

PORT ARTHUR PROJECT

Re-interpreting Port Arthur Historic Site through contemporary visual art interventions

Port Arthur Project is a site-specific exhibition to be presented at Port Arthur Historic Site as a major event within the 2007 Ten Days on the Island program. It is to be accompanied by a two day symposium and a monograph.

Port Arthur Project aims to enrich public understanding and perception of Port Arthur through site-specific contemporary visual art. The result of a unique collaboration between Ten Days on the Island (TDOTI), the Port Arthur Historic Site (PAHS) and the Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania, and the project will commission up to 25 established and emerging artists to research, develop and mount work that explores lesser-known or under-acknowledged aspects of Port Arthur's history, culture and environment. *Port Arthur Project* offers an extraordinary opportunity to create a landmark exhibition of work that will explore, challenge and embrace the complexity and richness of the site through the unique approach of contemporary visual artists. Nothing of this scale and nature has been undertaken in Tasmania before.

A total audience of over 20,000 is anticipated, based on PAHS's position as the state's most popular tourist attraction and the success of the special events associated with previous (performing arts) TDOTI projects at Port Arthur. While the site is a hugely popular destination, audiences will not have previously experienced such dramatically new ways of considering its characteristics.

Site-specificity and public art generally are rapidly developing elements within Tasmania's visual arts. Their application to one of the country's most significant and notable sites presents an opportunity to extend artists' practice and audience understanding and enjoyment, while also providing timely recognition of the potential of art to contribute to the Tasmanian community's acceptance of Port Arthur's place in our culture. Through its commitment to consultation, *Port Arthur Project* will forge new relationships between the Peninsula community, artists and PAHS staff. And, through the symposium and publication of a book, the project will foster and expand research into one of Australia's most significant historic sites.

The Port Arthur Project will be presented in the year following the 10th anniversary of the tragedy of April 1996, which has refocussed media and community attention on the site and region. The shootings impacted widely, affecting the immediate Port Arthur community very deeply. While the Port Arthur Project is not commemorative, those events, and the way in which they have affected the community, add poignancy to a project that, through art, considers the events that form our sense of community.

Theme

The focus of the exhibition is centred on the concept of revelation - the uncovering of under-recognised or over-looked elements of the PAHS and its environs, or the reinvestigation of conventional readings of history in new and unusual ways. Artists' responses may be inspired by themes that include concealed histories, untold stories, imagined lives and spaces, architectural remains and physical traces in the natural world. The work will be exhibited within the grounds and historic buildings of the Port Arthur Historic Site in March/April as a feature of the 2007 Ten Days on the Island program.

Artists will consider the theme through a broad range of characteristics that may include:

Transportation and convict archives	Post-convict life
Unusual crimes and characters	The gardens
Irish convict and political exiles	The Peninsula environment
Non-Anglo-Irish residents	Boat building, mining & industry
The indigenous community	Criminology
The role of women	Museology
Significant events	Architecture
Lost histories and myths	Tourism

Proposals include a broad range of media: video and sound works, photography, sculpture and installations, and performance; a summary of the concepts is attached.

Audiences – Public Program and Associated Events

In both 2001 and 2003 Ten Days on the Island presented a successful program of events at the Port Arthur Historic. As part of the 2007 program we expect visitors for the family day to exceed 2,500, and total visitors to exceed 20,000.

Port Arthur Project's public education program will incorporate:

