

NAVA: in conversation, Episode Seven

[Introduction music]

Voiceover: The National Association for the Visual Arts is the peak body protecting and promoting the professional interests of the Australian visual arts. NAVA: in conversation is a series exploring the issues and challenges of working in the sector. We speak with artists, curators and administrators to gain insight into the experiences of contemporary practice and seek to propose ideas for change, progress and resilience in both local and global contexts.

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Penelope Benton: First I'd like to acknowledge the Guringai peoples of the land of where we are meeting and pay my respects to the Aboriginal people who are listening and to elders past, present and emerging. The new documentary feature *Whiteley*, is a visual journey into the private life and creative legacy of Australia's most iconic artist Brett Whiteley, told in his own words using personal letters, notebooks and photographs interwoven with reconstructions, animations, archival interviews and rare footage. I'm here with Wendy Whiteley to discuss the film and the impact of this story on the dialogue around the value of visual artists in Australia, thanks for joining us Wendy.

Wendy Whiteley: Nice for me to be here.

Penelope Benton: This documentary is so important in showing that being an artist can be a legitimate full time career, a real job, as they say, what made Brett to decide to peruse art full-time?

Wendy Whiteley: Well he always drew, as a kid he drew, and he got positive attention for that, it was treated as a good thing to do, his parents kind of encouraged him and his father kind of put it together for him, a little note book of his drawings. Later on, in life I met people who used to give their children great big canvases to paint on and things when their whole idea of children's art was being something almost as good as adult art, and that whole theory that all kids can draw but then it kind of gets wound out of them and things. So he always got good attention, as did I, so he had a kind of curiosity that went with that and then he was quite good at most things, Brett, for a while, because he looked so odd. Then there's the famous story he was sitting in church on Sunday chapel at the boarding school which he loathed in Bathurst and he found a Vincent book on the floor and it hit a nerve, basically he knew nothing about him, I didn't know much at that age either about Vincent but that was all kind of patched up after *Lust For Life* came out, the big film, on Vincent at the time with the paintings blown up on such a huge scale. I think Vincent Van Gogh entered so many people's consciousness through that, you know, it's amazing because they're so packed with energy and things, it just stayed in people's mind. Both Brett and I had kind of honed out skills with our visual intelligence because we considered the visual arts as another form of language really, and communication and a lot of people don't get that, or they don't have, I'm not sure whether it's that they don't educate themselves visually, or they don't have that kind of a brain, I'm not quite sure what the answer to that is. Brett had that kind of a brain and kind of curiosity and that kind of ambition. I had all of those things except the ambition, you know really, I didn't have that huge ambition to make a profession and make it my career. So, I married an artist instead and went with an artist and lived the life without having to, and

I've been trying to make up for it ever since a bit, but you know. I think partly the thing of being a professional artist is that you have to earn a living. And of course, when we, Brett's father was horrified at the idea as was my mother at the idea, because of the myth you had to starve in a garret, which was a bit of a hangover from Vincent of course, that you were just going to live a life of abject poverty as an artist, well that's not really been true for a very long time. The balance here is such a small market that it can only support enough people and there's still that slight thing that in order to either get an international career or, be accredited with being great, is that you have to go away first and then come back. Well we went away, because Brett won the scholarship very young which you know the Whiteley Scholarship tries to replace to some degree, but we didn't come back for 10 years. So we had an extraordinary education in the visual arts at a time when Australia wasn't providing one at all and nor were there blockbuster shows that we have here now, so it felt very isolating in Australia but I still think it's the best education you can have, is actually go there and just spend a lot of time in museums and seeing how it's done. Technique you can learn in art school but none of the other stuff, they can tell you how to pay your taxes, or how to have a career it's the minute you walk out of school, but I think that's all a bit of bullshit really. I think there has to be a period where, unless you're super talented, and also quite charismatic, you're going to have a hard time getting good shows and establishing a buying public, you know. Enough to make your living but there a lot of people in this country that actually live quite good lives out of being visual artists. I'm not talking about the rest of the Arts (capital A) being actors and musicians and things like that, I think there is always a bit of struggle but it's nothing like the great myth.

Penelope Benton: That brings me to what I was going to ask you next which is the perception that being an artist is easy, but you did mention this a little bit, but professional artists are swamped with the administrative demands that are required by anyone running their own business. And in the documentary, we get a sense that you play such a pivotal role throughout Brett's career, not only as inspiration for much of his work, but really in managing, I guess, the practice and the business of Brett Whiteley.

