

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

THE ART NEWSPAPER™

What's On 77

Welcome to Wim's world

Delvoye is showing more than 100 works at Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art

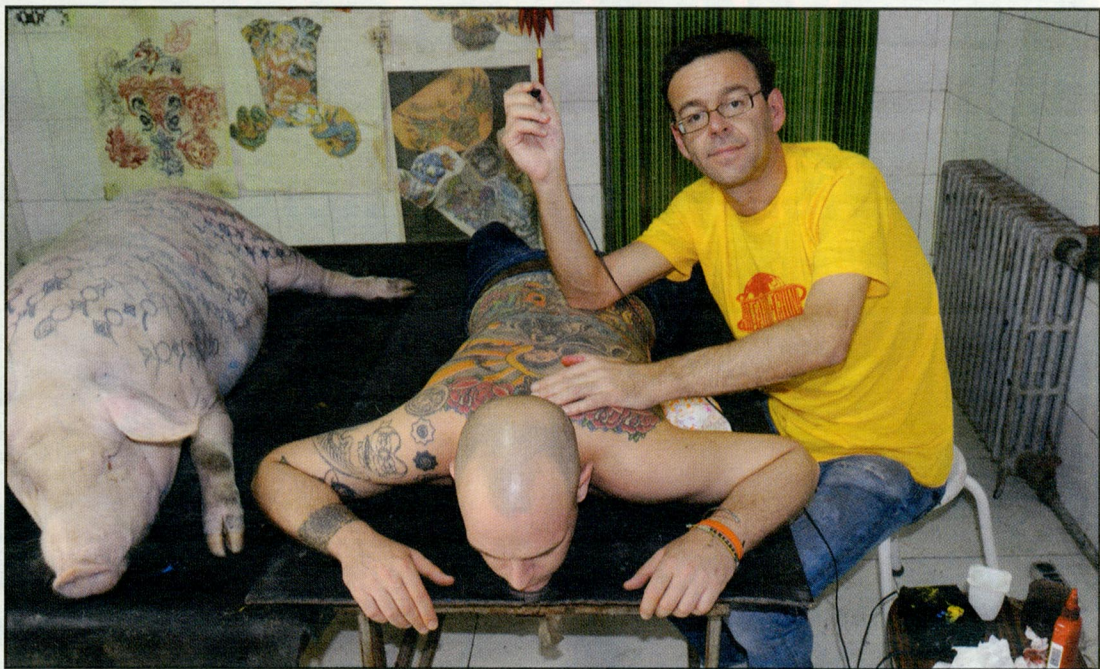
HOBART. The most hated work in the Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania (Mona), according to visitor feedback, is Wim Delvoye's *Cloaca Professional*, 2010, an installation consisting of several interconnected chambers that emulates the human digestive system and produces faeces that look and smell just like the real thing.

So it's no surprise that David Walsh, the collector and provocateur who built Mona, is shipping over five more poo-making machines from Delvoye's studio in Belgium for a survey on the artist, which opens this month.

The *Cloaca* machines do not just titillate and disgust, they also raise serious questions about the human condition, says Walsh. "Do we exist purely as incubators for bacteria?" he asks. "Is that all we are?"

"Wim is the only contemporary artist I was familiar with before I became familiar with contemporary art," says Walsh. "For Wim, making art is a human thing, and it carries with it the burden of human culture and biology... Wim's world is the world we inhabit but don't notice, portrayed with an ironic twist so that the obvious is cast into sharp relief and we see it for the first time."

As well as the *Cloacae*, the exhibition includes around 100 other works. There are car tyres transformed into delicately hand carved floral patterns, pig-skins tattooed with luxury labels and other decorations, x-rays of copulating couples and rats, and the artist's newest series of work—bronze crucifixes that have been



Tattoo Tim, who has been permanently inked by Delvoye, will be a live exhibit and tour guide at Mona

twisted and stretched, some into donut configuration, another into the double helix of DNA.

The work is both conceptually strong and aesthetically pleasing, says the exhibition's co-curator Olivier Varenne, who has organised the show with David Walsh and Nicole Durling. "In terms of the ideas represented in the pieces, you can explore Wim's work for hours, and visually the art is very, very exciting. The works look like big toys."

Also on display will be several works in Delvoye's faux-gothic style: steel sculptures with intricate metal latticework cut by laser such as the artist's *Concrete*

Truck, 2008. This will be placed on the roof of Mona and will stay there until August. Inside the gallery there will be a six-metre-high church tower similar to the one installed by Delvoye at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice in 2009. An even larger version will go on display at the Louvre in a solo exhibition devoted to the artist, which opens next March.

When the exhibition finishes another major Gothic work will find a permanent home on the Mona site. Walsh has commissioned a 12-metre-high chapel, complete with stained-glass, which will be used for weddings.

So how does Delvoye feel about making so much work for the eccentric museum builder who made his fortune through gambling? "David Walsh has been a big inspiration to me because his museum is the museum of a wild person... I adore him," says the artist. "Also, I'm very afraid of him as a collector because he's smarter than me and that costs me money. He's fast, he's always three steps ahead of me." ■

Cristina Ruiz

Wim Delvoye
Museum of Old and New Art,
Tasmania
10 December-2 April 2012

Courtesy of the artist and the Museum of Old and New Art