



On the Inside

Archive

With a brutal history as a former penal colony, Tasmania is a fitting place to stage an exhibition based on incarceration. [Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery](#) (TMAG) has done just that with *A Journey to Freedom*, on view during Dark Mofo – the [Museum of Old and New Art's](#) annual winter solstice festival. Through a broad-ranging selection of photography, sculpture, installation and virtual reality, the exhibition features 13 artists exploring the premise from a national and international perspective.

Geneva-based [Barbara Polla](#) has curated *A Journey to Freedom* in tandem with Mona's international curator, Olivier Varenne and Mary Knights, senior curator at TMAG. Although trained as a doctor and medical researcher, Polla has maintained a strong interest in human rights, freedom and imprisonment. Over the course of her varied career, Polla has been a writer, a member of the Swiss National Parliament and the co-director of Geneva gallery, Analix Forever.

With Polla based in Geneva, Varenne in London and Knights in Hobart, the location of the curators has resulted in a wide catchment of artists and subjects.

Covering local issues like Tasmania's convict past through to recent occurrences at Hobart's [Risdon Prison](#), *A Journey to Freedom* also looks at off shore detention centres and experiences of imprisonment abroad. TMAG curator Mary Knights explains that "each of the included artists have been involved in researching and interrogating issues relating to imprisonment and social justice as an ongoing part of their practices."

Specialising in video art and drawing, Polla has assisted in bringing together several artists working within these disciplines for the exhibition. Australian artist [Shaun Gladwell](#) previously worked with Polla at the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation in 2015 and his virtual reality work, *Orbital Vanitas* 2016, is a major component of *A Journey to Freedom*. Set up in the TMAG's central gallery, *Orbital Vanitas* gives viewers the immersive experience of being inside a giant human skull while orbiting the earth. As the skull spins, our perspective floats inside and outside of the skull, framing our view of the earth with bare eye sockets.

From a global perspective, the exhibition is timely.

Documenting the curatorial development of *A Journey to Freedom* on her blog, Polla spoke out, saying that "in these times of political fear and chaos, the temptation of jailing anybody who diverges – from subversive teens to migrants, from political dissidents to journalists – seems to be raised every day."

Reflecting Polla's thoughts, a number of artists have created work specifically for *A Journey to Freedom* and respond directly to aspects of Tasmanian history. French artist [Nicolas Daubanes](#) spent time in Tasmania researching the architecture and colonial history of Port Arthur to create his site-specific drawing installations while artist and poet [Robert Montgomery](#) (UK) engages with the buildings of Hobart's Sullivan's Cove using light, text and sculpture to evoke the emotional and physical turmoil experienced by Tasmanian Aboriginals, displaced convicts and the broken families they had left behind.

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rearranging antiquated prison doors fitted into large slabs of concrete.

Presented like a shrine to those once held captive, one of Pancin's best known iterations of this series is *In Memorium* 2016, an installation at Berkshire's Reading Prison using the door of a cell formerly occupied by Oscar Wilde.

Also included in the exhibition are works by celebrated Indigenous photographer [Ricky Maynard](#) and comics journalist [Sam Wallman](#), whose long-form illustrated interview *At Work in Our Detention Centres: A Guard's Story*, won the Print and Online Media category at the 2014 Human Rights Award. The exhibition is spread throughout temporary galleries and transitional spaces within the TMAG which lends a sense of impermanence and displacement to the positioning of the works and provocatively echoes the central themes of the exhibition.

Following on from the 2016 success of *The Tempest*, an exhibition curated for the TMAG and Dark Mofo by Juliana Engberg, *A Journey to Freedom* presents an internationally significant exploration of historical and contemporary experiences of imprisonment. As Knights concludes: "Having a guest curator who lives and works in Switzerland, the heart of Europe, ensures the artists and artworks selected represent a wide range of international perspectives. Consequently, this has also led to the inclusion of a number of artists and artworks that have never been seen in Hobart before."

[A Journey to Freedom](#)

[Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery \(TMAG\)](#)

8 June – 29 July

FEATURE

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Words by [Briony Downes](#)

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STUDIO

Inside Sarah Contos's sprawling home studio

Stepping into Sarah Contos's sprawling home studio in Kyle Bay, in southern Sydney, feels like a step inside the artist's inventive and inquisitive brain—apt given that Contos's upcoming show at UNSW Galleries, *Eye Lash Horizon*, explores aspects of what makes us human.

Michelle Wang



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FEATURE

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Giselle Au-Nhien Nguyen

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FEATURE

The liquid dreams of Iris van Herpen

With the likes of Björk and Beyoncé wearing her creations, within Dutch fashion designer Iris van Herpen's surreal garments—which are showing at QAGOMA—couture becomes a canvas for the phenomena of nature.

Isabella Trimboli

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FEATURE

The photography of Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto captures uncertainty, ruin and empty splendour

Born in 1948, Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto works with photography, site-specific sculpture and architecture. *Time Machine* at the Museum of Contemporary Art surveys over five decades of his work, highlighting his conceptual approach to images and his continual investigation of the photographic form.

Jane Simon



A print and online magazine capturing the best of contemporary Australian art.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and we particularly acknowledge the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation, upon whose land we largely operate. We

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