Wendy Whiteley: I wasn't conscious of being an admin person. All the day to day stuff, Brett wasn't going to do that. And if I'd said I'm not doing it either, I want to paint, the relationship would have gone out the window in two seconds. I never thought about it, I just did whatever needed doing. And we lived, until we bought this house, we more or less lived in one room wherever we were. The studio, so the painting and the living and everything was going on in one space. People paint for the size of the house they're in, the building or the space they're in, so Brett's pictures really didn't start expanding to big sizes until he started getting big studio spaces to work in and make a hell of a mess while he was doing it. Which is different to try and all live in one room. In London I used draw a line across the floor and say don't cross it, which of course got totally ignored, but it was an attempt to just have a space where you could sit without getting covered in paint and having somewhere that you just felt was your space. A room of one's own, like Virginia Woolf said we should all have, and I think everyone should have, a space of their own. But when we got this house, I mean apart from that it was what, paying taxes, you get a tax accountant and you take in a box of stuff and you give it to him and say sort it out, you know. I mean now people have to deal with the media much more, and obviously it helps to be articulate and to have a bit of charisma. Brett's a character, you know, he didn't like some of the judgements put on him, he was born that kind of character, an outsider kind of character, and that can get you into deep water, always identifying with the outside. I did also because of my background and my father more than anything else. I was rebellious and, you know, I didn't mind being, in fact I hated being ignored much more than I liked being noticed. Now that can or can't help you. It can get you

into deep water in other ways, but it also be quite useful. When we came back here, we came back here with a reputation which we didn't deserve at the time.

Penelope Benton: Do you think so? Why would you say that?

Wendy Whiteley: No we'd lived in New York for a couple of years, Brett had had major success in London and Europe and New York. A couple of big shows. When he kind of pissed off from New York because he got upset about the American dream not being exhibited by Marlborough-Gerson who was his gallery in New York and went to Fiji, when he got busted in Fiji we came back with the media all over us, you know. But because they thought we were drug addicts, not because they thought Brett was a great artist, they didn't know anything about it. But also we had the stamp of good housekeeping for the Australian media, you know, we were celebrities and it wouldn't have mattered what you were doing. But somebody who had had success abroad, it didn't matter where it was, but abroad, as long they didn't have to wait for here. At the time we got back it was 1970 and the '60s were just starting. We had already been through the whole thing of that abroad so really all we wanted to do was find, we didn't intend to stay actually. Because of that thing of it feeling. The one thing about the change over that 10 years had been that Australia didn't nearly feel as isolated as it had done before, and also we could afford to get the hell out when we needed to. Certainly young artists can do that now, it's cheaper to travel, it's not as much fun, it's much more expensive when you get to the other end and much more dangerous. Everyone bagging on about the beauty of the '60s was that, it had its dark side as well, but it was easier in those days. But then there were a lot less people claiming to be artists or calling themselves artists, whatever that means. Sometimes I think they need to think up another word.

Penelope Benton: I'm interested in what you just said about you thinking that you didn't deserve the reputation and it was really more or less based on the celebrity status of being busted for drugs. I mean part of NAVA's main agenda is to raise the profile and acknowledgment of the value of artists in Australia and infrastructure that supports them. Wendy, how do you see this documentary as an avenue to open up a discussion on the value of artists in Australia? Do you think we should be valuing artists here?

Wendy Whiteley: Of course! I mean, you know for me, I can only really answer for myself, a lot of my friends and lot of people I know, life without the Arts, capital A with an S on the end, in whatever form it takes, and most people are interested in maybe two of the forms and they may not be so interested in the other two or the other three, whatever exists outside that, but specifically involved in, let's just concentrate on the visual arts for the moment, yes I think it is important because it just unthinkable to me. I know there are lot of people who think it is not that important, but I don't think any culture survives without a balance between the two things. I'm not in the least bit interested in sport but, it's not to say Brett wasn't, but you know watching, but I'm not in the least bit and never have been. Don't like team sport, don't like any of that thing. But it's not like I'm not interested in the physical, it's just for me that not something I am interested in. So ok that's something that a lot of attention is given to in this country and in any country you go to, so it's not just Australia anymore that's obsessed with soccer and football and things like that. We used to think in the old days that it was just Australia but it's not. Because there are huge audiences that go to these things. Pop music is another thing. Brett envied the power of being a pop musician, one who was well known, because it's an incredible power sensation to be able to go into a huge auditorium somewhere and have thousands of people having an amazing time. And the benefits from it are also great. On the other hand our friends involved in pop music are very envious of Brett being able to go into his studio by himself without the band and the managers and the

