



## **Monsters come to life across opening weekend of 2020 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: *Monster Theatres***

*'21st-century contemporary art has shown a marked tendency to co-opt the strategies of drama, with the increasing prevalence of performance-based practices, live art, participation and embodied engagement.'* - Leigh Robb, Curator

**Adelaide, Australia:** The 2020 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: *Monster Theatres* assembles some of the most provocative Australian artists who will bring their monsters to life through live performances, interactive exhibitions, artist talks and keynote addresses held across the opening weekend from Friday, 28 February at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide Botanic Garden and Freemasons Lodge.

Marking the 30th anniversary of the nation's longest running survey of Australian art, *Monster Theatres* invites artists to expose the monsters of our time. Curator Leigh Robb says, 'Endurance performance, sound works, arenas for action, and listening take the stage in *Monster Theatres*. This exhibition creates encounters with agents of artificial intelligence, the chance to choreograph robots, or to rest and breathe with bees. Agency and power structures will be shifted and redistributed, materialities mutate and morph.'

Seminal performance artist Mike Parr will perform his six-day durational *Reading for the end of time* at AGSA, testing the limits of voice, stamina and the human body. Pioneering performance Stelarc will perform on his 9-metre robot at AGSA, exploring the human body as a chimera of meat, metal and code in a world ruled by technology. Stelarc, will also address audiences in a keynote presentation titled *Contestable chimeras: excess, indifference & obsolescence*.

Quandamooka artist Megan Cope responds to geological and industrial histories from the land through an interactive and sonic sculptural installation created using discarded mining machinery and rocks that sound the warning of climate change resembling the bush-stone curlew's haunting call.

# AGSA

## MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release: Thursday, 20 February 2020

Environmentalist and artist Mike Bianco invites audiences to rest with 50,000 live bees in a participatory experience for the senses in *Anthrocomb*, a bee experience that explores the spectre of ecological collapse at the Adelaide Botanic Garden.

Soundscape artist Julian Day is concerned with reviving lost histories through sound, breath, and meditative spaces. His musical performance at the Freemasons Lodge, *A Civic Space*, featuring Barossan brass band and choir, chronicles the story of the Hill & Son Grand Organ since its unveiling in 1877.

Digital ethnographer, socially engaged and widely published artist Professor Larissa Hjorth will deliver a keynote address titled *Eco grief, creative practice and hope*, reflecting on eco grief and the power of creative practice ethnography to transform how we live in the world at the Freemasons Lodge.

Following the opening weekend, *Howl* by APHIDS is a commemoration of controversy and the censored performed by women. A requiem that questions who gets to determine arts legitimacy, *Howl* is aptly scored by Mozart. The ticketed performance, presented in partnership with RCC and Vitalstatistix, takes audiences on a parade through and alongside the Gallery.

*Colony* by Garry Stewart & The Australian Dance Theatre is a free performance that configures the monster as the morphology and behaviour of the human, manifesting an image of symbiotic integration between multiple bodies into a cooperative whole.

*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* is a companion exhibition that parallels the themes of *Monster Theatres* as the historical echo of contemporary monsters that are created as answers to inexplicable events and misfortune. The exhibition invites audiences to experience and explore 600 years of monsters during the Adelaide Biennial.

*Monster Theatres* will be presented from 28 February to 8 June with exhibitions at AGSA and partner venue, Adelaide Botanic Garden. AGSA presents its associated talks program, 'In the Arena' free, thanks to generous support from the Naomi Milgrom Foundation.

Presented in association with the Adelaide Festival, and with generous support received from AGSA Biennial Ambassadors Program and Principal Donor, The Balnaves Foundation. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council and by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy.

