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Famous artwork 'We Must Cultivate Our Garden' set for an Australian debut in Perth



Scottish Artist Nathan Coley's message sculpture 'We Must Cultivate Our Garden' is showing at the Perth Cultural Centre from 24 February 2012. Photo: courtesy of the artist and Haunch of Venison, London.

Scottish artist Nathan Coley is bringing his sculpture 'We Must Cultivate Our Garden' to Perth, the Australian debut of this internationally acclaimed artwork.

Nathan Coley is an eminent Scottish artist and Turner Prize nominee, whose practice is based on the exploration of public space and the social aspects of our built environment.

We Must Cultivate Our Garden will be shown at the Perth Cultural Centre from Friday 24 February to 26 March 2012, presented by the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority, Department of Culture and the Arts and Artsource.

"All of the text works I make are found from an existing source; from stories I have heard, popular song titles, radio programs or written texts," Coley explained.

"*We Must Cultivate Our Garden* is a quote from the last line of the book 'Candide', written by French author Voltaire in 1759. It is commonly held up as a masterwork of the Enlightenment."

We Must Cultivate Our Garden has garnered worldwide praise since first being conceived in 2006, exhibited widely in the UK and Europe including Edinburgh, Paris and Stockholm – where the Mayor wanted to buy the artwork as he felt it spoke to the people of Stockholm today.

The ten metre long sculpture is made from fairground lights, suspended on a temporary scaffolding structure; creating an intriguing juxtaposition between the profound text and dingy travelling fairground aesthetic.

“The text can be read in many ways. I take it to mean that after a hard day in front of a computer, sending emails and making calls, you should potter in your garden, watering your tomatoes. Also, it means that we are in charge of our destiny, there is no God, and that nothing should be left to fate,” Coley reflects.



Nathan Coley, *We Must Cultivate Our Garden* (detail) Photo: courtesy of the artist and Haunch of Venison, London.

We Must Cultivate Our Garden will sojourn in Perth for a month as part of the Perth Cultural Centre Ephemeral Public Art Program, an initiative of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and curated by Artsource consultant Consuelo Cavaniglia.

“It is a really beautiful work and a great coup for Perth that we are able to host it here for its Australian debut,” Curator Consuelo Cavaniglia said.

“The sculpture stretches ten metres across and has a mesmerising presence, particularly in the evening. The beauty of the work is that it has such a simple and poignant message, which can be interpreted by the audience into a multitude of personal meanings,” she continued.

“It is the type of work which will generate a lot of interest and we are thrilled to have it as part of the ephemeral public artwork program at the Cultural Centre.”

We Must Cultivate Our Garden, follows a similar formula to Coley’s highly celebrated text based sculpture ‘*Heaven Is A Place Where Nothing Ever Happens*’, which was shown at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) during the Melbourne International Arts Festival in 2010 to much public attention.

We Must Cultivate Our Garden will be installed on the roof of the amenities building across from the Art Gallery of Western Australia in the Perth Cultural Centre from 24 February to 26 March 2012.

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About Artsource

Artsource is Western Australia’s peak representative body for visual artists. A not-for-profit organisation in operation since 1986, Artsource works to expand and improve the sustainability and profile of artists through practical services and support. For more information, please visit www.artsource.net.au

About the Perth Cultural Centre Ephemeral Public Art Program

The Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority, Department of Culture and the Arts and Artsource are working in partnership to bring ephemeral public artwork to the Perth Cultural Centre, in a program designed to delight, challenge and inspire. For more information, please visit www.perthculturalcentre.com.au