travelling and the collapse of the families because they were never there or the temptations of all the girls or boys outside the room at night, you know I mean every life is complicated but it's fascinating, that kind of power is fascinating and I think any creative artist is interested in power in a way, certainly the power to communicate in a way that is meaningful. I don't think anybody does any of that in a vacuum at all, it's not like being Buddhist monk in a cave, it is a form of communication and you need the audience to communicate with. So the importance of art is providing that place to go, any of the arts is providing that place for the people. And I don't think it is elitist anymore, more and more are going to the museums and more and more people are consider that to be part of their lives and that has changed vastly from, there used to be nobody in the museums, now there's almost too many people in the museum. And a grumpy old thing like me will go oh my god I wish they would all go and watch football. When you are trying to look at a painting through 15 people holding up iPhones you just think it has become too popular and too important for a lot of people. The problem is you have no idea what is going on in their heads, you don't know whether this crowd is just ticking off a travel log thing that they think they have to do, or whether they are seriously looking at the work, seriously enough to actually contemplate. I think it is getting harder and I certainly don't think that people looking at stuff on their iPhones is anything like looking at a painting in the museum where it is hung or any given space where they are hung, it's a completely different experience. I'm 76 now and Brett would have been 78 and the world has changed enormously, but there were plenty of years when painting was supposed to dead and that's turned out to be a great reversal that's happened. And the entire of Europe and America are obsessed with paintings from Brett's generation and before.

Penelope Benton: Which is so exciting to hear you say that because particularly with the arts schools a lot of dialogue about whether there is any commitment to the old disciplines or if we are all in new media which I think is a bit of a debate.

Wendy Whiteley: It's one of the main reasons it is very important to keep the National Art School going with a studio-based curriculum and whether they are free from all that other stuff you were talking earlier about teaching artists about trying to get a show the minute they walk out of the art school or whether they can somehow, I don't know. Even be an artist, a lot of people go to art school, its good place to grow up, but they are not all going to be artists, but they might make terrific teachers or admin people, you know in one way or another, but there has to be some way to support them afterwards. It's still a very individualistic thing to make it, in any of the arts fields as an individual doing your thing because the audience demands that you come up with something that's unmistakably yours, good, better and different.

Penelope Benton: What do you think, I mean just touching on some of the things you've just mentioned, what do you think are the key ingredients for a long term successful career and international recognition as a visual artist? Is it possible in today's...?

Wendy Whiteley: Well we'll start with the first question. The ingredients are obviously talent, ambition, stubbornness, the ability to ride the rough days, and the ability to make a fool of yourself sometimes, and you know, survive it, curiosity, I mean a huge bag of things come together in one lump and it is very difficult to find which is the starting point. Probably somebody telling you you are good at what you do is a good starting point, that is encouraging. You need an enormous amount of tenacity and you need to work bloody hard. That gets you somewhere. The international bit, there are two ways obviously now, either you've got a gallery that takes you to the art fairs all over the place, so you start being spread around a bit and other people get to see you, you're lucky enough to be in an exhibition when

there are some tourists coming around and they see it and they take you out of it, or you go and live somewhere else for while. That's what I would have said a few years ago, that it is essential, if you want an international career you'll have to go and live in New York or London or somewhere else because the punters want to meet the artist, they want to know them, they want you to go to dinner. And that can sometimes be nice and sometimes a price you have to pay when you're young.

Penelope Benton: Do you think there is anything that Australia as a country can change to create that sort of platform or potential for artists to grow to that sort of status, like Anish Kapoor or Damien Hirst?

Wendy Whiteley: I don't think Australia can do much about it, except Australia as a culture, which involves kind of bureaucrats really. Their whole idea would be to not send show to the Royal Academy like they did a couple of years ago, to actually send a good show instead of one that was so rubbished it was unbelievable. I believe the Australian impressionist show has done well recently and it was smaller, and it got much more positive attention. But once again, a good deal of luck that Brett was involved in, the Tate did one and Whitechapel did one, well the Whitechapel one was the one that really made people sit up and take notice. And then of course Brett got involved in the whole British thing then with Hockney and all the other people that came up, you know it was one of those moments in London when there was an incredible uprising of energy into the visual arts which was unusual for London because you know it's always been seen as theatre and Shakespeare and all that stuff. Not such a huge reputation, I mean Paris had that, the French and the Italians have the kind of visual artists thing tied up in sense that's where the genius, you know, the really creative people are coming from in the visual arts. London suddenly had that huge surge and all the people of that time was the time we were there, and Brett was involved, mostly through Brian Robinson and Whitechapel.

