

Agenda setters

We identify the latest batch of otherwise behind-the-scenes figures who are shaping the art world and making their mark along the way.

PORTRAIT BY ZAN WIMBERLEY

 Our photographer caught up with Alexie Glass-Kantor at her new home, Artspace in Sydney.

35.

Alexie Glass-Kantor

Alexie Glass-Kantor's energy and entrepreneurialism are renown. When she announced in late 2013, after seven years at the helm of Melbourne's Gertrude Contemporary, that she was leaving to become executive director of Sydney's Artspace, the news came as no great surprise. Glass-Kantor, originally from Sydney, was considered to be among the front-runners for the role. She replaced longstanding Artspace director **Blair French** who some months earlier accepted a position as assistant director, Curatorial and Digital at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia.

Glass-Kantor's achievements at Gertrude Contemporary strengthened her claim for the coveted Artspace directorship. These include her significant development of the International Residency and Visiting Curators programs and the establishment of the highly successful Gertrude's Table Patrons program, which provided the financial underpinnings of Glass-Kantor's ambitious expansion of creative programs. Perhaps her most resonant impact was to nurture a strong sense of community at Gertrude Contemporary where studio artists, alumni, board and staff all speak of her commitment to supporting the development of studio artists and her professional and personal generosity.

While in her role at Gertrude Contemporary Glass-Kantor maintained an active career as an

independent curator. She co-curated the critically acclaimed *Parallel Collisions: 2012 Adelaide Biennial of Australia Art* exhibition, with Art Gallery of New South Wales curator **Natasha Bullock**. Her transition to Artspace coincided with a show she produced for Anna Schwartz Gallery in Sydney titled *You promised me, and you said a lie to me*, which brought together notable international artists such as **Heman Chong** (Singapore), **Laurent Grasso** (France), **Jesse Jones** (Ireland), **Jane** and **Louise Wilson** (UK), **Ming Wong** (Singapore), **Haegue Yang** (Korea) and leading Australian artist **Susan Jacobs**. This project among others reflects Glass-Kantor's internationalism and longstanding interest in the Asia-Pacific region.

The announcement of Glass-Kantor's appointment to Artspace was welcomed on social media and immediately generated speculation about how she will effect change in the organisation. Rather than answering this question directly Glass-Kantor has offered praise for her predecessors over three decades, who she credits with building critical momentum for Artspace through international partnerships, high quality publishing and with effective engagement with the arts community and stakeholders.

Glass-Kantor reveals that the Artspace board and all staff have cleared their diaries in the last week of January for a multiday planning

workshop that will reflect on the achievements and history of the institution and create a vision for its future over the next decade and longer. She comments: "I am interested in developing a shared vision that everyone throughout the organisation will contribute to. It will be an inclusive and collaborative process."

The new strategic plan will span five years from 2015 and will project a decade or more beyond this period says Glass-Kantor. "We are in the enviable position of being able to rethink Artspace, indeed, as a team we hope to reimagine and recalibrate how we integrate programing initiatives and envision the future. An organisation like Artspace isn't a vessel where ideas simply land; Artspace needs to thoughtfully and persistently agitate, contributing to a constantly changing cultural landscape by leading with risk, innovation and accessibility at the foremost of our minds."

In the end says Alexie Glass-Kantor; "Artspace is a generator for ideas and that's not just about exhibitions although the galleries are central to our identity. We are going to focus on not only maintaining the expectations of stakeholder audiences, but explore ways in which we can enhance and establish newly responsive ways of working to provide critical space for artists and myriad audiences. We want to engage the full dynamism, unpredictability, convergence and creation of contemporary art across all our existing platforms and then some."

With Artspace such an important organisation the art world will be watching as Glass-Kantor sets about making her mark.

Melissa Keys

36.

Hector Burton

At Tjala Arts, at Amata in the APY lands, **Hector Burton** is one of a group of senior cultural leaders who art writer **Nicholas Rothwell** described as, "... five men, five kings of desert law – the highest of the high."

Leadership comes naturally to Burton who was "born in the bush and grew up in the bush" and worked as a leading hand in the building industry. His present role, supervising in Amata and at the art centre, includes overseeing the creation of an archive to showcase its contemporary art movement.

