

MONA removes Aboriginal DNA test exhibit from art installation

Updated Wed 25 Jun 2014, 3:12pm



PHOTO: MONA has removed the Aboriginal DNA testing exhibit in the Southdale installation. (Supplied: The Australian)

Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) has removed a controversial part of an installation that invited DNA testing for Aboriginality.

MAP: Hobart 7000

The exhibit by Swiss artist Christoph Buchel had been on a stand offering DNA testing with a sign that read: "Are you of Aboriginal descent?"

It was part of an installation that had transformed a section of MONA into a shopping centre called Southdale.

MONA said it had removed the stall after consulting Aboriginal elders who had raised concerns about the concept.

Aboriginal group disappointed over MONA consultation

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre said it was disappointed it had not been consulted before the exhibit went public.

The centre's chief executive, Heather Sculthorpe, said she would have warned MONA if she had been asked.

"They haven't been in the habit of thorough consultation before the event, you know, at the ideas stage, so we have tried to encourage them to do that by having talks with them, but it never seems to get anywhere," she said.

"So early talks is what we would recommend to MONA."

MONA apologises for DNA exhibit

In a statement on the museum's blog, founder David Walsh said the artist had told the museum he wanted the installation to be displayed intact or for it to be removed entirely.

The blog apologised to Aboriginal people in Tasmania and to anyone who had been offended.

It described the Southdale installation as an exhibition that explored what it called "the colonisation/invasion of Tasmania by Europeans, and the debilities that resulted for its inhabitants".

In 2007, Mr Buchel took legal action against an American museum that exhibited one of his installations without objects he wanted included.

Topics: contemporary-art, visual-art, community-and-society, aboriginal, hobart-7000

First posted Wed 25 Jun 2014, 2:58pm
