

# AGSA



La Biennale di Venezia

58. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte  
Eventi Collaterali



## AGSA brings South Australian art to the global stage

The Art Gallery of South Australia is thrilled to announce that South Australian collaboration, *Living Rocks: A Fragment of the Universe*, has been selected as one of only 21 Official Collateral Events of the 58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia 2019.

As Director Rhana Devenport ONZM states, ‘Not only is Living Rocks by James Darling and Lesley Forwood one of a number of international art events selected as official Collateral Events, it is the only Australian collateral project selected. This means that South Australia will have a very strong presence at the world’s most significant art event, and it will have its very own presence in the astonishing Magazzini del Sale. The Art Gallery of South Australia is honoured to be the official Promoter of this event.’

In *Living Rocks*, sculpture meets moving image and sound. Water floods the Magazzini del Sale, the historic stone salt storehouses of Venice that have stood the test of many an inundation. From an extensive pool emerges thrombolites that have been crafted, not by nature, but by Darling and Forwood who employ the distinctive roots of an arid land eucalypt to create ‘living rocks’. Surrounding the water are images made in collaboration with Jumpgate VR. Constantly in motion, the images are accompanied by *String Quartet No 2* composed by Paul Stanhope and performed by the Australian String Quartet. The work was first shown at Hugo Michell Gallery in Adelaide, where the artists have shown their work since 2010.

‘This is a major creative milestone for the state’, says Premier Steven Marshall ‘and a stunning demonstration of what is possible when partnerships emerge between the public and private sectors. The project also proves the power of creative collaboration – leading

artists Darling and Forwood are working alongside tech innovators Jumpgate VR and nationally esteemed musicians Australian String Quartet.'

*Living Rocks* was inspired by a lake containing rare, rock-like thrombolites. Thrombolites are rock-like microbial structures that grow in shallow pools and release oxygen. They were the only living organisms on earth for three billion years and created the beginnings of the atmosphere of our planet.

Within Curator Ralph Rugoff's theme, 'May We Live In Interesting Times', the installation links the present to the beginning of life and brings to the fore the fragility of the planet. 'It is a memory of our origin and a prophesy of our future,' says artist James Darling.

Darling and Forwood are radical farmers and environmentalists from south-eastern Australia. They are also radical thinkers. When government policy demanded clearance of native vegetation for agricultural land, they responded by conserving the roots of the mallee gum to make art. Since the 1990's they have been making large installations that dramatically celebrate the whorl and the helix of the roots of the arid land eucalypt.

*Living Rocks* is curated by Assistant Director, AGSA, Dr Lisa Slade and will be on display in the Magazzini del Sale in Venice Italy from 8 May until 24 November 2019.

This project is funded through a combination of public and private support, and donations are being made through <https://australianculturalfund.org.au/projects/living-rocks-a-fragment-of-the-universe/>

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Images available to download:

[https://files.artgallery.sa.gov.au/ftp/marketing/LivingRocks\\_Images.zip](https://files.artgallery.sa.gov.au/ftp/marketing/LivingRocks_Images.zip)

Image detail: *James Darling & Lesley Forwood, Living Rocks: A Fragment of the Universe (digital video still), 2018, multi-channel digital video (20 minute loop), 1.5 tonnes mallee root & 4,000 litres of water, 16.12 x 4.64 m*

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