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Penelope Benton: As part of the measures to ensure a conducive environment for the visual arts in Australia, NAVA has been active in the call for a national arts policy. You mentioned at the NAVA screening of the *Whiteley* documentary in Sydney that you've been speaking to Arts Ministers about arts policy and supporting artists, what did you say to them?

Wendy Whiteley: Well one meeting was completely by chance in Cairns, before that, again by chance, I mean I didn't know it was going to happen, opening the film, I think it was the first occasion that Don Harwin went to, you know officially, he had just been named Arts Minister and he turned up there, so I met him and we had a nice chat, he met a lot of people and it kind of was his entrance into the visual arts. And luckily Don Harwin especially is one of the few Arts Ministers who is interested specifically in the visual arts rather than theatre or literature or opera or whatever, you know, the visual arts is the thing that he loves. So having done that he went to the Art Gallery and started talking to the people there and now they have got the money, I'm sure that helped, having an Arts Minister that thought it was a really good idea to build the extension. There's a lot of people who don't think it is a good idea, but on the whole I think it will work extremely well, I have been very supportive of the idea. And you know Michael Brand's been given such a hard time about it and I think that is very unfair, very unfair. A lot of the things that happen that people thought were appalling at the Art Gallery was set in train well before Michael Brand arrived, and that was set in train by all the cuts by the government to the arts. I don't know, it's difficult you know, once anything, any institution gets involved and dependent on the government, tax payer's money, they are

also giving up quite a lot of the ability to control what they do. So it's a difficult, a bit of high wire walk, because you have to do two things. Edmund Capon was very keen that the museums in Australia always stayed free, open to the public, now that's very English thing, though I believe they have started changing that in England too and most of the museums in the world are finding that they can't keep going on funding, and Australia actually gets probably more. I keep saying why the hell don't we have another arts lottery.

Penelope Benton: We've been talking about that too.

Wendy Whiteley: Why don't we have an arts lottery? Look what London achieved. Probably too big now, the extension on the Tate, it's huge, there's Tate in Cornwall, the Tate has done an amazing job. The opera got picked up and everything. Everybody started to complain because the hospitals were falling down and all the money was going to the arts, but at the time when they were selling those tickets for the arts, exactly the same as with the Opera House, we would never have had the Opera House if we relied on the government to build it, you know, because everybody would have said it cost too much. But when they are buying lottery tickets they don't give a stuff about things like that because there is a chance somebody is going to win some money back. Fair enough, I mean it doesn't matter, but it seems to me to be a very good way of raising money. Certainly in this country there is a bit more philanthropy going on than there used to be, and America wouldn't have what they have without that being rife in the beginning. The thing that annoys me about Australia and the governments is that the arts are always the first thing to be cut back the minute they get in trouble and there's always the feeling that it will come at the end, so I am quite surprised at what has happened in the last couple of weeks with the money being handed out. We get people like Brandis taking money away from the Australia Council, not that I am all that involved in the Australia Council, but I mean you know, a lot of people think they don't make the right decisions, but you've never going to make everybody happy whatever you do.

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Penelope Benton: We started to talk before about what you said to the politicians when you were promoting the film and you mentioned Don, but I remember you said something about chatting to Mitch Fifield.

Wendy Whiteley: Oh yeah, they were both semi accidental but the other one was really accidental it was that he happened to be up in Cairns at the same time the show was opening, for something else because he's Arts and Communications and there was something to do with communications, I think it was to do with the medical app, they were trying to get out, people connecting to the medical app and he was up there with an old mate, a real Queensland politician and I thought oh this is going to be, immediately Joh Bjelke Peterson came to mind and Queensland and white shoe brigades and all of those things, he turned out to be absolutely nothing like it, said what's that and he was supporting equal rights marriage and he was supporting AIDS in some way, so this very right wing politician had the absolute other side and Fifield had said, he told Mitch Fifield the *Whiteley* thing was opening so he phoned up the gallery, Andrea Churcher, up there and said can come and can I open it? They were thrilled, you know, he came in and I had a terrific chat with him. He had really been given the arts, but he didn't think he had ever really met an artist, so we made joke about things, but he was very affable and very open to the idea of supporting the arts too. It's not until you actually get the opportunity to talk to these people in a non-abrasive way. This is the difficulty, when you are dependent on government money, or institutional money, tax payers money it's a fine line to walk and you have to make individual decisions

