



# In affairs of the art, Kew is not so far

A private art museum wows visitors from the Guggenheim, writes **Karl Quinn**.

**W**HAT looked a lot like a case of teaching your grandmother how to suck eggs, a delegation from one of the world's most famous private museums has visited a Melbourne home that's also a public gallery to see how it's done.

Fourteen members of the advisory board of the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice have just spent 10 days in Sydney and Melbourne, visiting private art collections and public galleries to apprise themselves of the latest developments in modern Australian art galleries, and public-private institutions.

They visited Naomi Milgrom's private collection, the Besens' Tarawarra winery and gallery in the Yarra Valley, the Heide Museum of Modern Art in Bulleen and the National Gallery of Victoria on their whirlwind tour of Melbourne.

But it was the Lyon House Museum in Kew that appeared to leave the biggest impression.

"This really is quite extraordinary," said Princess Sibilla of Luxembourg, the honorary chairwoman of the Peggy Guggenheim Museum advisory board and one of the 14 visitors. "I have never seen anything quite like it."

Philip Rylands, director of the Peggy Guggenheim Museum, was of the same view.

"This would never happen in Italy," said the Englishman, who has been with the museum for 30 years. "There are some quite marvellous private collections in Italy, but they remain precisely that — private. In Australia, I'm struck by how obliging people are, opening up their collections for the public to enjoy."

Architect and collector Corbett Lyon and his wife Yueji threw open the doors of their massive Kew property for the first time six months ago. But it was no spur-of-the-moment thing.

"This collection was born about 20 years ago," Lyon told his guests.

"And about 10 years ago we started thinking that we needed to do something with it, either donate it or make a building to house it."

This means a couple of times a week the Lyons and their two teenage daughters share their home with a bunch of strangers, who have access to everything but the bedrooms.

"This is a very challenging place to live," said Corbett Lyon, with a glint in his eye that suggested it was precisely the kind of challenge he relished.

It wasn't just the house that impressed the visitors, though. Mr Ryland was struck by the "fresh, dynamic, thoughtful" work he'd seen from some of Australia's artists. Sadly, he was not here on a buying trip. "We don't really purchase work, though we do accept gifts," he said. There was, however, a chance that some of the advisory board might buy work for their own collections.

Though this was the board's first trip to Australia, it won't be the Guggenheim's last. In October, the museum is lending a selection of its works to the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

So, what about Geelong? Is there



Main: Philip Rylands, left, visits the home gallery of architect Corbett Lyon. Above: Visitors to the MindBodySpirit Festival join the laughter yoga workout.

any chance the once-rumoured outpost of the Gugg might crop up on the shore of Corio Bay after all?

"Where is Geelong?" asked one Guggenheim staffer. "I've never heard of it."

## Ho ho ha ha ha

THERE'S laughter coming from the back of the hall at the MindBodySpirit Festival — but not because anyone's mocking the aura cameras or the angel paintings. Certainly not.

The woman chortling into a microphone onstage is Bronwyn Roberts, president of the Laughter Clubs of Victoria. She's leading the crowd in a laughter yoga workout.

They stretch up their arms, and as they release, chuckle, then guffaw, then finish with loud, manic and, frankly, unsettling laughter. We haven't missed the punchline. Roberts tells only one joke, and as she admits, it's dreadful. She says seriously, folks, 15 minutes of laughter a day makes people feel better, mentally and physically. Laughter yoga has its chants ("ho ho ha ha ha") and its guru — Mumbai's "giggling guru", Madan Kataria. "Not every day is a laughing day, is it?" says Roberts, "so if you only get five minutes one day, laugh for 20 the next."

The final laughter yoga workout is at 3.30pm today at the Exhibition Centre. [mbsfestival.com.au](http://mbsfestival.com.au)

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