



MONA's mixed message

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A NEW exhibition at Tasmania's Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) has linked Israeli settlements in the West Bank with the Nazis' Final Solution and the White Australia policy.

Titled *The Land Of David*, the installation by Swiss artist Christoph Buchel is "inspired by the story of Melbourne adventurer Critchley Parker Jr", according to the museum, "who after learning the fate of European Jews during World War II persuaded the Tasmanian government to allow him to research the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the state's south-west wilderness".

The work, which includes a tome detailing the "genocide of Tasmanian Aborigines" and testimony from Adolph Eichmann on the Final Solution, also has an index of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

A *caravilla* (temporary house), similar to the ones erected in West Bank settlements, has also been erected in Port Davey, the site Parker identified as a possible haven for Europe's Jewish refugees,

with a billboard, which reads: "Poynduk [the name Parker proposed for the site] holiday villas now available at Port Davey".

A spokesperson from MONA, which has become a popular Australian tourist destination with local and overseas travellers in recent years, told *The AJN* that the "caravilla built near the site of Parker's death symbolises his unrealised utopian vision, and the replica on MONA's roof plaza links the project to the south-west installation".

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Dvir Abramovich

Chair of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission

"The project includes simple concepts connecting Parker's diary notes, found with his body on the shores of Port Davey where he died in 1942, and his vision of a Jewish homeland, designed by [Swiss/French architect] Le Corbusier, housing a community that would create 'the Paris of Australasia'."

"Other themes include: Adolf Eichmann's 'Final Solution'; the genocide of Tasmanian Aborigines; the history of Australia's 'White Australia Policy'; Solomon Guggenheim and the creation of the Guggenheim Museum in New York; and the utopian idea behind America's first shopping mall created by Austrian emigre Viktor Gruen," the MONA spokesperson said.

Dvir Abramovich, chair of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission said links between the Israeli settlements and the Final Solution were "unfair and wrong".

"While it's difficult to precisely ascertain what Christoph Buchel's artistic purpose was in this exhibition, the inclusion of a list of West Bank settlements in a book that contains chapters about the Nazis' Final Solution and Australia's now defunct White Australia Policy is unfair and wrong," he said.

"Such inappropriate and trite associations trivialise and contribute to a lessening of the true meaning of the Holocaust and grossly distort the facts about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."