



Placing the MONA Effect: Dark Mofo Festivals and the Cultural Ecology of Hobart

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Since the arrival of MONA in Tasmania, the museum's impact has been compared to the Bilbao Effect and subsequent iterations of culture led urban regeneration projects. This paper reconsiders MONA's relationship to the iconic flagship model, by exploring the museum's integration with, and stimulation of, a strong preexisting cultural ecology in Hobart. The Dark Mofo winter festivals serve as primary case studies for examining the museum's social, cultural and economic embeddedness. The festivals translate the MONA brand from the museum, and inscribe MONA's ethos across the city during a fortnight of 'large-scale public art, food, music, film light and noise.' The co-constitutive relationship between festival and city is demonstrated through the multiple actors who are active participants in supporting, enabling and facilitating the impact of Dark Mofo. This paper contends that through the distributed agency of cultural activity the festival supports, the conventional shortcomings of an episodic seasonal festival economy are diminished. By being embedded in Hobart's cultural ecology, Dark Mofo is able to support the daily making and re-making of local identity and sense of place, beyond the winter festival fortnight.