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Weird, People Are Protesting An Art Performance Featuring 500 Liters Of Bull Blood

Oh, and a slaughtered bull.

By Priscilla Frank

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Austrian artist Hermann Nitsch in an earlier happening at Vienna's Modern Art Museum. REUTERS PHOTOGRAPHER / REUTERS

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blood as well as an actual slaughtered bull.

“Action” participants, who Nitsch calls “disciples,” are invited to dress in white and engage with the bloody mess by bathing in blood, butchering dead animals, whatever floats your boat. The performance will involve a bizarre buffet of blood, semen and guts, a visceral event at once pleasurable, horrifying, pornographic, spiritual and grotesque.

Nitsch’s work is slated to run in June as part of the Museum of Old and New Art’s [Dark Mofo](#) festival in Tasmania, but a [petition by Animal Liberation Tasmania is calling on the Hobart city council to ban the literal blood bath.](#)

The appeal reads: “We are opposed to this event, which trivializes the slaughter of animals for human usage, and condemns a sentient being to death in the pursuit of artistic endeavors.” It had received over 9,000 signatures at the time of this article’s publication.



Hermann Nitsch, "122.Action," 2005, Burgtheater Vienna. PICTURE: GEORG SOULEK

Though an actual bull will need to be killed for this debauched sensory overload, Dark Mofo creative director Leigh Carmichael told [ABC Radio Hobart](#) that reports of a “live slaughter” are incorrect. Instead, the animal will be “slaughtered humanely” at a local butchery before the performance, he explained, adding that the blood used in the performance would also be locally sourced.

Despite this clarification, Peter West, the general manager of animal welfare group RSPCA Tasmania, is still concerned with what will happen to the carcass after it’s slaughtered.

“I think the difficulty we have is the respect shown to the animal with this action, that’s the challenge that we have with this particular artwork,” West told [Guardian Australia](#). “It’s clearly not respectful to the beast and even though it has been humanely and respectfully dispatched, what happens after that is anything but respectful.”

Surely no bull wants its life to end with a crowd of young art enthusiasts bathing in its blood, but for Nitsch, such an action evokes intensified sensations that are often muted in everyday life, feelings that get to the core of what it means to be a human being.

“I want my work stir up the audience, the participants of my performances,” the artist told [Hyperallergic](#) in 2014. “I want to arouse them by the means of sensual intensity and to bring them an understanding of their existence. Intensity is an awakening into being.”

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As of now, Dark Mofo remains unsurprised by the controversy Nitsch’s performance has provoked and has no plans to cancel the performance. As Carmichael [explained](#), the festival will “not shy away from presenting work that challenges us to consider the ethical implications of our actions both today, and in the past... Some artists use paint, he uses blood and meat.”

Barring cancellation, Nitsch's "150.Action" will run in Hobart as part of [Dark Mofo](#) from June 8 to June 21. "Action" attendees — all of whom must be 18 years or older — may even be able to feast on the freshly butchered meat itself, if the museum can sort out the details with Australian health and safety regulations.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST DARK MOFO 2017

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