The archive will be launched as a book this year: *Tjala Arts. Nganampa Kampatjanka Uungutja – Beneath the Canvas – The Lives and Stories of the Tjala Arts* (Wakefield Press). Over the last two years, Burton has directed the book's production, from choosing the title to its artist-driven content, and the selection of writers and artworks.

"Hector is acutely aware that he and many of the other artists are elderly and that their stories need to be collected and recorded now," said **Shannon O'Meara** from Tjala Arts. The writers involved in the book include Australia's best – **Hetti Perkins, Nici Cumpston, Judith Ryan, Diane Moon** and **Rothwell**.

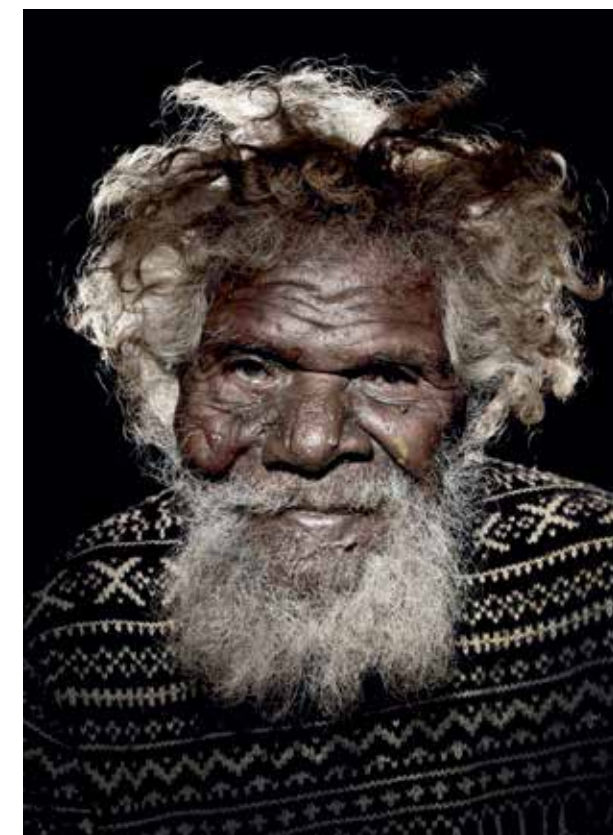
Burton was also integral to the establishment of a cultural exchange between the young and old, the Tjala Arts Kulata Project. It is currently directed by Burton's brother **Willy Kaika Burton** who suggested, "All of the young men are learning this *punu* (wood) and *kulata* (spear) craft again through the old men like me." These skills, imparted to the young men, will be part of *Dark Heart* the 2014 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, describing a potent moment in Amata history when, "Spears moved like a dark cloud across country."

Burton has been an integral part of driving these two ambitious projects and, along the way, he created a new model for the artist as community leader. As an amazing artist himself, exhibition curator, and committed supporter of his community - and its Amata Bombers football team - Burton breaks the mould.

Lowise Martin-Chew

“Hector is acutely aware that he and many of the other artists are elderly and that their stories need to be collected and recorded now.”

Shannon O'Meara



36. Hector Burton

Hector Burton
PHOTO: ADAM NOTT

“Artspace needs to thoughtfully and persistently agitate, contributing to a constantly changing cultural landscape by leading with risk, innovation and accessibility at the foremost of our minds.” Alexie Glass-Kantor

37.

Garis & Hahn

The art market is following the tentative recovery of the United States economy almost as closely as Wall Street. It goes without saying that the co-location of one of the world's major financial centres and the centre of the global art market in New York City is no mere coincidence.

Establishing a new gallery in the city that never sleeps amid the continuing fallout of deepest recession since the Great Depression, and during a period of unprecedented turmoil in the art market takes courage.

In January 2013 two recent Christie's Masters graduates opened a new gallery on Bowery just a block north of the New Museum on the Lower East side of Manhattan. This mixed neighborhood is home to a growing number of galleries including

This new space sets out to differentiate itself as a hybrid that functions between dealer gallery and a kunsthalle.

37. Garis & Hahn
Gallery directors Sophie Hahn and Mary Garis.



Sperone Westwater, LMAK Projects, Salon 94 and Lehmann Maupin. Called Garis & Hahn after its two principals American **Mary Garis** and Sydney-born **Sophie Hahn**, this new space sets out to differentiate itself as a hybrid that functions between dealer gallery and a kunsthalle.

