



## The Red Queen opening: Mona till Midnight

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### **ARTSHUB**

TUESDAY 4 JUNE, 2013

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Well la-de-dah and lucky you. You are warmly invited to meet the Queen at MONA from 6.00pm till the stroke of midnight on June 18. Forget the formalities, that's not going to be how it happens at Mona till Midnight, the opening night celebrations to *The Red*

*Queen* exhibition. What will happen is that anyone and everyone who comes on the night will find the doors of the museum flung open to them for free entry to join the party spirit at *The Red Queen* revelries of music, food and drink. The idea is have your fill of fun, get excited, dance if you like, and take the chance while you're there to wander and wonder at the art that's there to riddle you with the question, why do people make art? If the night's not the right time to ponder the profound, enjoy the sights and come back another time and time again to investigate the intricacies of a question not many have thought to ask and fewer have offered to answer.

There to help you find some answers and very likely more questions, like pieces of a puzzle, will be more than 100 works and objects assembled from yet-to-be-seen parts of the MONA collection, 15 new commissions and loans from the [National Gallery of Victoria](http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/) (<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/>), [The Museum of Everything](http://www.museumofeverything.com/) (<http://www.museumofeverything.com/>) and [The Holmes à Court Collection](http://www.holmesacourtgallery.com.au/page/janet_holmes_court_collection.html) ([http://www.holmesacourtgallery.com.au/page/janet\\_holmes\\_court\\_collection.html](http://www.holmesacourtgallery.com.au/page/janet_holmes_court_collection.html)) in Perth. Besides ancient artefacts like Egyptian funerary art and Neolithic arrowheads, the work of 46 contemporary artists will be displayed.

The hidden hands of MONA co-curators Olivier Varenne and Nicole Durling have shaped *The Red Queen*. 'It's been a huge job, because when we talked to the artists and told them what we were trying to achieve and we asked if we could use a particular work, many of them were so interested in the idea they wanted to do a piece specifically for *The Red Queen*,' says Olivier Varenne. 'That's why we have such a lot of commissioned works.'

Nicole Durling explains what visitors can expect when they come to the exhibition. 'We didn't want to contain *The Red Queen* in a traditional way in its own series of galleries, because if the works and objects we are showing reveal the various theories on the driving forces behind art, then we should also include the rest of the collection. On the other hand, we do want to tell particular stories and to take visitors on a journey, so the O device will direct them to *The Red Queen* works, but they are then free to look around them and make their own links to other works nearby.'

Although other works sit side by side with pieces from *The Red Queen*, MONA will look little like it did the last time you were there. 'We have reconfigured 75% of the museum, which has been challenging and exciting,' Nicole Durling says.

For a bit of back story, The Red Queen is a term taken from Lewis Carroll's character in *Through the Looking-Glass*. 'Now, here, you see,' she tells Alice, 'it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.' That notion was adapted in 1973 by Leigh Van Valen, an early pioneer of evolutionary biology, a science that says organisms can never stay still, they must keep on adapting to stay in the race to survive, because all other organisms are doing the same. Think of all the viruses that are rendering antibiotics less and less effective by making adaptations on the run.

MONA founder David Walsh once remarked to the curators that he built the museum 'as an attempt to understand why people make art'. From that comment has come *The Red Queen*.

One thing to remember as you pick your way around the museum is the fact that from the start, humans have made art. 'We are trying to show that there is really no difference between the people who drew on the caves of Lascaux and the artists in this exhibition,' says Olivier Varenne.

Another is, if art didn't serve an evolutionary advantage, we would have dropped it along the way to where we are today. It hasn't, so what is that advantage? The curators were guided on their journey by thinkers like Geoffrey Miller, Brian Boyd, Steven Pinker, Leda Cosmides and co-worker John Tooby.

'The act of taking on each project changes you,' observes Nicole Durling, 'and so MONA has evolved and will continue to do so – as we all must to survive.'

The artists below were selected for *The Red Queen*. The names in bold are artists who had work commissioned or reworked for *The Red Queen*.

**Shachiko Abe** (Japan), Marina Abramović (Serbia/USA), Francis Alÿs (Belgium), **Kutlug Ataman** (Turkey), Pierre Bismuth (France/USA), Mircea Cantor (Romania), Chen Zhen (China/France, 1955–2000), David Claerbout (Belgium), Henry Joseph Darger (USA, 1892–1973), Hubert Duprat (France), **Tessa Farmer** (UK), Michel François (Belgium), Anna Halprin (USA), Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Mexico/Canada), **Ryoji Ikeda** (Japan/France), Ali Kazma (Turkey), Joseph Kosuth (USA), **Laith McGregor** (Australia), **Yves Netzhammer** (Switzerland), Chris Ofili (UK), Yazid Oulab (Algeria/France), **Brigita Ozolins** (Australia), Mike Parr (Australia), Julius Popp (Germany), **Sam Porritt** (UK), Alex Rabus, Léopold Rabus, Renate Rabus, Till Rabus (Switzerland), **Cameron Robbins** (Australia), Leni Riefenstahl (Germany, 1902–2003), **Sarkis** (Turkish-born Armenian/France), **Lindsay Seers** (UK), **Chiharu**

**Shiota** (Japan/Germany), Roman Signer (Switzerland), Taryn Simon (USA), Simon Starling (UK), Sung Hwan Kim (South Korea/USA), **Tamuna Sirbiladze** (Georgia/Austria), **Rirkrit Tiravanija** (Argentina/USA), Rover Thomas (Australia, 1926–1998), Uta Uta Tjangala (Australia, 1926–1990), Wang Jianwei (China), Erwin Wurm (Austria), Zang Huan (China/USA) and **Toby Ziegler** (UK).

The clip below is one visitor's experience of MONA on a day shortly after the museum opened.

**The Red Queen** (<http://www.mona.net.au/what's-on/exhibitions/>) opens at MONA on June 18. It runs to April 21, 2014.

**The Red Queen opening night** (<http://www.darkmofo.net.au/program/the-red-queen/>) is free to all on June 18 from 6.00pm till midnight. To get there, take the MR-1 Fast Ferry, \$20 return. For bookings call (03) 6223 6064.

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