

The Mercury

The Museum of Old and New Art puts on two shows to celebrate one million visitors

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Photographer Roger Ballen in his installation. Picture: Kim Eiszele

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THE Museum of Old and New Art expects its millionth visitor this month and is celebrating the landmark with two new exhibitions by international artists.

One features striking, often confronting, black and white photographs taken in a former asylum in Johannesburg that has become a squat.

The pictures show the squat's inhabitants – humans, animals and birds.

"If the pictures shock you, it's probably the medicine you need," American-born South African photographer Roger Ballen said.

Last week he built an installation at MONA, an entire room to expand on the theme of the photographs and

to allow visitors experience the world of the squat.

Ballen had a battle to get some of his materials into Australia through Customs and augmented them by a trip to the Tip Shop.

He said MONA had an international reputation and he was very pleased to be in Hobart.

"It's been one of my goals as an artist to show at MONA," Ballen said.

The other exhibition is by Frenchman Hubert Duprat, who creates intriguing, beautiful works from a large variety of materials.

Often they combine precious and seemingly mundane items such as shark skin and polystyrene, dozens of replica prehistoric flintstones set into polyurethane foam or an intricate red coral sculpture stuck together with bread dough.

Some of his smallest, most delicate pieces are not his work but the creations of insects – caddyfly larvae that make tiny cocoons from silk thread, twigs and gravel.

Duprat puts the larvae in containers of gold dust and precious stones so they build exquisite, jewel-like cocoons out of the precious materials.

Both exhibitions continue until April 21.

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