



MUSEUM OF OLD
AND NEW ART

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NEW MONA EXHIBITION SET TO LAUNCH WITH MASSIVE FREE PARTY

MEDIA RELEASE

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‘Zero is silence. Zero is the beginning. Zero is round. Zero spins. Zero is the moon.’
—Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker, Zero’s artist founders

Tomorrow Mona will open its next major exhibition, ZERO. The opening will be celebrated with a free Grand Opening Party that is expected to draw a crowd, with around 4,300 ticket registrations from the local community, Tasmania, interstate and overseas. More free tickets will be available on the door on the night.

This exhibition brings ZERO’s leading artists together for the very first time in Australia.

Named after radical artists who collectively called themselves ‘Zero’ in post-war Germany, Mona’s exhibition, ZERO, reveals the work of those protagonists from the 1950s and ’60s; their network of connections and collaborators across Europe and beyond; and the continuing influence of their vision today. In the words of one of those founding artists, Otto Piene, ‘It is not a style, it is not a group... It’s a vision of things’.

This internationally networked ‘vision of things’ counts among the major art-historical phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century.

From Mona’s David Walsh: “I’m told this is a departure from my obsessive attack on the myth of art as culture. The Zero artists believed art is culture, but they didn’t mind being entertaining, and they didn’t mind being wrong.”

“Zero fits well with our *raison d’être*, but that’s not why it’s here. It’s here because we couldn’t get anything else.”

Zero came from Düsseldorf, but they wanted to go to the Moon, or at least to exhibit there. They found individualism oppressive, but the future looked very impressive indeed. Zero seemed to be the place to start the future.

“Zero’s philosophical foundation was that art was not something to be painfully extracted in solitude, but assembled and constructed with others, using whatever materials came best to hand: metal, cardboard, glass, plastic, cloth, mirrors and smoke... They banged nails, smashed bottles, poked holes, and cut up each other’s canvases,” Jane Clark, Senior Research Curator, Mona, said. The physical sensory experience of the spectator, one-night exhibitions with music and manifestos, optical and sound effects, were all absolutely intrinsic to their art.

Mona’s exhibition brings together artworks by Zero’s founders, and the much wider international movement that has come to be called ‘ZERO’. Many of their originally ephemeral installations have been reconstructed here for the first time, with reflective materials, electric light, perceptual distortions, and moving parts creating a powerfully immersive journey for visitors.

In particular, the exhibition highlights the theme of ‘vibration’: the theme of the eighth ‘evening exhibition’ and the second issue of the journal Zero in 1958. Back then, Heinz Mack wrote about “resting restlessness... the expression of continuous movement, which we call ‘vibration’... Its harmony stirs our souls, as the life and breath of the work”.

Artists include Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Günther Uecker and Adolf Luther from Germany; Lucio Fontana, Nanda Vigo, Grazia Varisco, Enrico Castellani and Gianni Colombo from Italy; with Marcel Duchamp, Yves Klein and François Morellet from France; Henk Peeters from The Netherlands; Christian Megert from Switzerland; Jesús Soto from Venezuela; and Yayoi Kusama from Japan.

Guest curator, Mattijs Visser, says: “Zero is one of the most significant, yet largely forgotten, art movements since the Second World War. Internationally, ZERO has had a major influence on contemporary artists and curators. ZERO needs to be discovered now, while several of their speakers are still with us”. Mr Visser was founding director of the international ZERO foundation, which strives to preserve, present, research and further the movement. Tijs is also the nephew of Henk Peeters, central figure in the ‘Nul’ movement (Nul is Dutch for Zero). He is founder of the Institute for Contemporary Archeology and a research specialist in art of the sixties.

The ZERO Grand Opening will be held at Mona on Saturday 9 June from 6–10pm. To Europeans Tasmania might seem as distant as the moon, but in seeking appropriate entertainment we decided to go to the Sun. Sun Ra Arkestra will perform, but before them we will have some FourPlay.

ZERO was conceived by Mattis Visser with Olivier Varenne, Co-Director Exhibitions and Collections, Mona.

ZERO continues at Mona until 22 April 2019.

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