



Calling art lovers: Amy Barrett-Lennard and Brendan Van Hek.

An auction with a difference at PICA

STEPHEN BEVIS

Cash-strapped public art institutions are looking for new ways to put out the begging bowl as government funding fails to match their rising costs and programming ambitions.

One example is PICA Salon, which brings potential patrons and artists together for a fundraising auction with a difference at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts on Friday night.

PICA gets about \$850,000 of its \$1.5 million budget from State and Federal grants, with the rest coming from philanthropists, sponsors, venue earnings and special project grants.

"We can moan and groan that we don't get enough money until we are blue in the face but it is not going to change anything, certainly in the short term," says PICA director Amy Barrett-Lennard.

Everyday costs such as utility bills, insurance, freight and travel for visiting artists are always rising, Barrett-Lennard says. "To be the contemporary art space where we want Perth people to experience the best of what the world has to offer, we need to spend that money. We do need to find other ways of raising money but we need to do it in ways that are fun and in a way that supports artists."

And so was born PICA Salon, where patrons will bid for more than 30 selected artworks from some of Australia's leading artists while

sipping French champagne. Tickets will be a cool \$1000 for two people, \$900 of which can be written off as a tax deductible gift.

The Salon is the centrepiece of PICA's ART 1000 philanthropy program which asks donors to contribute \$1000 a year to support its programs. Barrett-Lennard hopes the ticket sales will raise \$70,000, enough to mount a substantial event like the Jeppe Hein exhibition earlier this year or the Burning Daylight performance last November.

She expects that the auction will bring in a similar amount for the artists, who include James Angus, Callum Morton, Louise Paramor, Roderick Sprigg, Bennett Miller, Brendan Van Hek, Kate McMillan, Tarryn Gill and Pilar Mata Dupont.

The institution's curators have done the serious culling work required to ensure that those interested in buying contemporary art, perhaps for the first time, can be confident they are getting a good head start. "PICA is inviting the art-loving public to invest in great art as well as the careers of those who will be influencing the contemporary art scene well into the future," Barrett-Lennard says.

The PICA Salon is on Friday from 7pm, with tickets available on 9228 6300 or at pica.org.au. The exhibition of works will continue on Saturday and Sunday.

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- Stephen Bevis