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Dark Mofo artist Hermann Nitsch's 'ritual' slammed by animal rights groups

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A "bloody, sacrificial" performance involving a dead cow, set to appear at Hobart's Dark Mofo in June, has sparked condemnation among animal rights activists who are calling on the city's mayor to ban the event.

Animal Liberation Tasmania slammed the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), which organises the annual festival held over the winter solstice, for scheduling the programming art piece by Austrian artist Hermann Nitsch, who plans to use 500 litres of animal blood in the work.



Austrian artist Hermann Nitsch has been using animal carcasses and blood in his art for decades. Photo: Moorilla Gallery

In a petition at change.org, the activist group said that "a bull will be slaughtered specifically for usage in this bloody performance piece", and urged Hobart City Council and Lord Mayor Sue Hickey to cancel the event, [150.Action](#).

On the Dark Mofo website, the free, three-hour performance, scheduled for June 17 and for over-18s only, is described as "a bloody, sacrificial ritual" that contains "distressing imagery, nudity and

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strong adult themes, and is not suitable for children".



An image from the 2012 Hermann Nitsch work, 135.Action. Photo: Moorilla Gallery

"We are opposed to this event, which trivialises the slaughter of animals for human usage, and condemns a sentient being to death in the pursuit of artistic endeavours," Animal Liberation Tasmania said.

At the time of writing, more than 3500 people had signed the [online petition](#).

Dark Mofo creative director Leigh Carmichael clarified there would not be a live animal slaughter as part of the performance.



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The artist would be using the carcass of a locally-sourced, humanely-killed animal that was already destined for the meat market, he said, along with some fish, fruit, blood, live performers and an orchestra.



Hermann Nitsch's 122.Action at Burgtheater, 2005. Photo: Moorilla Gallery

It was the intention of the artist that the meat be eaten after being used in the performance, Mr Carmichael said.

"We are working through addressing the health and safety regulations to achieve this outcome.

"We understand that his work will be confronting and difficult, but we will not shy away from presenting work that challenges us to consider the ethical implications of our actions both today, and in the past."

The festival is [currently calling](#) for "athletic performers aged 18 to 35" and "comfortable with blood and gore" to participate in the event.

Nitsch, 78, has been practicing his controversial style of performance art since the 1960s as part of the Viennese "Aktionism" movement. He is known for using animal remains, vast amounts of animal blood, and nudity to explore themes of religion, spiritualism, hedonism, creativity and catharsis.

Nitsch's work is held in some of the biggest art galleries in the world including the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim, in New York, and the Centre Georges Pompidou, in Paris.

In 2015, In a move that was largely panned by the art world, Mexico's Museo Jumex in 2015 became the first institution [to cancel one of Nitsch's shows](#).

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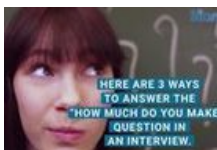
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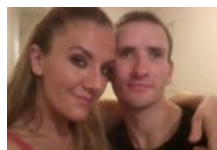
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