

Culture

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## White Night: A melancholic artistic dream that lingers long

International artists and emerging talent will create a special night of nights.

By **Annabel Ross**

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An ephemeral, melancholic fantasy world that leaves a lasting impact: that's what White Night's organisers are hoping to create on the second annual all-night arts event on February 22, replete with a musical line-up including a homage to Prince's epic 1980s musical drama film *Purple Rain*.

Final details of the White Night program, to be announced on Monday, reveal a schedule of more than 100 free events to be staged across the city from dusk 'til dawn.



Pierre Ardouvin's light and sound work pays homage to Prince's *Purple Rain*. MARTIN ARGYROGLO

Following last year's hugely successful inaugural event, which saw more than 300,000 people flood the CBD to take in the entertainment program, this year's White Night will have an increased focus on visual arts.

Anais Lellouche, the Franco-American curator sent to Melbourne to advise her previous employer, Paris' Pompidou Centre, on Australian art, has been enlisted this year to curate the *Arcadian Reverie*

exhibition staged in Queen Victoria Gardens. Lellouche was also an associate curator of White Night Paris in 2012.

"That led me to meet the team at Victorian Major Events, who told me they were planning to have the inaugural White Night Melbourne here, which I witnessed and wrote about for them in an article," says Lellouche.

For her Melbourne White Night curatorial debut, Lellouche engaged her international networks - and local ones formed during a stint as curator-in-residence at Gertrude Contemporary last year - to create a richly varied *Arcadian Reverie* of 11 works.

"The principle was to create a dialogue between Australian and international artists and also, in terms of how the artworks were chosen, it was for their medium and their experience, there'll be a number of different experiences," says Lellouche. "There'll be a light installation by the Argentinian, Paris-based Julio le Parc, who is 85-years-old and absolutely internationally acclaimed," she says. "We're creating a new version of a work I commissioned in Paris for Nuit Blanche 2012 which is called *Vibrating Life*."

An Australian artist living in Paris, Mel O'Callaghan, also features, with a 16 millimetre film called *MOVE*, in which a man crushes a series of rocks. "It's based on repetition and the absurd," says Lellouche.

"She's very poetic and it will be cantilevered above one of the rocks in the pond. It will be very visual while asking people what makes people make these gestures."

The overarching theme of *Arcadian Reverie*, she says, is "nature being sublimated by artistic imagination".

"And so it's a bit like a fantasy because we know that White Night Melbourne is a dream that we have for a very limited amount of time, and what I have created here is a much-too-ambitious exhibition with very important artists. So the idea is to have this contemporary sublime experience - it touches you for a limited amount of time physically, but hopefully it stays with you for a long time."

Another overarching theme, she says, "is the celebration of nature, beauty, but also melancholia, so the oscillation between this experience".

Music also features strongly if perhaps not as prominently as last year given the shift of the main music stage, now dubbed the Northern Lights music stage, from the steps of Flinders Street Station to the side of the State Library in Latrobe Street.

"Trains are running at a much higher frequency at this point so we were conscious we had to clear the station a bit," says White Night creative director Andrew Walsh.

The Northern Lights stage will feature local artists including Client Liaison, Beaches, Teeth & Tongue and Fraser A. Gorman performing through the night. The jazz stage will return this year, but will also include R&B music and will move to Bourke Street Mall.

"I wanted to create a couple of hot spots," says Walsh of distancing the two music stages from each other.

Also featuring in the Northern Lights precinct is *Purple Rain*, which first appeared at White Night Paris. In the visual and sound installation by French artist Pierre Ardouvin, participants will be encouraged to pick up an umbrella and wander around under lilac-coloured rain.

Other highlights announced on Monday include *Voices*, a choral installation work featuring members of children's choir Gondwana Voices singing compositions based on important moments in their lives, the scenes projected using dioramas.

Elsewhere, cultural critic Ashley Crawford curates *Cabinet of Curiosities*, a multimedia exploration of the body via sculpture and video, featuring the work of Cypriot-Australian performance artist Stelarc and Lisa Roet's Monkey HEART, investigating comparisons between the ape and human heart.

Lellouche hopes White Night will act as a springboard for the careers of emerging exhibiting artists. "I think Melbourne is a wonderful city, we've had the great excitement of *Melbourne Now* which has given us the impulse to say we have this amazing talent and I really believe that White Night Melbourne can do the same for artists," she says.

"I think now the challenge is to keep people thinking, to keep people amazed, and that is how the event will become more of a stepping stone for artists."

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