

## **A letter of apology to Tasmania Aboriginals (and anyone else we have offended).**

A couple of weeks ago Mona opened an exhibition Southdale/C'Mona, with the purpose of exploring, amongst other things, those that dreamed of created Utopia's, and the unintended consequences that resulted. The colonisation/invasion of Tasmania by Europeans, and the debilities that resulted for its inhabitants were amongst the areas explored. Another was the potential establishment of the Jewish nation in southwestern Tasmania. That project, however, didn't come to such a fraught conclusion, since it disappeared, as did its major proponent.

The artist who devised the exhibition is Christoph Buchel. Because the project was presented as an intervention he wasn't named at its inception. He, and we, thought that the impact would be enhanced if the project was taken at face value. Since his identity as exposed by the Australian newspaper at the weekend (and they obtained their information from his dealer's website, and not from us) I don't feel that, at this point we are breaking any confidences by revealing the artist's identity. However, not naming the artist before meant that we, at Mona could appear to be endorsing a presentation that we are uncomfortable with. In the event, that is what happened.

I certainly had warnings. During the exhibition planning, Christoph proved to be uncooperative to a point I had not hitherto encountered. When an idea was rejected, the next day he would present the same scheme again, as if it was new. But we ploughed on, although on a few occasions we categorically rejected some of his material. I have discovered since the exhibition opened that, in at least one of these cases, he proceeded to print and distribute some of this inflammatory material despite our veto.

We believe that much of Christoph's exhibition is relevant, clever and funny. But he thinks it all is, I'll get back to that point in a moment. Christoph holds the intellectual property for the exhibition, and when we offered (threatened?) to take down some material we were uncomfortable with, he maintained his confrontational viewpoint. In his opinion, the exhibition is a conceptual whole. His position: if we take any of it down we must take it all down. Obviously that puts us in a difficult position.

Christoph has demonstrated (for the most part) the facile nature of certainty. Those that believe in utopias, and attempt to engineer them, repeatedly fail and generate unintended consequences. They fail because their path becomes the only path, and the required outcome, the end, is sought regardless of the means. Christoph's hypocrisy is that he parodies that position while taking the same view. He knows what he wants, and while he pursues his goals he doesn't care what the consequences are for others.

We do. We will engage with affected individuals and redress the situation. If Christoph fails to approve our action he will have the right to legal process, of course. We know he knows about that. He has been involved in a long legal action concerning the failure of a previous show.

We're sorry we pissed anyone off. And we will find a way to resolve reasonable unaddressed issues.

David Walsh.