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To the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection,

We write with concern regarding the imminent arrival in Australia of the controversial Austrian artist Hermann Nitsch, who intends to hold a performance at the Hobart arts and culture festival Dark MOFO.

In 1962, Nitsch was arrested in Vienna with his close artistic colleague Otto Muehl on charges of public indecency, involving violence, pornography and blasphemy. He unsuccessfully appealed the two week custodial sentence which he later served in 1966. (Muehl was later sentenced to 7 years imprisonment for sexual relations with multiple minors).

In 1966 Nitsch was again arrested, for holding a violent and pornographic action in a public gallery, and was imprisoned for five days. Later that same year he was sentenced to six months in prison, and granted probation on the proviso he abstain from engaging in his public art actions. Nitsch instead left Austria.

His 43rd action in Munich was broken up by police in 1974. Later that same year, another action in Italy was broken up by police and Nitsch was extradited from the country.

Videos of his works were seized by New South Wales Police in 1988, whilst being screened during the Biennale of Sydney.

In 2015 a planned event in Mexico City was cancelled following a petition which accrued over 5000 signatures.

Opposition to Hermann Nitsch's appearance here in Hobart has been fierce on local, national and international levels, and has attracted significant media attention. A Tasmanian based petition calling for the intervention of the Hobart City Council has accrued 20 000 signatures, whilst an international petition addressed to the organisers of Dark MOFO has attracted around 100 000 signatures.

Nitsch's works involve the use of slaughtered animal carcasses, entrails, animal semen and hundreds of litres of blood in an event that the artist himself describes as an "orgiastic celebration of cruelty and chaos." There is a reliance in his art actions on simulated physical and sexual violence, especially against the female performers. Participants in his actions are covered in entrails, bound and/or crucified, and often "forced" to drink animal blood. Nitsch has stated his wish that the animal flesh used in the performance be consumed by participants and the public afterwards.

Submissions relating to health and safety concerns have been made to the Tasmanian State government.

If the planned event goes forward, it will be the 150th time Nitsch has performed this work in 50 years.

We would appreciate it if the Minister would consider investigating the immigration status of Hermann Nitsch, on the basis of his record of arrests, imprisonment and extradition, as well as the general public concern regarding his intended activities here in Australia.

Regards,

Kristy Alger