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Collector David Walsh's subterranean Mona museum expanding to house 'dream library'

The new space at the Tasmanian institution will also include other “treasures” according to Walsh's wife, curator and artist Kirsha Kaechele

Gareth Harris

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The riverside museum has undergone two other expansions since opening in 2011

Photo: dudlajzov

Australia's largest private museum, founded by the collector and gambling millionaire David Walsh, is getting bigger. Walsh is adding a new underground space to his Museum of Old and New Art (Mona) in Hobart, Tasmania, which is hewn out of a sandstone cliff located at the six-acre riverside Moorilla estate.

The new space will house Walsh's vast library which is currently housed in another on-site building (an extension to the central Round House building designed by the architect Roy Grounds). His books collection includes a first edition of *Lolita* (1955) by Vladimir Nabokov and an early signed edition of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin.

“Would you be surprised to know that more than art—possibly even more than mathematics and milkshakes—David Walsh is mad about books?” says the [Mona website](#). “Our collection reflects David Walsh's tastes, which are both prolific and eclectic (as a kid, he had no friends so decided to dedicate his small life to reading).”

Walsh gave an idea of how long the extension could take, telling *The Art Newspaper*: “We are building art and art takes time. We expect to be teaching trolls and troglodytes their ABCs (Anselm [Kiefer], [Willem] Blaeu, [Julian] Charrière) in two or three years.”

In an Instagram post, artist and Mona curator Kirsha Kaechele, Walsh's wife, shows him walking inside a tunnel currently under excavation. She goes on to describe how the new expansion is “coming along beautifully” and that there are “so many surprises—the intensity of the sandstone and some interesting metal deposits [in the tunnel walls]...it's money intensive to say the least, thank you [Anselm Kiefer] for driving us broke! But it's worth it. One day it will house hubby's dream library along with many treasures.” The cost of the extension is undisclosed.

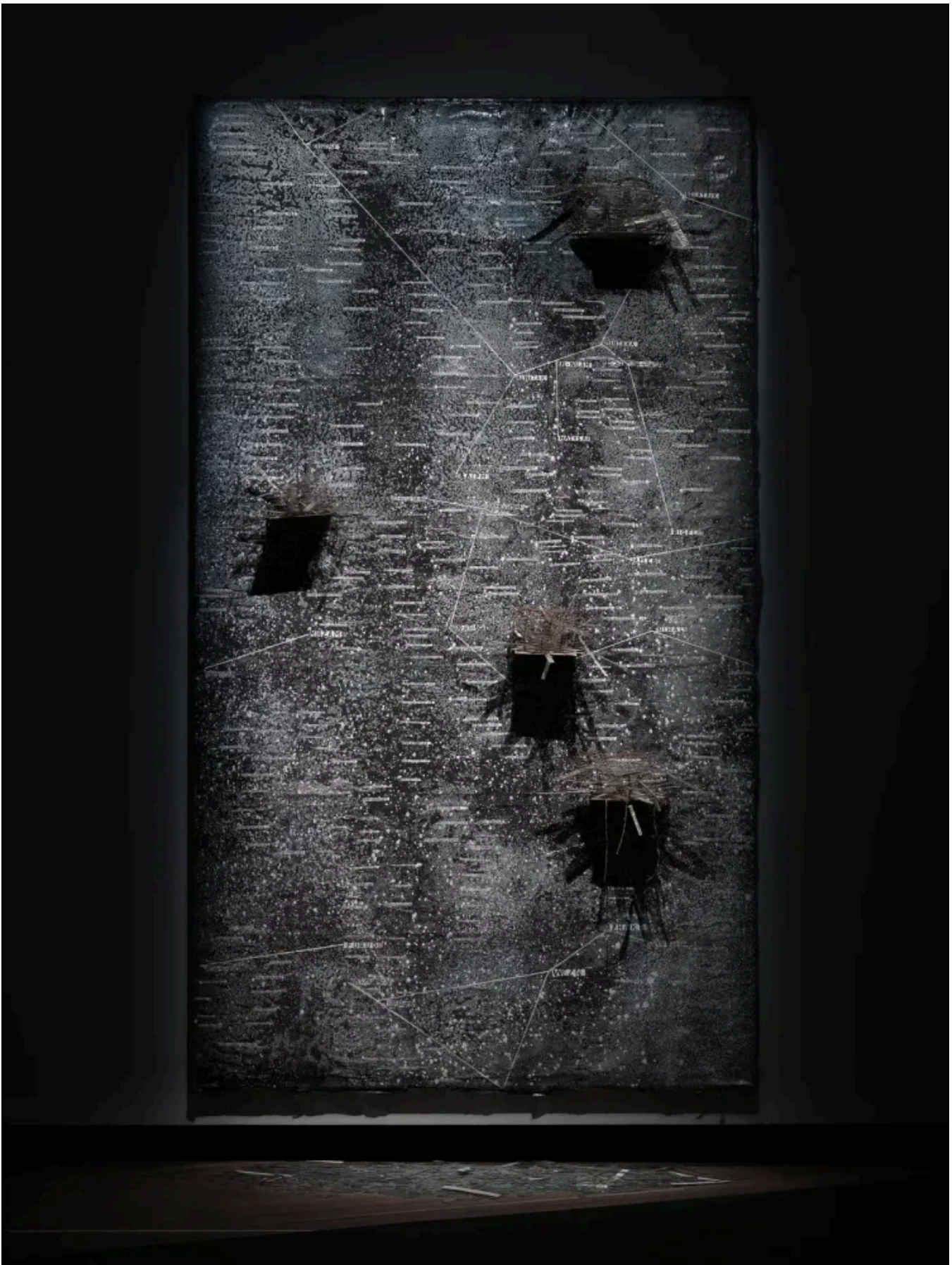


Kiefer is currently showing two works at Mona: *Sternenfall* (1999), a mixed-media piece mapping stars and other parts of the night sky, and *Sternenfall/ Shevirath ha Kelim (Falling Stars)*

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displayed in the existing library.



Anselm Kiefer, *Sternenfall* (1999)

Photo: MONA/Rémi Chauvin. Courtesy of the artist and Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Mona opened in 2011. According to the Tasmanian news website [Pulse Hobart](#), the new underground space is being designed by Melbourne-based Fender Katsalidis Architects, the

firm behind the original Mona building (Walsh bought the Moorilla estate for A\$2.5m in 1995).

The planned annex will be the museum's third major extension after the Siloam project in 2019 and the [Pharos addition](#) in 2017, which houses four new light works by the US artist James Turrell and the acclaimed oil installation *20:50* by the UK sculptor Richard Wilson which was bought from the collector Charles Saatchi in 2015. "Pharos cost approximately A\$32m [approximately \$20million today], the art at least A\$8m," a Mona spokeswoman said.

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