

No Exit, Part 2



Ronnie van Hout's gloriously important mid-career retrospective I've Abandoned Me (vomiting monkeys included) is touring all the major galleries in Australasia – except, strangely, the glass tutu.



The Physics Room



The Physics Room

The Physics Room, Level 2, 209 Tuam St

Thankfully, the Physics Room is offering a taste for Cantabs in the form of No Exit, Part 2 – largely made by van Hout in Wellington, where he is currently artist in residence with Massey University.

Guessing references in artworks is like intellectual Where's Wally and this is no exception. No Exit parts 1 and 2 draw on Jean-Paul Sartre's 1945 play No Exit in which three people in a barely furnished room eventually realise they are in fact dead, and trapped together for all eternity in their own personalised versions of Hell. As Sartre himself said, 'Hell is other people.' It's a typically van Hout sort of premise, he is, after all, the Norman Bates of contemporary New Zealand art. If he was any less self-aware, he would be an outsider.

The installation is the artist's meditation on the 'afterlife', so to speak, should he ever take it upon himself to give up art (i.e. metaphorically die). 'What dreams may come?' Apparently it would be an unending living hell of being trapped in the frustrated desire to both express and know the self – complete with the van Hoot trademarks of self-portrait busts and mannequins and freestanding 'No's. At the opening, one couldn't resist slipping a glass of wine into the hand of the artist's prostrate and track-suited facsimile. He looked like he needed it.

Andrew

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