

PROJECT 33

Anri Sala

2017

The Last Resort

13 October – 5 November 2017

Observatory Hill, Sydney

BIOGRAPHY

Anri Sala's works of film, sculpture and installation create poetic analogies that reflect on life and culture from different frames of experience. Past works have traversed European contexts, from his hometown, Tirana, Albania, to Germany and France where he has spent much of his adult life. His films balance allegorical and symbolic subjects, presented as simple narratives that often creatively pair image with sound, and explore the choreographic potential of musical instruments and their performers. Sala has represented France in the Venice Biennale, participated in Documenta 13, Kassel, and has presented solo exhibitions at Centre Pompidou, Paris, and New Museum, New York.

FACTS

- During a visit to Australia in 2012, Sala became intrigued by the chasm between 18th-century Europe and early colonial Sydney, between the ideals of the Enlightenment period and the devastating impact of conquest and colonisation.
- *The Last Resort* responded to the social and cultural significance of the Observatory Hill site and its layered histories.
- Suspended upside-down from the ceiling of the Rotunda, an ensemble of 38 snare drums played a pre-recorded, reworked version of W.A. Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K.622.
- Recontextualising a masterpiece of the Western Classical canon, Sala's installation expressed the changes that occur across time and distance, and revealed new perspectives on the historic location.
- The second movement, the Adagio, or slow movement, featured in the work. Sala rearranged the tempo of the Adagio, altering its pace and flow to reflect wind conditions described in the diary of sailor James Bell, during his 1838 voyage to Australia.
- Bell's daily journal entries commence with a description of the weather, and Sala draws on this document of time, experience and personal journey to manipulate the composition.
- Attached to each drum, a pair of drumsticks beat their own rhythm, adding a layer of live percussion to the recorded music.
- Inside each custom-built drum, two hidden speakers played the layered composition. One played a rendition of the orchestral music, the other an inaudible low-range frequency, causing a strong vibration, and triggering the beating of the sticks.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Celebrated French-Albanian artist Anri Sala created an innovative new installation of sculpture and sound for the 33rd Kaldor Public Art Project, which was developed over three years ahead of its world-premiere in Sydney. *The Last Resort* was co-presented with Art & About Sydney.

Sala's project transformed the Observatory Hill Rotunda, a site with expansive views from the most elevated point in the city. Audiences were invited to step beneath a gravity-defying ensemble of custom-built drums, to experience their rhythmic, live response to a contemporary interpretation of a Mozart Concerto. Set against the sights and sounds of the harbour below, this musical dialogue animated the relationship between sound, place, time and history on this evocative site. These themes formed the basis of a vibrant suite of public programs presented during the project in partnership with the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

For *The Last Resort* Sala reimagined Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in A Major, a seminal piece from the Western canon and a musical expression of the European Enlightenment. Mozart's score was upended, as if it were a message in a bottle carried from Europe across the ocean to Australia, affected by wind and waves. This abstraction of the score's structure expressed the way shifts of location, time and perspective alter meaning.

Sala has achieved international acclaim for his works, which explore themes of loss and language, as well as the relationship between sound, space and architecture. These themes have been expressed through poetic video works, live performance and recordings, sculptures and installation. In recent works Sala has explored the complex interplay between live and recorded musical compositions.

Kaldor Public Art
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Photo: Pedro Greig



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Photo: Cassandra
Hannagan

