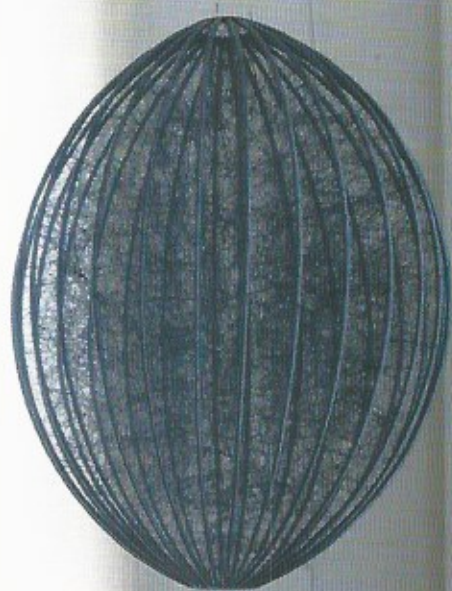
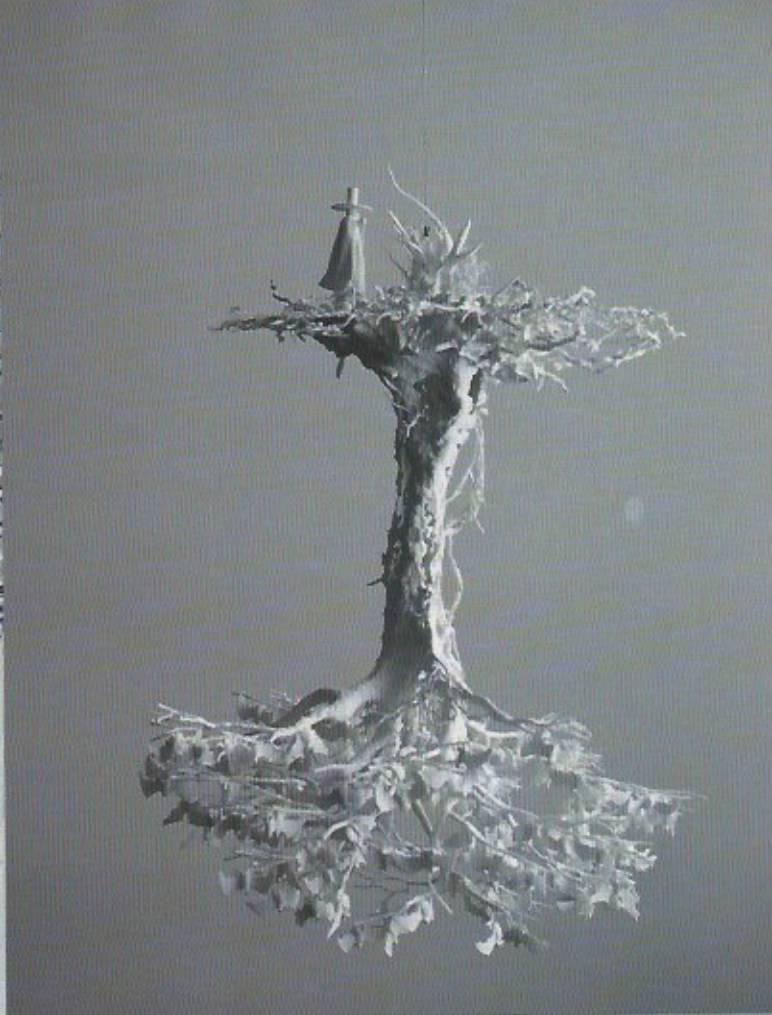


On display at *Migration*, a pop-up exhibition of contemporary international art at Melbourne's Ormond Hall, co-curated by Matthias Arndt of Arndt gallery in Berlin, is the thread work of Japanese installation artist Chiharu Shiota; *State of Being (Ellipsoid)* (2011), hangs above *State of Being (Globe)* (2012). The table is 'West Cafe, Documenta X' (1997) by the late German artist/designer Franz West.



PRECIOUS CARGO

A MELBOURNE POP-UP EXHIBITION OF WORLD-RENOWNED CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS PRE-EMPTS A SHIFT IN AUSTRALIA'S INVESTMENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL ART SCENE.



A detail, **top left**, of Nick Cave's *Soundsuit* (2011). **Left**: Eko Nugroho's *La Rue Parle #7* (2012). **Above**: Mathieu Briand's *Arbre retourné* (2011). **Below**: Zhan Wang's *Universe 24* (2012) hangs above Joe Colombo's 'Universale' chairs (1965) and 'Brillo' table (1971).

