

DESIGN Canberra announces new City Walk artwork and 2020 festival program



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Music, Theatre & Arts



DESIGN Canberra artistic director Rachael Coghlan and artist Hannah Quinlivan outside Monaro Mall. Picture: Karleen Minney

It was officially opened in 1963 by Robert Menzies as Australia's first fully enclosed shopping mall. Now in 2020, its mid-century architecture and its ceiling mosaic will be highlighted with a new artwork, created by Hannah Quinlivan and commissioned by DESIGN Canberra.

The festival announced the commission as part of its program launch for next month's event.

"Hannah works in what's described as spatial drawing so she makes these large installations which are like drawings," Craft ACT chief executive and DESIGN Canberra artistic director Rachael Coghlan says.

"She was really moved, as we all were, by the fires and the smoke of earlier in the year and that's when we started gathering ideas and inspiration to curate into the program. And then, of course, the year just got even more 2020 with the global pandemic so it is about nurturing people through these difficult times and trying to make sense of the challenges that we've all been through."

Titled *Desiderium*, the large-scale light sculpture will be installed at the City Walk entry to Monaro Mall to act as an artistic arrow to the ceiling mosaic originally designed by Frank Hinder.

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 A render of Hannah Quinlivan's installation. Picture: Supplied

"We've got these iconic mid-century designs in architecture and public art, and it's great to raise a little bit of awareness about these gems that are under our noses every day," Coghlan says.

"I love the City Walk entry to Monaro Mall ... that was designed by Whitehead and Payne. It came about as the government moved in the late-50s and early-60s to transform Canberra into a fitting national capital. They also made this commitment to collaborate with public artists.

"And so there's Frank Hinder's gorgeous glass mosaic, which you only see if you take the time to look up. It's an exquisite and delicate art installation, under the tall, elegant pillars of Monaro Mall."

The installation is the embodiment of the 2020 festival theme of Care. Although it was first decided on in August 2019, the theme has proven to be an apt considering some of the events that have followed since, such as the bushfires and COVID-19.

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"This year has brought the realisation that the slow unravelling of our ecology has gained irreversible momentum," Quinlivan says.

"At the same time, the viral outbreak has compelled us to face with sober senses the fragility of our once taken for granted ways of living.

"After a year of grief and fear, this artwork asks its audience to take time to pause, to listen and hold close our ardent longing for the futures we once possessed but that dissolved into smoke, and to find the fortitude to care for each other through the uncertain future."