

News

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MONA goes bush with South-West park project

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MONA plans to build an art project near Forest Lagoon in the South-West National Park.

Source: Supplied

SECRECY surrounds an art project to be built by MONA in Tasmania's World Heritage Area.

The Parks and Wildlife Service has granted permission for an international artist to create a "temporary installation of conceptual satellite elements of an exhibition" to be constructed at Forest Lagoon, near Claytons Corner south of Bathurst Harbour, in the Southwest National Park.

The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment would not reveal details of what these "conceptual satellite elements" would involve nor the extent of land-clearing and construction work required.

The project deep in the south-west wilderness is inspired by the late Critchley Parker Jr, who died at Port Davey in 1942 while surveying a site for a possible Jewish settlement.

MONA officials are remaining tight-lipped, refusing to confirm or deny knowledge of the project or the international artist involved.

However, sources in the area have told the *Sunday Tasmanian* that there has been a flurry of activity in recent weeks involving representatives from MONA.

In a statement to the *Sunday Tasmanian*, a DPIPWE spokeswoman confirmed that the Parks and Wildlife Service had approved a project application from MONA "on the basis that it contributes to the celebration of Tasmania's heritage, in that the exhibition will celebrate the life of Critchley Parker".

The department would not release a copy of the application because it was “an internal document”.

“No formal publication consultation has been undertaken, however the RAA (Reserve Activity Assessment) process requires that MONA provides information to relevant operators and we are informed this has been done,” the statement said.

During World War II, Melbourne businessman Critchley Parker had a vision of a new Jewish state in Tasmania’s South-West, where up to 50,000 European Jews fleeing Nazi persecution could find a safe haven.

His plan had the support of the then Tasmanian premier Robert Cosgrove.

However, aged just 31, Parker was struck down by pleurisy while exploring the area and his body was found in a sleeping bag by fishermen at Port Davey.

One of Parker’s final diary entries states: “It is at Port Davey that I hope the Jewish settlement will start, not far from where I sever all earthly connections with it ... to die in the service of so noble a cause is to me a great satisfaction and if, as I hope, the settlement brings happiness to many refugees and in so doing serves the state of Tasmania, I die happy.”

There is speculation Paris-based Japanese artist Ryoji Ikeda, who created the Spectra installation that wowed audiences at Dark MOFO last winter, may be involved in the new MONA project.