AT THE MELBOURNE media launch of *Migration* – a 'pop-up show' of big-name international art by Berlin-based gallery Arndt – a local critic, Champagne in hand, shirt-fronted the gallery's owner, Matthias Arndt, with the fact that Melbourne had more than 200 commercial galleries and needed no more. Arndt, an affable cultural entrepreneur who boasts one of the highest profiles in the 600 gallery-engorged Berlin art scene (within which he has operated for the last 25 years) and who can flash the French Ministry of Culture's Chevalier of the *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, smiled politely, surveyed his immediate place and simply agreed.

Whether his parochial guest got the irony that she was standing in a 19th-century music hall built for the blind, and that Arndt's one-off staging of museum-quality art throughout its ballroom and branching chambers made no allusions to the modern gallery, is not certain, but she soon fell into line and quiet acquiescence as Arndt led a tour through the resonant 'atmospheres' of Ormond Hall, elucidating on the unexpected encounters with contemporary art by the white-hot likes of Georg Baselitz, Anselm Kiefer, Thomas Hirschhorn and Gilbert & George. Stopping at a glass showcase internally propped with someone's personal stuff, he informed us that, with the exception of China, Australia was probably the only country whose major museums had never exhibited or collected pieces by art stars Sophie Calle (the showcase's creator) or Thomas Hirschhorn, "and still, works of theirs with museum provenance were available for under \$50,000," he shrugged. >





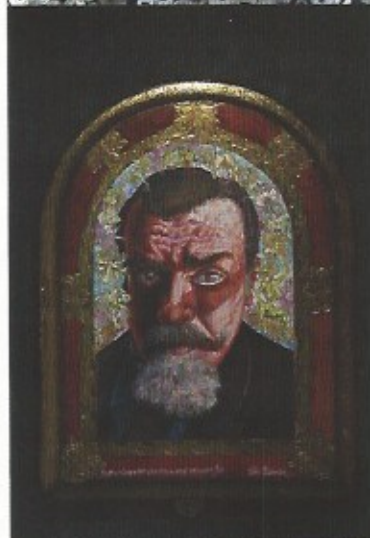
< So why present all these cryptic 'conceptuals' in an 'odd' context off the predictable art-paths of Europe and the US? "I think Australian private, corporate and public collections are now ready and committed to engage and collect contemporary art from all over the world," Arndt replied, qualifying that he will always create what doesn't exist rather than complain about circumstance. "Coming here is also a private mission." (Arndt's wife, Tiffany Wood – co-producer of *Migration* – is Australian.)

This connection aside, Arndt conceded that 'circumstance' has sucked local speculators and investors out of this market, dried up institutional budgets, contracted the commercial gallery scene and delivered the worst sales revenues to dealers in decades, but defended his presence in Melbourne (and Sydney, where he 'popped up' earlier) with the pronouncement that Asia is now the new geo-political centre and Australia one of its key art portals.

"I have only my intuition – it is my capital – but I see great opportunity in coming to Australia, a direct neighbour to the most booming art landscapes and markets in Asia," he said, pre-empting announcement of his next Melbourne incarnation, *Made in China* – a "special presentation" of China's blue-chip collectables at Ormond Hall. "For these fast-developing areas,



Left: cultural entrepreneur Matthias Arndt stands in one of the Migration viewing rooms, which has been propped with Kostas Murkudis's 141 Dresses (2011) (**detail opposite page, top**); Eko Nugroho's *Under Pillow Ideology* (2009) on the floor; Nick Cave's *Soundsuit* (2011), centre (**detail above right**); and Gilbert & George's *Muslim Straight on the wall*. **Opposite page, bottom:** Chiharu Shiota's *State of Being (Guitar)* (2011). Joe Coleman's *Another Carpenter* (2010), **right**, and Sophie Calle's showcase *The Birthday Ceremony: 1986 (1980-93)*, **below**, are exemplar of Migration's international art-star line-up.



we are adopting a different approach to exhibiting contemporary art. In this new world order, we need to offer more. I always try to find the right moment and the right structure."

Moment and structure are currently coalescing in Arndt Singapore – a project space and office within Singapore's new go-to art complex, Gillman Barracks (see overleaf) – but Arndt continues to oversee a strong exhibition program in Berlin, "the 'white cube' is a protected zone that still centres an important focus on the arts". Also acting as an independent consultant for museums, private and corporate collections, Arndt likes to distil his business diversity into a single credit: 'connector' of artists to an international community. If this means opening up new fields and presenting new formats, so be it. "But remember there is no promised land," the pragmatic veteran of some 270 exhibitions and 90 international art fairs self-cautions. Still, in these unconventional times, when art must triumph over the beleaguered traditions on which it has long depended, a continuous reinvention of its exhibition and promotion might be its only means of survival. ANNEMARIE KIELY
Arndt's next exhibition, Made in China (by appointment only) runs until May at Ormond Hall, Melbourne Vic, (03) 9529 3111.