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### KEY DATES

Media Preview | Fri 28 Feb, 11am, AGSA | FREE | [RSVP media@artgallery.sa.gov.au](mailto:media@artgallery.sa.gov.au)

Opening Night | Fri 28 Feb, 5:30pm, AGSA Forecourt, North Terrace | FREE

Mike Parr Live Performances | Fri 28 Feb – Wed 4 Mar, 10am – 5pm, AGSA | FREE

Stelarc Live Performance | Sat 29 Feb, 10am – 3pm, AGSA | FREE

Artist Talks | Sat 29 Feb, 11am, AGSA | FREE

Mike Bianco Live Performances | Sat 29 Feb & Sun Mar 1, 10am – 5pm, Adelaide Botanic Garden | FREE

Professor Larissa Hjorth Keynote Address | Sat 29 Feb, 3pm Freemasons Lodge | FREE

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Stelarc Keynote Address | Sun 1 Mar 11am, Freemasons Lodge | FREE  
Adelaide Biennial Artist Talks | Sun 1 Mar, 3pm, Adelaide Botanic Garden | FREE  
Julian Day Live Performances | Sun 1 Mar, 12pm, Freemasons Lodge | FREE  
Howl | Wed 11 Mar - Fri 13 Mar | [Tickets available here](#)  
Garry Stewart & Australian Dance Theatre Company - Colony | Fri 20 - Sun 22 March

**MEDIA CONTACT** Lindsay Ferris | 0405 046 116 [ferris.lindsay@artgallery.sa.gov.au](mailto:ferris.lindsay@artgallery.sa.gov.au)

**MEDIA PORTAL** <https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/about/media/adelaide-biennial-media-portal/>

**SOCIAL MEDIA** @agsa\_adelaide | #monstertheatres | #adelaidebiennial

**BIENNIAL ARTISTS** | Abdul Abdullah, APHIDS, Mike Bianco, Polly Borland, Michael Candy, Megan Cope, Erin Coates and Anna Nazzari, Julian Day, Karla Dickens, Mikala Dwyer, Brent Harris, Aldo Iacobelli, Pierre Mukeba, David Noonan, Mike Parr, Julia Robinson, Yhonnie Scarce, Garry Stewart and Australian Dance Theatre, Stelarc, Kynan Tan, Mark Valenzuela, Willoh S. Weiland, Judith Wright.

**ABOUT THE ADELAIDE BIENNIAL OF AUSTRALIAN ART** | Known for its risk taking and expansive vision, the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art has demonstrated a significant and sustained practice for more than a quarter of a century. Inaugurated in 1990, it is the country's longest running survey of contemporary Australian art and an important platform for Australian artists to realise new works and projects of a scale that require an institutional context for their conception, realisation and presentation. The Adelaide Biennial has had a lasting impact on Australian art, on the careers of artists and arts professionals, and on the state of South Australia as a wellspring for contemporary art. The Adelaide Biennial nationwide Ambassadors Program plays an important role in supporting the Adelaide Biennial's artistic ambition and championing the practice of Australian artists.

**ABOUT LEIGH ROBB** | With an international and Australian career spanning over 15 years, Robb has a reputation for working closely with artists to realise ambitious commissions and for curating group exhibitions of experimental art forms and ideas. Prior to her appointment as inaugural Curator of Contemporary Art at AGSA in 2016, Robb was Senior Curator at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), Associate Director at Thomas Dane Gallery in London and led the Education and Internship programs at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice. Robb completed her Bachelor of Arts in Art History and Psychology at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, and her Masters in Art History at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. Robb has curated over 30 major exhibitions including solo presentations of *Chiharu Shiota* (AGSA, 2018); *Tracey Moffatt* (PICA, 2015); *Richard Bell* (PICA, 2014); John Gerrard (PICA, 2011); and group exhibitions including *Versus Rodin: bodies across space and time* (AGSA, 2017); *Dead Ringer* (PICA, 2015); *What I see when I look at sound* (PICA, 2014), *AC4CA: Australian Centre for Concrete Art* (PICA, 2014); *First Amongst Equals* (Gertrude Contemporary & PICA, 2012) and *Love of Diagrams* (PICA 2010). She has co-curated exhibitions including *Radical Ecologies* (PICA, 2016); *Alternating Currents: Japanese Art after March 2011* (PICA, 2011); and the touring exhibition *Hijacked III: Contemporary Photography from Australia and the UK*.

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