah, no he wouldn't, he didn't know. But he did say to me towards the end, he phoned me from hospital and said, “Ted, I think we should put them on the web. And then we sell them and don’t sell them too cheap, $500 each, but you know, that'll be enough money to have the exhibition.” So he wasn't, he was aware that the web existed and he was aware of the opportunities that that the web provided. So I think he might be quite pleased, actually.

**BRENDAN:**

I was just going to say that yeah, that is a lot for a pretty huge endeavour for one man to take on his shoulders. Yeah, huge burden. And yes, it is sad that we've community and sort of lost him. But I guess at least people will still be able to engage with it after, after the fact.

**TED:**

Indeed.

**BRENDAN:**

Our next question for you is that the we think that there are probably a lot of students who want to engage more with the gallery, get more out of it while they're at university. And so I'm wondering what your tips or thoughts might be on how they can get more out of the gallery than they already are.

**TED:**

We're always open. We hope more people will come. (Laughs) I think what you guys are doing is so important, because one of the best ways of getting people into the gallery is word of mouth. And so the fact that you're there as our ambassadors telling people that this is an exciting opportunity and to come into the gallery. It's cool in winter – cool in summer, warm in winter. The coffee's cheap. It's a great environment, you'll meet people. There's always something fantastic to see. And it's right on the corner of the campus. So, yeah, we're hoping that more and more people will just walk through the door. Hopefully they'll become ambassadors as you guys have become. Hopefully, they'll come to our culture club events each semester, where they have the opportunity to see the exhibition and listen to music being played by students from the Conservatorium. We would like the gallery to be a hub that everybody remembers as part of the university life. Unfortunately, we know that quite a lot of people go through their whole time at UWA, come out at the end, and then say, oh, was there a gallery there? So we have work to do, but we would like as many students as possible to be able to enjoy the experience of coming into the gallery, having fun, meeting people and getting the opportunity to see the world through somebody else's eyes.

**BRENDAN:**

I guess that would be the key selling point then right, especially with how flat the earth is getting in terms of, you know, globalisation has been going on for a while now. So that sort of seem to be at the peak of it, you know, there's so many people from different kinds of backgrounds through the internet, or even in person just because people are able to travel so much more that are interacting with each other. So it's probably more important than ever, for people to have a better grasp of what the world is like through the eyes of someone from a radically different background so that they are able to get the most out of them, or not get the most out of but interact better with them. Sorry I don't think that's the best way to word it, but…

**TED:**

We have a task to do too, because we need to be able to present more artists from different cultural backgrounds. The next exhibition that the Berndt Museum is holding, it's called *Expressions of India*. And that is some of the work in our collection that In the Berndt Museum, which is from from India, obviously. We've also shown work from Korea, we've shown work from Japan. We've shown work from Indonesia. We are part of this amazing time zone, which if you add in the Indian Ocean region is two thirds of the world's population. That's extraordinary. We haven't at the moment, used the gallery as an opportunity to show the wide range of cultural experiences and ways of viewing the world that that timezone offers us. So there is a challenge for us. And I think it's, it's a great opportunity to open up our doors a bit more. And we're keen to do that. Because I think, as you say, seeing the world through different eyes and through the different ways that people interact with each other and through the experiences that they have. That's really, really important.

**ZAHRAA:**

And might just interject and ask the question I was told not to ask. I've always been curious -do you have a favourite colour?

**TED:**

A favourite colour! Ah, interesting. My favourite colour changes pretty much day to day. I go on a walk every morning around the neighbourhood and I take my phone with me of course and I take photographs. And for instance the sky this morning was just extraordinary. It was almost like it was bleeding. And I thought that particular colour, that sort of magenta red, isn’t that beautiful? And yesterday, it was really soft and delicate pink. And I thought that was fabulous. But then a few days before, it was this golden yellow glow, that I just thought was extraordinary. So yeah, changes pretty much moment to moment, really. (Laughs). What I love about the world is that it is such a fantastic palette no matter where you look. You can find colours interacting with each other, you know, you see a red next to a blue and think ah wow, look at that, that is fantastic.

**ZAHRAA:**

I can confirm that I’ve gotten the same response from almost every artist that I have spoken to.

**TED:**

(Laughs). Yeah, why limit yourself. Mind you, there is Ad Reinhardt, who only used black, so…

**ZAHRAA:**

(Laughs) Each to their own.

**TED:**

Each to their own, indeed. You guys, thank you, that’s been fantastic. I really enjoyed talking with you and very much enjoyed meeting you. So I hope you have fantastic careers ahead of you yourselves, and I’m really grateful that you’re engaging with the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery while you’re on campus and I hope that that continues after you’ve graduated as well.

**VICTOR:**

Thanks very much, that was really informative and quite inspiring.

**ZAHRAA:**

It was great to have a chance to speak to yourself, and we do appreciate the time you’ve made for us as well.