

40 YEARS: KALDOR PUBLIC ART PROJECTS 1969–2009 introduced by John Kaldor

My passion for contemporary art made me do projects and I've been doing them for forty years, to share my love of contemporary art with the Australian public. But forty years is just the beginning, and I want to continue to make better and more important projects in the future.

I am John Kaldor. I have been spending a lot of time lately at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 'cause we're working on *40 years: Kaldor Public Art Projects*. It's very exciting for me, as it really brings back memories that started in 1969 with Jeanne-Claude and Christo.

Because I'm passionate about contemporary art and I was fortunate that, because of business, I could travel to New York, to London, to Paris, I saw what was going on, for example the explosion of pop art, which occurred in the end fifties – early sixties; it was just so different, so vibrant, so exciting. That's when I started to collect. But I thought, collecting wasn't enough; I wanted to share my passion for art, for contemporary art, with the Australian public. So that's how I got to Christo and that's how Little Bay began.

The big difficulty with Little Bay was getting permission. Because in those days Christo and Jeanne-Claude were not well known at all, not like now when they are celebrities. At that time, all the coastline around Sydney was owned by the army, navy or government, so I just knocked on doors and said to these officials, "I'd like to borrow a piece of your coastline," and they said, "What for?" Well, I said, "I'd like to put up a temporary sculpture." They said "What *kind* of sculpture?" "Well, we just want to wrap it." Well, most of the time I was just thrown out of those offices. But finally, I got to Prince Henry Hospital and the director, a Doctor Clancy, said, "Well, it sounds crazy, but if you cover the insurance and if we can charge an admission, which will go to the hospital, the nurses and patients will probably enjoy [it]," so that's how we got permission, that's how it all started.

If you come and visit the Gallery you will not only see the history of the art projects beginning from Christo, 40 years ago, but you will see the latest, the brand new project, from a Japanese artist called Tatzu Nishi. I heard about Nishi's work about 4–5 years ago now, and I just thought this would be perfect. It's currently under construction, and I think it'll be a great project; people will love it!

And one of the aims of our projects is for the everyday passer-by to come face-to-face with a project and to make their eyes open, to make them wonder... well, what *is* this? And, I think, to encounter art unexpectedly is a great experience.

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