



# From Australia

BY HEIDI MCKENZIE

Kirsha Kaechele's surrealist exploration of turning flaw into feature using invasive species, *Eat the Problem*, opened at Mona, the Museum of Old and New Art, in Hobart, Tasmania on April 13th, 2019. Mona is Australia's largest privately-owned museum and art gallery. It was cleaved into cliffs by philanthropist, writer and professional gambler, David Walsh, in order to house his collection in 2011. Kaechele happens to be Walsh's wife. Mona's state-of-the-art digital didactics tells us that Kaechele's "lifelong commitment is to work that combines social justice with conceptual art. She is an artist-curator, a maker of fabulous happenings, a visionary and a perfectionist." I sat down with Kaechele after her presentation at the Australian Ceramics Triennale in May, and she shared her philosophy of art that seems to permeate all aspects of her life. She practices creative expression and tries to apply creative thinking to all elements of reality, including social environments: "I like to think about the systems that have been set up that are dysfunctional and try and reimagine them creatively, and then transform them through art." Hence *Eat the Problem* is about transforming loathsome objects or waste products into features of celebration; it is about transmuting, in Kaechele's words, "shit into gold."



Kirsha Kaechele, *Feasting inside Eat the Problem*, 2019. Aluminum, felt, camel, deer, seaweed and tapioca.  
PHOTO: MONA/JESSE HUNNIFORD, COURTESY OF MONA MUSEUM OF OLD AND NEW ART





Centrally featured is *The Grand Feasting Table*, a 24-metre musical instrument tuned to 432Hz, slightly lower than contemporary musical standards of 440Hz. This frequency is associated with the Pythagorean theorem and the tuning system used for ancient Tibetan flutes and bowls. The artist believes that this frequency is tuned to a universal rhythm of the earth, which ties into the healing aspect of the exhibit that incorporates bookable healing sessions of massage, sound therapy and reflexology, where sessions are actually given ‘on the keys’. The instrument itself is billed as the largest glockenspiel in the world. A collection of guest musicians fills the gallery with resonant harmonics on a regular basis throughout the run of the exhibition.

ABOVE Kirsha Kaechele, *Grand Feast, Eat the Problem*, 2019. Aluminum, felt, camel, deer, seaweed and tapioca.  
PHOTO: MONA/JESSE HUNNIFORD, COURTESY OF MONA MUSEUM OF OLD AND NEW ART

LEFT Kirsha Kaechele, *The Grand Feasting Table or A New Musical Invention, Eat the Problem*, 2019. Aluminum, felt, camel, deer, seaweed and tapioca.  
PHOTO: MONA/JESSE HUNNIFORD, COURTESY OF MONA MUSEUM OF OLD AND NEW ART

In keeping with the theme, aside from the aluminum powder-coated keys, the *Table* is rendered entirely from invasive materials: the dyes that create the chromatically-hued surfaces and felted mammoth mallets come primarily from the pigments of the cochineal, an invasive insect; the wax on each ‘key’ or tabletop comes from a by-product of invasive deer, mixed with other invasive species, such as tapioca, seaweed, and invasive Australian feral camel hump fat. Sunday feast menus boast other pests such as sea urchin and thistle.

The original complementary coloured plates were designed and hand-crafted for the 544-page corollary recipe book, “Eat the Problem”, by local ceramic artists Zsolt Faludi and Nanna Bayer. The dishware and cutlery that is being used and sold at the museum were custom designed by Kaechele herself. Trained in architecture, Kaechele’s understanding of the possibilities inherent in materials allowed her to work closely on the minutiae of the design for *The Grand Feasting Table*. She admits to having spent fifty-seven hours fussing with the 3D modelling for the rim of one of the plates for the table. In the end, the plans were sent to Mexico, where the makers ignored the models and just made everything by hand. *The Feasting Table* is a rare example of finely tuned socially responsible craft, art, design, and activism. ■