about when you are going to say 'having nothing to do with that' and probably very few visual artists in this country can afford to do that, cut their nose off despite their face. We used to get quite deeply involved with politics, demonstrations and things, Brett did in New York, very much so. I would go to the demonstrations he would paint big posters and things for Norman Mailer and things like that, never made the slightest bit of difference which was a huge disappointment, death of a romantic idea really, there is nothing wrong with having it you've got to survive the disappointment, but it doesn't make that much difference. It can only make a difference if somebody sees it, an individual sees it and it makes a difference to them, and then there are a whole lot of individuals and it makes a difference then. So once again it became a kind of group idea. And you still think it's tough to be an artist in Australia, do you?

Penelope Benton: Yeah I do. We haven't had...

Wendy Whiteley: A lot of people I have mentioned having a very good life had to teach, and Brett's an exception, he never had to teach. Sidney Nolan never taught, Arthur Boyd never taught, that generation didn't because they went to England basically, they got the hell out of here. The people who stayed here mostly had to teach, or they lived pretty rough bohemian lives, probably great lives but they didn't own anything much, maybe a run down house and an old bomb of a car. I've got friends who still live like that but they're happy and frankly we didn't have anything for years and years and years, we didn't own a bloody thing. We had enough money to get on with it, that's all, and travel, and go somewhere else and find an empty farm house and move in it and sweep out the bat shit and move in, pump the water and cook over a thing. I'm sorry that that doesn't exist a bit more. The sense of space is terribly important. Actually, Colin McGuinness said that to us in London when we first met him, the most important thing is space for each person and the money to buy the space to live in, it's true.

Penelope Benton: Space is real problem.

Wendy Whiteley: It that room of one's own thing again. The money is the pinnacle, getting on the rich list you know.

Penelope Benton: I mean sure there's always going to be people that think that way. No, the majority of artists that I speak to and that contact us are not looking for the money, no one is an artist for the money. People are artists because they want to be, but people do struggle eating and you know getting through the day and finding it hard to, I guess, compete for visibility in a place where there are so many people, more people wanting that as a career. Particularly the cuts to the government arts budget has had a huge impact on artists' morale, it's a huge blow to people wondering if they are wasting their time, if they should bother being an artist when they are really passionate about what they're doing.

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Wendy Whiteley: I think we are doing alright in Australia. In fact, I think we have done remarkably well. We are hungry to create a culture that is Australian. It's going to change over time, we're getting more influences here now, and more things are coming in much more quickly, but there's still, you know, there's a reversal to going out to the outback and things now with the younger painters I noticed. Ben and Luke Sciberras and all that lot, they are all going off on painting trips out there, but they are also pissing off to Europe three times a year as well, so it's the same kind of naïve structure we had before we went. We'd seen nothing

except what was in the Art Gallery. And some of those artists like Lloyd Rees are so sadly neglected.

Penelope Benton: You mentioned before that we're hungry for culture.

Wendy Whiteley: You see culture is another word, what the fuck does that mean? Pop culture? Do you mean the culture that includes sport and everything else with it, yes of course you do. When you say culture you're not really talking high culture which is what we used to think being cultured meant, that you had a good education, you read Proust from cover to cover, you knew who Shakespeare was, you knew few pages, or you knew a lot about them.

Penelope Benton: Is that what you meant when you said culture or were you referring to identity?