Since its doors opened Garis & Hahn has hosted a New Museum interactive sound project called *Streetscape Symphony* as part of the museum's biennial *Ideas City* festival, and it has presented an exhibition featuring a high profile lineup of Australian artists such as **Vernon Ah Kee**, **Claire Healy** and **Sean Cordeiro**, **Nicholas Folland** and **Amanda Marburg** among others. The gallerists have also worked with other international artists, including **Petros Christostomou** and **Monika Sziladi**.

In 2014 Garis & Hahn will present a major exhibition, developed by British curator **Preeya Seth**, of work by artists emerging out of London hotspot Peckham. It will coincide with art fair Frieze New York in May. Also on the schedule is an exhibition curated by Gagolian's **Max Teicher** that will feature new work by New York painter **Colin Kilian** in dialogue with historic works by abstract expressions.

With the proliferation of international art fairs, and online and other event-related marketing shifting art market dynamics, bricks and mortar galleries like Garis & Hahn will have to continue innovating.

Hahn is up for the challenge and sums up their strategy "we craft an intentionally flexible program and are open to all media, nationalities, topics and all manner of ideas." In the global marketplace diversity is imperative.

Melissa Keys



38. Christchurch Art Gallery
Michael Parekowhai, *Chapman's Homer*, 2011. Bronze, stainless steel.

PHOTO: JOHN COLLIE, CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY TE PUNA O WAIWHETU
COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND MICHAEL LETT, AUCKLAND

38.

Christchurch Art Gallery

The team at Christchurch Art Gallery is devising innovative ways to remain active and open while the doors are closed - since the Canterbury earthquakes in 2011. Among them were two funding campaigns keeping the locals engaged with the gallery and responding to the new dynamic landscape for public art in the city.

The first, in May 2013, was *Populate*, launched on a new arts crowd-funding website called Boosted. *Populate* focused on off-site venues for art, new *Outer Spaces* projects and *Faces from the collection* now being shown in the transitional spaces of the inner-city.

The much more ambitious *Back the Bull* campaign in September 2013 used the crowd-funding website, PledgeMe, helping Christchurch Art Gallery acquire **Michael Parekowhai's** work, *Chapman's Homer*. Initially made for the Venice Biennale in 2011, the 1.8 tonne bronze sculpture was exhibited in post-earth-

"What's great is there's a real sense of community 'buy in', which I've never seen before - the public has really got behind it." Jenny Harper

quake Christchurch in July 2012. It quickly became a symbol of the city's unshakeable strength; letters and feedback poured into the gallery at the time. One stood out: "I couldn't stop smiling with the bulls and then came inside and burst into tears - amazing."

Months later at their 10th anniversary gala dinner, the Art Gallery Trust launched the campaign to bring the bull back to the city permanently, seeking sizeable donations from more conventional donors alongside a six week crowd-funding campaign for \$200,000 matched by the Trust and Westpac. As trustees of the Chartwell Trust we are committed to supporting contemporary art, we became interested supporters as it was something that had not been done before in New Zealand.

Interaction with gallery staff was crucial to *Back the Bull*, with emails from an excited **Jenny Harper**, director of Christchurch Art Gallery, arriving in the Chartwell inbox. "We are on a real roll down here - with a lot of talk about a certain bull," she wrote. "What's great is there's a real sense of community 'buy in', which I've never seen before - the public has really got behind it." Harper emails again: "There have been street barbeques, functions at work places and multi-days at schools. It's a welcome distraction from the road works, house repairs and elections! Children at Fendalton School had their fundraiser today (they made \$623 for the cause!)." Then later: "More than 790 pledgers now and nearly 180 cheques (some as small as \$5 - all with remarkable notes). It's roaring along (so to speak!)."

Finally, a welcome email from Harper: "We have surpassed our crowd-funding PledgeMe target of \$200,000. All donations are matched - between them - by our Trust and Westpac." In the end, the *Back the Bull* campaign was supported by 867 pledgers and 207 who sent in cheques, as well as donors to the Trust's auction and others - including the Chartwell Trust.

Sue Gardiner