

PROJECT 28

Roman Ondak

2014

Measuring the Universe

Swap

Terrace

25 January - 14 February 2014

Parramatta Town Hall

BIOGRAPHY

Through his poetic interventions, Roman Ondak alters our perception of everyday life. Ondak merges art and the everyday experience, leading to an impressive body of globally significant work. Audience participation and the involvement of the public is integral in the realisation of his work.

FACTS

- Project 28 was presented as part of Sydney Festival at the historic Parramatta Town Hall in January 2014.
- In *Measuring the Universe*, Ondak gave the organisation a set of written instructions, which informed the development and evolution of the artwork.
- Ondak prescribed the size of the room, the specific marker pen and the way in which each participant's name should be written.
- The attendants were instructed on what to say when approaching the audience members, and how to respectfully measure a visitor with limited body contact.
- As the piece developed over the exhibition period, the invisible relationship between every visitor revealed itself through their shared experience of having their height recorded. This traditionally private undertaking, occurring between parents and children in the family home, became public through the work.
- The work attempted to gauge the scale of our world through one simple, repeated action.
- In *Swap* a community was generated within the gallery space as the performer searched for items to trade. Setting in motion a chain of swapping, the performer continued to ask each visitor to trade an object with the one on the table.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Roman Ondak takes the familiar elements of everyday life and reframes them to surprise our expectations and perspectives. He investigates social codes, conventions, rituals and forms of exchange by dislocating objects, ideas and actions from their usual settings. His installations, performances and interventions are sometimes scarcely distinguishable from the context in which they are presented. Often humorous, they provoke a double-take by viewers, making them question their preconceptions and modes of interaction.

For Kaldor Public Art Project 28, highly acclaimed Slovakian artist Roman Ondak presented a trio of participatory works at Parramatta Town Hall. The historic venue hosted *Swap* (2011), the riveting interactive chain of barter and exchange that delighted *13 Rooms* audiences, and *Measuring the Universe* (2007), previously presented to great acclaim at Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Tate St Ives, United Kingdom. The third work, *Terrace* (2014) was created especially for Kaldor Public Art Project 28.

MEASURING THE UNIVERSE

Ondak's celebrated work *Measuring the Universe* (2007) began with an empty gallery space. Equipped with a black felt tip marker, gallery attendants marked the height, name and date of each visitor who entered the space. As the blank walls transformed into a universe of marks, a dense, dark mass congregated at the average height of participants, transforming a common family tradition into a portrait of Western Sydney.

SWAP

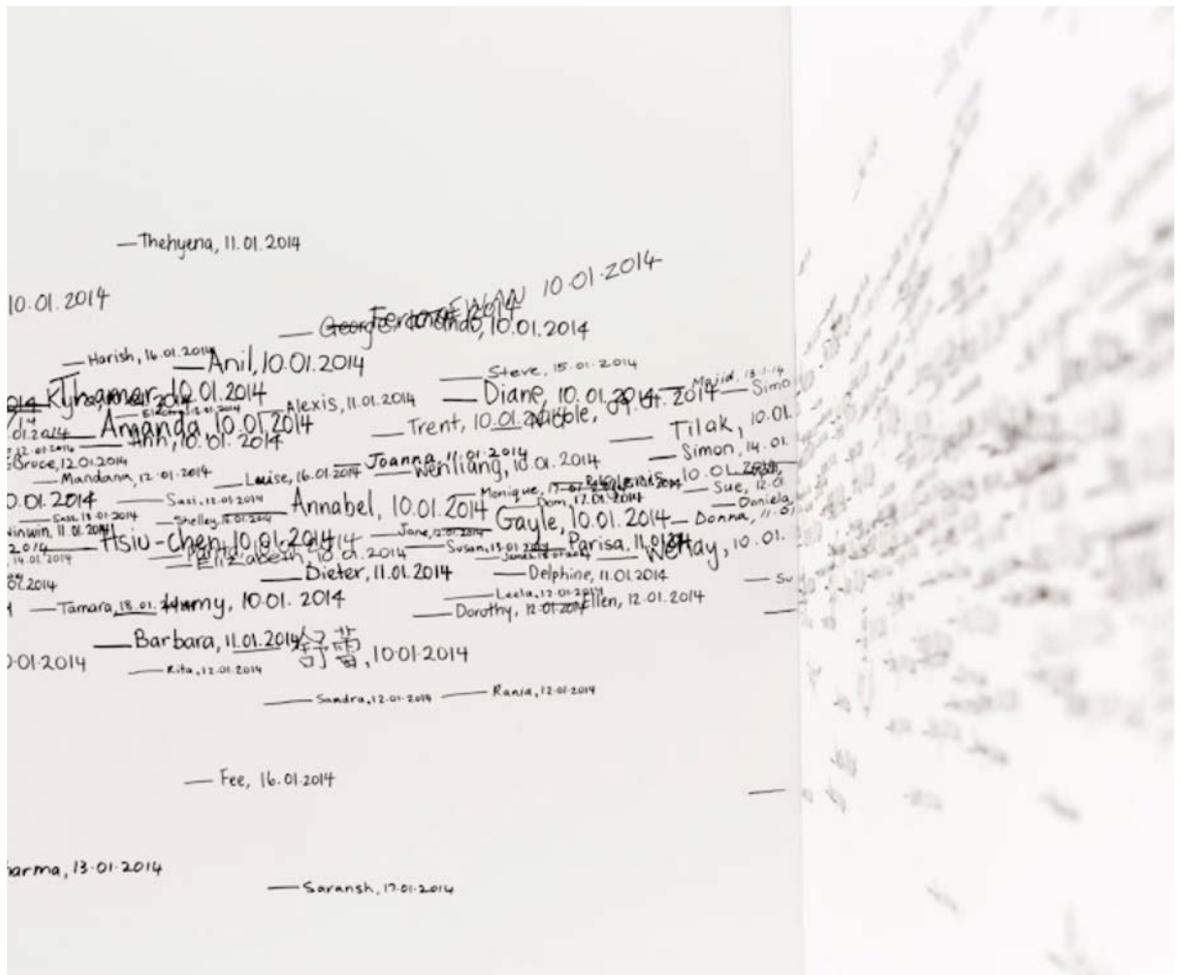
An undeniable favourite from Project 27: *13 Rooms*, *Swap* (2011) merged art with everyday life. Ondak selected a performer to sit behind a table akin to a vendor in a marketplace. Setting in motion an endless chain of barter and exchange, the performer invited each visitor to swap an object for the one on his table. Finally, at the close of the exhibition, the last performer took with him/her the final object of the day.

TERRACE

Adding a personal element to the project, and evoking the presence of the Slovakian artist in Parramatta was *Terrace* (2014), a work created especially for Project 28. An exact replica of the artist's own terrace in his post-war Central European apartment, this work provided a shift in perspective for viewers as they navigated the exhibition.

Kaldor Public Art Project 28: Roman Ondak, *Measuring the Universe*, Parramatta Town Hall, 25 January - 14 February 2014

Photo: Paul Green



Kaldor Public Art Project 28: Roman Ondak, *Swap*, Parramatta Town Hall, 25 January - 14 February 2014

Photo: Paul Green

