

Artists cover Hobart in white light for the opening of Dark Mofo

Tim Stone



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Darkness is something that Tasmania has in abundance at this time of year. Dusk falls around 4.40pm in Hobart mid-winter. It's earlier than any of the mainland capital cities, so in many ways a festival, like MONA's Dark Mofo with a focus on darkness and our relationship to it makes perfect sense for Hobart.

Beam In Thine Own Eye is the Museum of Old and New Art's first large-scale public art undertaking and it is a centrepiece of the inaugural Dark Mofo. It opens today to mark the start of the ten-day-long festival.

Featuring work by 15 artists the exhibition is staged at MAC1, a former wharf turned function space that extends into Sullivan's Cove. With installations by high-calibre international artists including Ryoji Ikeda, Anish Kapoor, Alfredo Jaar and Lawrence Weiner, alongside Australian Tim Bruniges, *Beam In Thine Own Eye* pushes viewers to consider their own notions of the sublime.

"Everything is pushed to the extreme, you sort of feel things more so in winter, you're challenged a bit more and are more aware of your body," says co-curator Nicole Durling.

Beam In Thine Own Eye includes new commissioned artworks by Gregorio Zanon's and Ivana Franke, who has created an immersive installation entitled *Seeing With Eyes Closed*; and reiterations like Ryoji Ikeda's *Spectra [Tasmania]* which is the latest presentation in the Japanese artist's white light projection series.

MONA's Nicole Durling and visiting curator Olivier Varenne selected artworks that specifically activate viewer engagement.

"The standard contention in academic art is that art can't exist without the viewer, and usually its bullshit," says MONA's David Walsh who was on site on MAC1 this afternoon for the launch of the exhibition.

“Art is a process that humans engage in. It’s part of our biological make up, it’s a thing we do.

“This exhibition turns that on its head for a short time making the academics right, because here everyone experiences their own little thing, their own little world. But we also have this commonality, everyone shares something and communicates and has a discussion,” he says.

Like most of the exhibitions and events staged by Tasmania’s MONA, *Beam in Thine Own Eye* has a point a difference. The title of the exhibition references a King James Bible passage from the Gospel of Matthew: “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”

A simplistic interpretation is that the curators are encouraging viewers to interpret and judge the art for themselves rather than swallow what others tell them.

For Ryoji Ikeda the viewer is a crucial component in the execution of his art.

“Without people, it [my work] is nothing for me, each single person has his or her own answer, their own interpretation of it,” he says.

Ikeda’s work *Spectra [Tasmania]* is a light and sound artwork installed in front of the Cenotaph that sits atop a small rise on the western shore of Hobart’s CBD. Consisting of 39 custom-made XENON searchlights arranged in a seven-by-seven metre grid pointing skyward, the artwork forms a monumental column of light from sunset to sunrise. For nine days *Spectra* will ascend 5-15km into the sky above Hobart (depending on the weather).

“I make half and people complete the rest, this is my stance, my job is to design the environment and people have to experience for themselves,” says Ikeda.

Installed at MAC1 are immersive sound environments, light installations, rooms filled with fog, works that distort time, visual illusions, hallucination inducing rooms, contemplative spaces and metaphysical sculptures. It’s an exhibition that will challenge your senses and push you to explore the boundaries of your perception. Or as David Walsh says: “we’re zooming in on the individual.”

- *Tim Stone*

Beam in Thine Own Eye runs June 14 – 28, 2013 at MAC1, Hobart as part of Dark Mofo
(<http://www.darkmofo.net.au/>)

Top Image: Ryoji Ikeda's *Spectra [Tasmania]* in *Beam In Thine Own Eye* at Dark Mofo Festival. (Photo courtesy of Aaron Horsley)

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