

## Artists Statement

House of Mirrors is a grotesquely fascinating walk-through installation composed of a labyrinth of seemingly endless mirrors.

Created by Melbourne installation artists Christian Wagstaff and Keith Courtney, House Of Mirrors focuses on the darker side of altered perception, playing with themes of uncertainty, claustrophobia, confusion and disorientation, apprehension and uneasiness, thrill, panic and paranoia.

Produced in collaboration with award winning creative studio CPS, House of Mirrors was commissioned by MONA for DARK MOFO 2016 in Hobart, Tasmania.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, mirror mazes have been trapping and reflecting participants, challenging those that venture into them, both physically and psychologically, resulting in delight, amazement and sometimes, fear.

These confronting puzzles have a long history in creating a sense of intrigue and disorientation, trickery and confusion.

Mirror mazes are a recurring trope of illumination and disorientation in art: Leonardo da Vinci sketched an octagonal chamber of mirrors in which his subject could see all sides of their body, infinitely reflected; Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of The Opera* features a torturous, geometric mirrored room that creates the illusion of a hall of a thousand columns; Orson Welles' climatic scene in *The Lady From Shanghai* featured a mirror maze and the television show *The Twilight Zone* often lured its lead character into a mirror maze to taunt them or scare them to death.

*'The walls of this strange room gave the patient nothing to lay hold of, because, apart from the solid decorative object, they were simply furnished with mirrors, thick enough to withstand any onslaught of the victim, who was flung into the chamber empty-handed and barefoot.'* Gaston Leroux.

The House of Mirrors features oblique corridors of large full-length high mirrors, producing multiple reflections, tricking the perception of those in front of them. Forty tonnes of steel and fifteen tonnes of mirrored glass are arranged in combinations of varying angles to create specific effects, including the illusion of being able to see other victims in the maze, but not yourself, in specific mirrors. A other times, that illusion works in reverse.

House of Mirrors includes Kaleidoscopic like chambers, voids, doorways and darkened breaks, the purist and most traditional form of a mirrored maze. The bare basics. No added gimmicks, no special effects, no special lighting, no sound track or soundscape. Just the primary ingredient of carefully arranged mirrors, geometry and pure optical illusion.

House Of Mirrors brings an authentic sense of amusement – a thrilling blend of delight and fear.

There is only one way in to the House of Mirrors. Getting out is an art.

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[TO EVENT PAGE](#)