- **A Community Lecture Series** will be held as part of the Tasman Peninsula's existing, regular community meetings, *The Port Arthur Talks*, providing the local community, artists, historians, archaeologists, writers and others with specialist knowledge of PAHS, a consultative forum for sharing ideas and knowledge about Port Arthur.
- **Exhibition Tours** will provide visitors to the site with explanatory information about the relationship between individual art works in the exhibition and the Port Arthur site.
- **Artist and curator talks** will provide visitors with an informal, on site opportunity to expand their understanding of site-specific contemporary art. Artists will discuss their work, its development and the aspects of Port Arthur that inspired their projects. Curators will offer further insight into the works, addressing contextual and conceptual issues associated with individual works, and the curatorial underpinnings of the project.
- **A Family Day** will offer families the opportunity to engage with Port Arthur and the exhibition by participating in events developed and presented by Ten Days on the Island. These will include an on site picnic, performances, and children's activities held in conjunction with the official opening of *Port Arthur Project* during the Ten Days on the Island program.
- **Interpretative signage** will provide visitors, unable to participate in other parts of the education program, with a concise way of engaging with the art works, including artist names, the title of the work and a brief explanatory text summarising the information available through artist and curator talks.
- **Brochure and site guide** will provide visitors with a navigation map for locating art works, artists' statements, and an overview of the project's aims and details of all art works and events associated with *Port Arthur Project*.

Symposium and Monograph

A two-day symposium will accompany the exhibition, providing a forum for scholarly research. The symposium will permit in-depth consideration of the art works and project development processes in the wider context of other Australian and international exhibition projects and discourse on temporary and interpretive public art that address historically significant sites.

The Symposium will be presented at the Tasmanian School of Art on 26 & 27 March 2007. Drawing heavily on the artists, designers, writers and curatorial team directly involved with *Port Arthur Project*, it will also be an open invitation to national and international writers, historians, artists and academics that specialize in the interpretation of historic sites. Equally significantly, within six months of the exhibition, but subject to funding, a monograph will be published that includes documentation of the exhibited art work, catalogue essays and selected symposium papers. The monograph will provide a permanent record of the exhibition and the symposium and increase the reach and 'shelf life' of the *Port Arthur Project* by encouraging ongoing critical reflection and analysis. All referred papers will be published electronically.

The Port Arthur Project is a major project that aims to reflect the varied but interrelated objectives of the three collaborating partners:

- To provide a major visual arts event for the 2007 Ten Days on the Island that recognises the richness and complexity of PAHS by showcasing the site-specific work of established and emerging artists associated with Tasmania.
- To explore, interpret and elaborate the PAHS through site-specific contemporary visual art, and in doing so, foster and expand research into PAHS.

- To identify and develop models for interpreting historic sites through contemporary art.
- To build on and strengthen the community's engagement with the PAHS by developing new relationships and dialogues between the different sectors of the community associated with Port Arthur: artists, PAHS staff, Peninsula residents and others.
- To consider notions of community, communities of interest, objectivity and artists as part of a community with interest.
- To enhance and enrich the PAHS visitor experience.

Port Arthur Project

Full Participant List

A project advisory committee will comprise Frankham and Clark joined by Stephen Large, Chief Executive Officer, and Maria Stacey, Director Tourism Operations, Port Arthur Historic Site and Elizabeth Walsh, Artistic Director, Ten Days on the Island. Frankham will have decision-making responsibility on advice from the committee and Stephen Large will be responsibility for final 'sign-off' on the project elements on behalf of PAHS.

Curators:

Noel Frankham
 Julia Clark

Artists :

Christl Berg	Photography/installation
Lucy Bleach	Sculpture/installation
Tracey Cockburn	Printmaking
Nicole Ellis	Video installation
Linda Fredheim	Furniture/installation
Ruth Frost	Photography/video
Loloa Greeno and Vicki West	Sculpture/installation
Fiona Hall	Sculpture/Installation
Leigh Hobba	Video/sound installation
Colin Langridge	Sculpture
Fiona Lee	Printmaking/installation
Karen Lunn and Milan Milojevic	Printmaking/installation
Anne MacDonald	Photography
Anne Mestitz	Sculpture
James Newitt	Video/installation
Brigita Ozolins	Installation/performance
Justy Phillips	Installation
Helena Psotova	Photography
Alyssa Simone	Photography
Lucia Usmiani	Sculpture/Installation
Matt Warren	Sound installation
Elizabeth Woods	Sculpture Installation