**LWAG Talks**

**A podcast by Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery**

*MUSIC, TEXT AND VISUAL ART* with Dr. Janice Lally and Associate Professor Tanya Dalziell, featuring Caitlyn Stone with Josh Adams and St George’s College Chapel Consort Choir.

**Dr. Janice Lally:**

I am Doctor Janice Lally, the Curator of Academic and Public Programs at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery at the University of Western Australia.

On Saturday afternoon on the 17th April, I hosted an event titled: *Recreation - Exploring Ekphrasis through words and music.*

It was inspired by the artworks of Olga Cironis in the exhibition*Dislocation***,** held during the period 27 February to 5th June 2021 at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery.

The event was created by Caitlyn Stone, a student in her third year of study at UWA and Joshua Adams a Perth-born singer and multi-award-winning choral composer, and performed by The St George's College Consort. It was introduced by Associate Professor Tanya Dalziell the Discipline Chair of English and Literary Studies in the School of Humanities at UWA.

With Paul Genoni, Professor Dalziell is co-author of *Half the Perfect World: Writers, Dreamers and Drifters on Hydra*, 1955-1964 (2018), which won the 2019 Prime Minister’s Literary Award for Non-Fiction and is being made into a feature film.

Her most recent book, published last year is on the Australian author, Gail Jones, and she is currently writing a book for Melbourne University Press on the Perth author, Joan London.

Thanks to our campus and student partners: Discipline of English and Literary Studies and St George’s College Consort.

**Tanya Dalziell:**

Thank you, Janice, for the introduction; I would also like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Wadjuk Noongar land, and I pay my respects to its custodians, past present and future.

It is my real pleasure to say a few words before the piece we are about to hear – a piece that responds to the exhibition around us, and which I hope you will have the chance to see deeply and reflect on following this performance.

The multidisciplinary, international regarded artworks that are on display are by the Perth-based artist, Olga Cironis. And they offer us a survey of artistic practice and querying that spans some thirty years.

The title of the exhibition is Dislocation, which captures Cironis’ abiding and urgent concern. As she notes: “Experiencing and seeing injustice of how people – migrant people, women, children, people in poverty – are treated by others in our democratic system is embedded in my work. I explore the space between the haves and the have nots, and the human desire to belong”.

This notion of dislocation carries with it a sense of both spatial and existential upset, but at the same time poses a representational challenge. How to imagine such dislocation ethically, politically and aesthetically?

Cironis’ work offers multiple possibilities; my eye, and thinking, is caught by the persistent presence in this art of the stitch. The stitch not only recalls the long-standing association of sewing and feminine hands; it also brings forth the notion of the suture, which in medical terms, is the stitching over of wounds. These specific stitches look to a time when they are no longer needed; when the hurt is healed. By contrast, Cironis’ stitches are permanent and purposefully present. They are not neatly tied and tucked out of sight, as we might expect in a garment, which has the effect of cover over the labouring bodies that have produced it. Instead, we are asked to attend to these stitches, which are perhaps no more shockingly presented than in the portrait-piece, Alexandra. Layered on a finely sewn textile is a photograph of the artist, her eyes both challenging and saddened; her mouth stitched tight. It is an image impossible to read independent of the other images we have seen, of desperate and defiant refugee protest.

At the same time, this image both confirms and critiques a pervasive idea that is held of art, namely that it is silent. In a literal sense this might be true, but I find it hard to accept that this image, or bottomless baby cots stitched with institutional-like blankets, are anything but quiet.

And this is why, I think, the piece we are going to hear today by Caitlyn Stone, Josh Adams and the St. George’s College Chapel Consort might be thought of as being in conversation with Cironis’ works. These art works are loud and demand a response; a response, rather than an explanation or translation into words and sound, is what this piece by Caitlyn and Josh offers.

As such, the performance is ekphrastic. Ekphrasis is, aptly enough given Cironis’ birthplace, a Greek word that was used originally to denote a skill in describing something in vivid detail. When the term was turned to Romantic uses in the early nineteenth century, it came to mean the poetic capacity to powerfully conjure in words a thing that does not actually exist in the material world. As such, ekphrasis also points to the creation or construction of poetry itself. It is a representation of a representation, with John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1819) probably the most famous example of this type of ekphrastic poetry.

More common today, ekphrasis is used to describe literary depictions of visual works, or the ways in which poetry can turn to art as a departure point for reflection. It can further be understood as an attempt to trick time; art (presumed, perhaps erroneously, to be still) is a taken up as a formal challenge for writing to emulate. In this scenario, language, which otherwise moves through space in accordance with linear time, come to be miraculously frozen like a painting or a statue. Or, as we’ll hear today, ekphrasis can lead us to thinking about how literary and indeed sonic responses to art can give each form new emphases and unexpected inflections.

Ekphrasis refers us to how artforms, and indeed artforms and life, are mutually implicated and enhancing. It is an idea writ large by the reflective glass surfaces of the photographic series, *Into the Woods Alone* (2013), which the work of Caitlyn and Josh expressly addresses. The ghosts of ourselves that are reflected back to us in and by these images speak to the ekphrastic gesture that is at the heart of the piece we are being presented with today.

So, with those thoughts at play, I would like now to introduce both Caitlyn and Josh, and the Consort, so that we can move on and listen to what we came to hear.

Caitlyn Stone is currently completing the third year of her Bachelor of Arts degree, here at UWA. She is majoring in both English Literature and German studies. She is the president of the UWA Winthrop singers, is involved in theatre performances and has also sung with the St George's College Chapel choir.

Joshua Adams is a Perth-born singer and multi-award-winning choral composer. In 2018 he completed his BA with Honours in Music at UWA. Currently, he is the Principal Cantor at St Mary’s Cathedral, the Musical Director of the Holy Spirit Choir at The University of Notre Dame, and a Graduate Artist at St George’s College. He plans to undertake a Master's degree in consort singing at the University of York, starting this September.

Caitlyn and Josh have collaborated together on numerous occasions, to combine Caitlyn's writing with Josh's fantastic compositions, and present it in a choral setting.

Which brings me to the St George's College Chapel Consort. The consort was founded in February 2018 by Director of Music Christophe Karas. The Consort is comprised of exceptional music scholarship students, and maintains a rigorous, year-round performance schedule of regular services, College events, and public events. Central to the College's culture is a weekly service of Compline performed by the Consort exclusively for College residents - a beautiful late-night candlelit service where our begowned students enjoy respite from their daily studies. The Consort receive mentorship from Vocal Specialist Brianna Louwen.

Would you please join me in warmly welcoming them.

St George’s College Chapel Consort Choir continues to sing.

*Into the Woods Alone* (2013)

After the work of Olga Cironis

Who goes there?

Who moves the trees?

What spirit walks in light, half-formed?

Speak; I shall be mute and kiss your feet.

“Lie down again, you beast.”

“You beast”, I hear the two men say.

Dear arm, reach out, pull back, back, back

Before I fall in the black dirt, black.

Oh, lie down again, dear beast.

The mist and leaves

Cut straight across the chest.

I cross myself, head to breast.

Finite, vile, I lie. I take my rest.

Here in the woods.

Here in the woods, alone.