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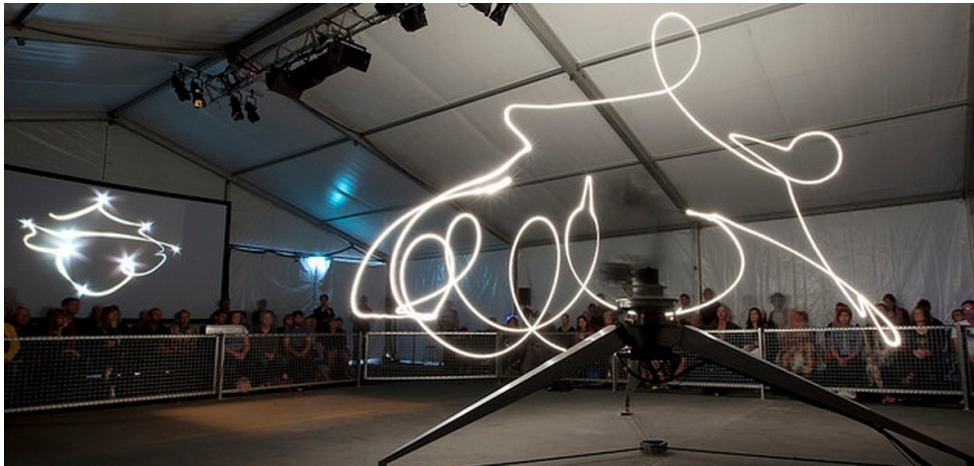
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## BLOG

# Australia Lights Up With Conrad Shawcross' Robot Powered Installation

by The Creators Project Team — Jan 22 2014

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Inspired by the work of seminal mathematician (and Lord Bryron's daughter) [Ada Lovelace](#) (1815-1852), artist [Conrad Shawcross](#) recently launched [The ADA Project](#), four interactive musical commissions based on the genius' tumultuous life. The four compositions, which ran from Thursday the 16th-Sunday the 19th at [MOFO](#), worked to compliment an industrial robot invented to dance a graceful round to the beats via light projection (see above).

Recently we were able to speak briefly with Shawcross about the thoughts and ideas that went into the project:

### The Creators Project: What was the inspiration for The ADA Project?

**Conrad Shawcross:** The project is above all an attempt to create a new way of commissioning music, where the machine and its movements become the primary source of inspiration. In essence the music becomes subservient to the machine and the artist had to work to a restrained, constrained situation. Design without parameters is impossible.

### How did the location at MONA FOMA enhance the piece?

The context of the festival was fantastic in both its endorsement of the idea and showing the work outside of the usual museum or a context.

### What technology, software, and tools were involved?

Many, many, varied things. At the centre we have a welding robot from the 90's, that we hacked into, dwarfed some of its limbs, stripped it down and polished its skin. At the end of the arm is a 1.5 metre finger at the tip of which burns a bright radiant and omni-directional Halogen light; the only light source in the room. The control system for the robot had taken nearly three years to develop and fine-tune but consists of a series of programmes; some off the shelf and some bespoke, all piggy-backed together. This involved hybrid of software allows me to control not just the path of the light but the speed profile of the light plus all of its six axes. The choreography itself is conceived by me, using the scanned plans of Charles Babbage's analytical engine as a way to generate the paths. As with a lot of my work I'm interested in numbers and ratios and have used key ratios extracted from the drive train of this never-realised hypothetical machine to create my paths known as a spline

### How does this project fit into your larger body of work?

There are many branches to my practice. One ongoing series explores and envisions harmonics and looks at the

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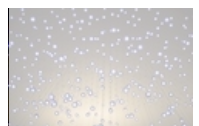
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mathematics of music. Another relevant branch is of course my light works, although this is more of a formal similarity rather than a conceptual commonality.

**What are you currently working on?**

The ADA Project is an ongoing series of commissions centred around the machine. So far we have crafted four which were all performed at MOFO. The next stage of the project is the set up a temporary event space/nightclub called The ADA Salon in London where we will create a programme of music, performance and lectures around the manifold themes and issues touched on by Ada Lovelace's extraordinary life. It will have an informal, hopefully a little bit wild, atmosphere with a possible bar built in, so it should be a lot of fun too.





Below, check out Shawcross' wondrous machines for yourself:



*Conrad Shawcross* is a British artist who specialises in epic-scale mechanical sculptures based on philosophical and

scientific ideas, exploring subjects that lie on the borders of geometry and philosophy, physics and metaphysics.

Tags: [Conrad Shawcross](#), [The ADA Project](#), [Ada Lovelace](#), [MOFO](#), [MONA](#), [robots](#), [Light Installations](#)

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