



MUSEUM OF OLD  
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## Et In Libertalia Ego, Vol. II

A project by Mathieu Briand  
2 SEPTEMBER 2015 – 11 JULY 2016  
MUSEUM OF OLD AND NEW ART

‘It is simpler to make a montage of real events from which to create a fiction, than to film a fiction in order to make something real of it’ – Mathieu Briand

When French artist Mathieu Briand swam from one small island to an even smaller island off Madagascar in 2008, he was on a quest: to find a safe haven for contemporary art, where he could create art for art’s sake, far away from the strictures and bustle of the art world proper. It was to be a creative paradise – in which Briand would eventually gather likeminded artists, dancers and writers – inspired by the fabled pirate’s utopia Libertalia, drawn from an eighteenth-century book by Captain Charles Johnson and rumoured to lie off the Madagascan coast.

But Briand soon discovered he was not alone. The island was home to a traditional Malagasy family who believed in animal sacrifice and the worship of a sacred tree. The family were puzzled by the artwork of Briand and his friends, convinced they were dealing in black magic. The weight of colonial history looms large, but the artist’s quest continues: Briand travels to the island still, as his utopic project and relationship with the island family evolves and becomes entwined with the fact and fiction hidden inside Johnson’s book.

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Through the tunnel of time and space to another island in colder waters: Briand will bring the latest iteration of his project to Mona, itself located on an almost-island still tethered to Tasmania, cast off from mainland Australia and mired in its own dark history of colonialism. At Mona, Briand expands this first manifestation, curated by Nicole Durling and Olivier Varenne and introduces the legendary Pitcairn Island and its inhabitants into the fold, to continue his exploration of the island as a creative laboratory of history and culture. The exhibition will feature videos, paintings, objects and sculptures, a dugout canoe, a sacred tree; and remnants of island life.

Since 2012, La Maison Rouge in Paris has supported Briand's ambitious project, which culminated in an exhibition, *Et In Libertalia Ego*, (February–May 2015). The introduction of the Pitcairn Island narrative further emphasises Briand's interest in observing cultural networks and systems, as he explores how society and culture develop through the microcosmic world of an island.

Briand will also return to the island off Madagascar in September 2015 for a three-day event that will include the showing of a work that will journey to Mona to be included in the exhibition. It is an ever-evolving continuing narrative of the artist's travels, experiences and research which further emphasises the 'living' aspect of this unique project.

An artist's book will be published narrating and exploring the project to be released in late 2015. It will feature over 300 pages of texts and photos related to Briand's experiences and influences as well as texts by those who made the intrepid journey to the island themselves\*.

In Briand's words 'The project is not... defined in advance but seeks to respect certain principles: process, research and experiment will be priorities; the work will unfold in time and in space. It is process that interests me rather than any endpoint. Utopia consists of making a work whose realisation is not the objective. A work that escapes classical constraints in order to confront new ones.'

Mona Senior Curators Nicole Durling and Olivier Varenne state that '**Et In Libertalia Ego, Vol. II** reflects Mona's commitment to artists who work outside traditional studio practices and pursue experimental ideas. It also reflects Mona's interest in exploring the nature of creativity, with Briand his is more an activity than a product where ultimately the product is experience and thought.'

\* Artists included - Francis Aljys, Thomas Hirschhorn, Prue Lang, Pierre Huyghe, Koo Jeong-A, Sophie Dejode, Yvan Salomone, Gabriel Kuri, Gilles Mahé, Rudy Ricciotti, Mike Nelson and more.



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### MATHIEU BRIAND

Born 1972 in Marseilles, France

Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia

Mathieu Briand's work explores our spatial and temporal perceptions of reality. He takes the concept of a 'system' as a starting point to cultivate what could become alternative realities. Neither lived experiences nor imagination take precedence in Briand's work as narratives are created through installations, sculptures, video, sound and other media.

Briand has held large-scale solo exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon. As well as at the Istanbul Biennale, Istanbul; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Jumex Foundation, Mexico City; ArtUnlimited, ArtBasel, Basel; and Tate Modern, London. His work has been included in two previous Mona exhibitions, *Beam In Thine Own Eye*, as a part of Dark Mofo June – July 2013 and *I Look to You and I See Nothing*, at the Sharjah Art Foundation, U.A.E., November 2013 – February 2014.

For the past seven years, he has been involved in *Et In Libertalia Ego* and will remain working on this project for the foreseeable future.

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