

Museum of Old and New Art
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MEDIA RELEASE



April 26, 2012

MONA/TMAG

Museum of Old and New Art/Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

announce

Theatre of the World

June 23, 2012 to April 8, 2013

Australia's largest collaboration between a private and public institution, the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), announce a major winter exhibition commencing at MONA on June 23.

The exhibition entitled, *Theatre of the World*, will present 4,000 years of creativity and rival the blockbuster shows held during this time at other major public institutions around Australia. It is timed to draw national and international visitors to Tasmania during the traditionally slow winter and spring months.

Theatre of the World will include more than 160 works from David Walsh's private collection and approximately 300 works from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery's collection. The works will be displayed across MONA's temporary exhibition galleries alongside special commissions and selected loans from other major national and international collections.

Visitors will enter a series of 16 galleries containing a prodigious and discontinuous array of objects reflecting some 4,000 years of human creativity. Works such as: taxidermic birds; parts of animal skeletons; ancient Chinese ceramics; water colour portraits from Georgian England; First World War "trench art"; Egyptian stone carvings, mummy cases, and funerary objects; African beadwork and woodwork; Aboriginal bark paintings and shields; natural history illustration; Melanesian artefacts; corals, and shells and animal skeletons; curiosities; contemporary art works, photographs and videos; geological specimens; scientific instruments; and teapots, along with more than 80 barkcloths from across the Pacific.

Over the past four years, international curator Jean-Hubert Martin who is recognised for such benchmark exhibitions as *Magiciens de la Terre* [Magicians of the Earth] (at the Pompidou Centre, Paris) and *Artempo* at the 2007 Venice Biennale has surveyed thousands of objects in the TMAG collection to curate his selection of rarely seen treasures.

The centrepiece of *Theatre of the World* will be the 80 patterned barkcloths collected by TMAG since the mid 19th century, which represent a spectacular survey of cultural practice across the Pacific. This will be the largest display of barkcloths exhibited in Australia.

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Two major national institutions are sending significant works: the National Gallery of Victoria is lending its most-loved work: 'Weeping Woman' (1937) by Pablo Picasso and Lucio Fontana's 'Concerto spaziale' (1964 – 65). The Art Gallery of New South Wales is sending Max Ernst's 'L'imbécile' (1961) and Fernand Léger's 'à bicyclette' (1930). Internationally, from Fondation Maeght, in France, will be an Alberto Giacometti, 'Grande figure (Femme Leoni)' (1947).

Special commissions include a work by French contemporary artist, Claude Rutault and Swiss artist Felice Varini, known for his extraordinary geometric perspective pieces.

Jean-Hubert Martin, exhibition curator, said, "*Theatre of the World* will attempt to revive visual thinking. Life today is about visual images. We take so much of our learning and communication from television and the Internet but we are not learning how to analyse images. We have lost confidence in our own ability to understand and have handed responsibility to the experts, with *Theatre of the World* we hope to encourage visual thinking as a counterpoint to the abstraction of language."

Nicole Durling, senior curator for MONA, said: "TMAG had and still has an enormous influence on David Walsh. He used to sneak out of mass to go there each Sunday. He says the collection taught him about Hobart and made Hobart his place. So this collaboration is not only significant in the number of objects but also significant because it shows the importance of museums to all of us. The works Jean-Hubert has gathered together from these two extraordinary collections will take visitors on a experiential journey through 4,000 years of creative thought."

Peter West, deputy director of TMAG, said: "We are extremely pleased to be able to display so many of our works from the collection that Tasmanians have rarely, if ever, seen. *Theatre of the World* offers Tasmanians an unusual perspective on some of the lesser-known treasures from the State Collection, and we are excited that a curator of Jean-Hubert Martin's renown has chosen so many unusual pieces from our collection to be part of this exhibition.

Brooke Copping, marketing manager for MONA, said: "MONA sees this exhibition as an important part of the Hobart winter landscape. We hope to improve tourism in the State during the winter months and will be working with the help of Tourism Tasmania to attract the high-spending, culturally aware traveller. If proven successful, we plan to have a major winter exhibition as an annual drawcard."

The Curators

Jean-Hubert Martin has served as director of the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Kunsthalle Bern, the Kunstpalast Dusseldorf, and the Paris Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie. He is best known for the 1989 exhibition *Magiciens de la terre* and, more recently, *Artempo*, the Moscow Biennale (2009); and in 2011 he was curator for Christian Boltanski's work at the French Pavilion for the 54th Venice Biennale.

Mat(tijs) Visser started his career in architecture and theatre in Holland. He was head of exhibitions at the Museum Kunstpalast Dusseldorf (2001 – 2008). For the 2009 Venice Biennale he curated, together with Daniel Birnbaum, the Gutai show at the Central Pavilion. In 2008 he established the Zero Foundation.

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Olivier Varenne has been a senior curator and international art buyer at MONA since 2006 and worked with Martin as co-curator for the Moscow Biennale 2009. In 2010, he curated *On and On* at Casa Encendida Museum, Madrid.

Nicole Durling has been a senior curator at MONA since 2006. Based in Melbourne, Nicole's background is as a practising artist and she holds a Masters of Fine Art degree. Working directly, in Australia, with emerging, mid-career and established artists, she has curated, developed and supported projects including music festivals, sound art performances, ephemeral interventions and permanent commissions.

The Collaborators

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery is the oldest combined museum and gallery in Australia, having its origins in Australia's first scientific society, the Royal Society of Tasmania (established in 1843), and it became Tasmania's state museum in 1885. TMAG remains Tasmania's leading art, natural history and cultural and heritage organisation, and is one of only a few institutions worldwide that combine a museum, art gallery and herbarium. TMAG's collaboration with MONA is not only its most extensive but also the first time many of the pieces have been displayed.

MONA, Museum of Old and New Art houses the David Walsh private collection, in Berriedale, near Hobart. Since opening in January 2011 almost 500,000 people have visited. With the museum's location, its subterranean structure built into the sandstone banks of the Derwent River, the owner's personal approach to displaying his collection, and the public's response, we will continue to challenge the mainstream.

Ends

For more information please contact:

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