

## Complete access: Art Gallery's radical vision

LIAM MANNIX | 1 OCTOBER 2013



A child opening a drawer to view exhibits at the Multiversity Gallery, UBC Museum of Anthropology, in Vancouver, Canada.

ADELAIDE | In the near future, viewing the Art Gallery's complete collection could be as simple as opening a drawer.

That's what the Art Gallery and its director Nick Mitzevich are imagining for the art discovery centre they're proposing for the site of the old Royal Adelaide Hospital.

The new centre would show the gallery's entire 65,000-piece collection.

To put that in perspective, currently only 1 to 2 per cent of the collection are shown at the Art Gallery on North Terrace.

To show the entire collection, Mitzevich is planning to turn to drawers – like those in the Multiversity Gallery in Vancouver, Canada (pictured above).

"All the holdings that the gallery has in its collection would be available for viewing by the public," Mitzevich told InDaily.

"Paintings would be on racks that would pull out, works on paper would be in cabinets and drawers, ceramics would be in glass cases, not beautifully displayed as you might see them in a gallery but instead of looking at one Japanese tea bowl in a glass cabinet you might be able to get 50.

"It would be like a sophisticated storehouse that was safe for the objects and for the public.

"Imagine pulling out a draw and seeing a (Spanish painter Francisco) Goya or a Rembrandt print.

"Imagine having a look at ... the 2000 works that we hold by (early Australian watercolour artist) Hans Heysen in our study drawers.

"There are elements of the collection where we have extraordinary depth. Colonial South Australian works, the works of Hans Heysen, the works of (early Australian painter) Mortimer Menpes, a very significant collection of early South Australian photography."

The proposed centre would cost between \$30 and \$80 million, according to Mitzevich. It was first put to the State Government around a year ago – although back then there was no specific location in mind.

Funding would come from a government-private-commercial coalition, with the Gallery planning to access its network of private benefactors.

The State Government is currently running a design competition to get ideas for the future of the old RAH site. One of the requirements in the [design brief](#) is for any development on the site to be "economically viable".

Mitzevich said the discovery centre would be a major economic generator for the site.

"Our *Turner from the Tate* exhibition ... we generated 41 per cent of our visitors from outside of Adelaide.

"So just that act of bringing people in causes economic activity and prosperity. We would propose that similar cultural activity of this scale and nature would be a destination, would bring purposeful people into the city, and that act would contribute to the vibrancy of

the city.”

The Art Gallery’s proposal is likely to be strongly linked to any proposals put up by the University of Adelaide, which is also eyeing the site.

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“The gallery would like to put in there a contemporary art collection, and if that happened then we would probably put creative writing, architecture, fine arts, a series of our humanities, we would put with that, so that you end up with a place where there’s exhibition space and event space,” Adelaide University vice-chancellor Warren Bebbington [told InDaily last month](#).

**Image:** Bill McLennan