Wendy Whiteley: We keep talking about generating a culture that is uniquely Australian. You know, film has done a bit, but it has a tendency to hang around either the dark side, which is you know the murders and things that go on in this country, or it hangs around the dopey lot, for me. I mean yes they're unique and they are funny and there's a Australian sense of humour which I have always loved, you mostly get it in the outback, the kind of laid back kind of situation. That's not about being clever being so much, well in a way it is, I don't know. We've wanted people to come here a look at our stuff, we want an acknowledgement for our playwrights for our things and we are beginning to earn it. I think the acting field has helped a hell of a lot, people don't even know where the fuck Australia is. A lot of Americans wouldn't know still where it is. But Americans are, you know, particularly inward turning in some parts of it, they really don't know what's going on in the rest of the world at all and they don't particularly want to. They really don't. And it's just this necessity to feel that you have to be part of a broad world thing now and it's because everything is coming at us. I mean we are doing it, it is happening, in spite of bureaucracy thinking it is good to have policy about it or not. It will generate itself. I'm pretty wary of getting too involved with government. I mean for example I knew for a fact that if I had phoned up the railways, or written a letter to the railways and said would you mind if I turn that dreadful rubbish dump in front of my house which has been there for 100 years and you've completely ignored and is now full of rubbish and ghastly and dangerous and ugly, would you mind if I turned that into a garden at my own expense? They would have said no, absolutely no. So if I had got the no and then tried to do it I would have been arrested, so not asking them was the best policy, just not getting involved. Also knowing that I was at the risk of being thrown off all the time, and actually in the end it worked because they never threw me off, mostly because it wasn't costing them anything, you know, if I had asked for help or asked them to do something for me there would have been no again. Because you are dealing with bureaucrats and you are dealing with people and always dealing with levels all the time with people who can't actually make a decision. So you're saying I'd like to talk to your boss, no no you can't talk to the boss because he is too busy to talk to you, but we can do this this and this and you can't move past that cause we can't make the decision. That buck passing mentality that gets into bureaucratic institutions, it's just it's the death of any kind of creativity really.

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Penelope Benton: Do you think art can...

Wendy Whiteley: Can change the world?

Penelope Benton: Maybe it can change the world.

Wendy Whiteley: I think it does, but I think it is very subtle and it's very slow.

Penelope Benton: It tells the stories and the perspectives.

Wendy Whiteley: It comes overall from the kinds of societies that set up the arts at different level than the idea of it changing, stopping wars and changing things like that because you know, I mean war and that kind of violence, they are running around and destroying it, they're not building it they're destroying it or they are keeping it and selling it for money, for ransom, doing whatever.

Penelope Benton: I think you said before that art is a visual language and I suppose that's what it's doing for, and with, those situations is that art probably is the old thing that has the capacity to articulate what is going on there in a way.

Wendy Whiteley: There's a lot of people who that that is the job of art and I don't think is all the time and I think people get really overburdened with most of the visual arts being kind of gloomy and about violence or pornography or it's got a political point and it is grinding it over, depends how well its done of course, but actually I don't think it has nearly as much impact on anybody unless it's particularly profound works of art. I mean the black Goyas about a very hard time in Spain with the war and the thing going on in Spain, and he's illustrated that in a way that's very meaningful and affects people and the way they think about the horror of what went on. But it took somebody as great of an artist as Goya to do that, it's not done by any old person just grinding out some kind of political message or putting graffiti on the wall or something. That's something else and it's another form. Maybe all attempts to communicate but it is another form, it's not what should be under the heading of the arts that government should be supporting or having arts policies about, you know. In a way everything people do, you know, a garden done well is an art form, anything that involves communication with a thing is an art form but how much of that needs to be supported by government and how much of it will survive, if it's not, it's going to be up to the people who are actually using it.

Penelope Benton: Or making it.

Wendy Whiteley: Or going there and if the public stop going to museums you know and galleries and things like that. Edmund really changed the Art Gallery of NSW around. The whole thing has been stuck in the mud a bit for a while but hopefully it will regenerate and there are more works that will be able to be shown. But I don't think it is the duty of any Australian museums to be trying to buy absolutely phenomenally expensive pictures and bring them here for people to see. It would be much better to spend money on, well, I'll give an example, the rather mediocre Cezanne they bought for Edmund's parting gift which cost \$14 million. In my view it would have been much better to spend \$14 million on putting people on planes to go to France and see some Cezannes, if that is really what they want to concentrate on, and bring them straight back, let them have three days looking at Cezanne, you know, it would be much more meaningful than that little picture that nobody looks at anymore much. Or the Vincent Potato Eaters or something, what's the point of New South Wales having, or Australia, one Vincent? Ollie bought some good things actually with her money, the Bonart portrait, it happens to be a beautiful little portrait in its own right. But people are not going to travel to Australia to see that, or to see international art, they come to

Australia, they want to see great Australian art, we really need to take that more seriously you know. And they will go to London to see, you know, Bacons and they will go, you know, they will go to the big international museums to see the great collections from the past.

Penelope Benton: I think that is a really important message and a good one to finish on.

Wendy Whiteley: Well I hope so, I hope the new building, I keep banging on about it, that's what we should be concentrating on.

Voice over: Head to our website visualarts.net.au for more information on NAVA's advocacy and campaigns for improving the working environment for Australian artists and arts organisations.