

# Heart of darkness

## ■ VISUAL ART

Richard Moore

**M**ARTIN Creed regards his work *The Lights Off* as one of his more extreme pieces. Occupying three rooms of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Arts is nothing — except darkness.

The work is also a close relative of *The Lights On*, which in 2001 won the British artist the infamous Turner Prize. *The Lights On* featured a light switching itself on in an empty room every five seconds.

"I couldn't decide whether to switch the lights off or on in that piece, but with this one I made a definite choice to turn them off," Creed says.

"How do you rate failure?" shouted one of the assembled throng at Creed's lecture in nearby Federation Hall.

"Minus three," came the instant reply from Creed.

He has a sense of humour.

"All my favourite works make me laugh."

One wonders whether *The Lights Off* is his joke at the expense of the art world.

Despite being hailed as that world's enfant terrible, Creed doesn't feel comfortable as one of its citizens.

"I don't want to be in the little art world, in the centre of a small clique. I want to be part of the big world," he says.

**I**N HIS work for the Melbourne Festival, Creed has managed to exclude all art. As he says, "*The Lights Off* is almost all surroundings and no work."

So what's the rationale?

"For me, my works are completed only by their marriage to the outside world," he says.

## ■ THE LIGHTS OFF

**Where:** Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 111 Sturt St, Southbank

**When:** until December 4  
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"Usually I try to make a diagram in my mind. It's about 50/50; 50 per cent my input and 50 per cent the audience completing the work. This piece is an experiment at the extreme end — it's 1 per cent me and 99 per cent the audience filling in."

Many people will be left in the dark by Creed's approach, but at heart is a belief that all meaning is entirely personal and that "Nobody can tell you what it means."

"I can't say what it may mean to others. It may piss people off, but in the end people will project themselves onto the work," he says.

While he is unconcerned about what others think, his reasons for his work show more concern.

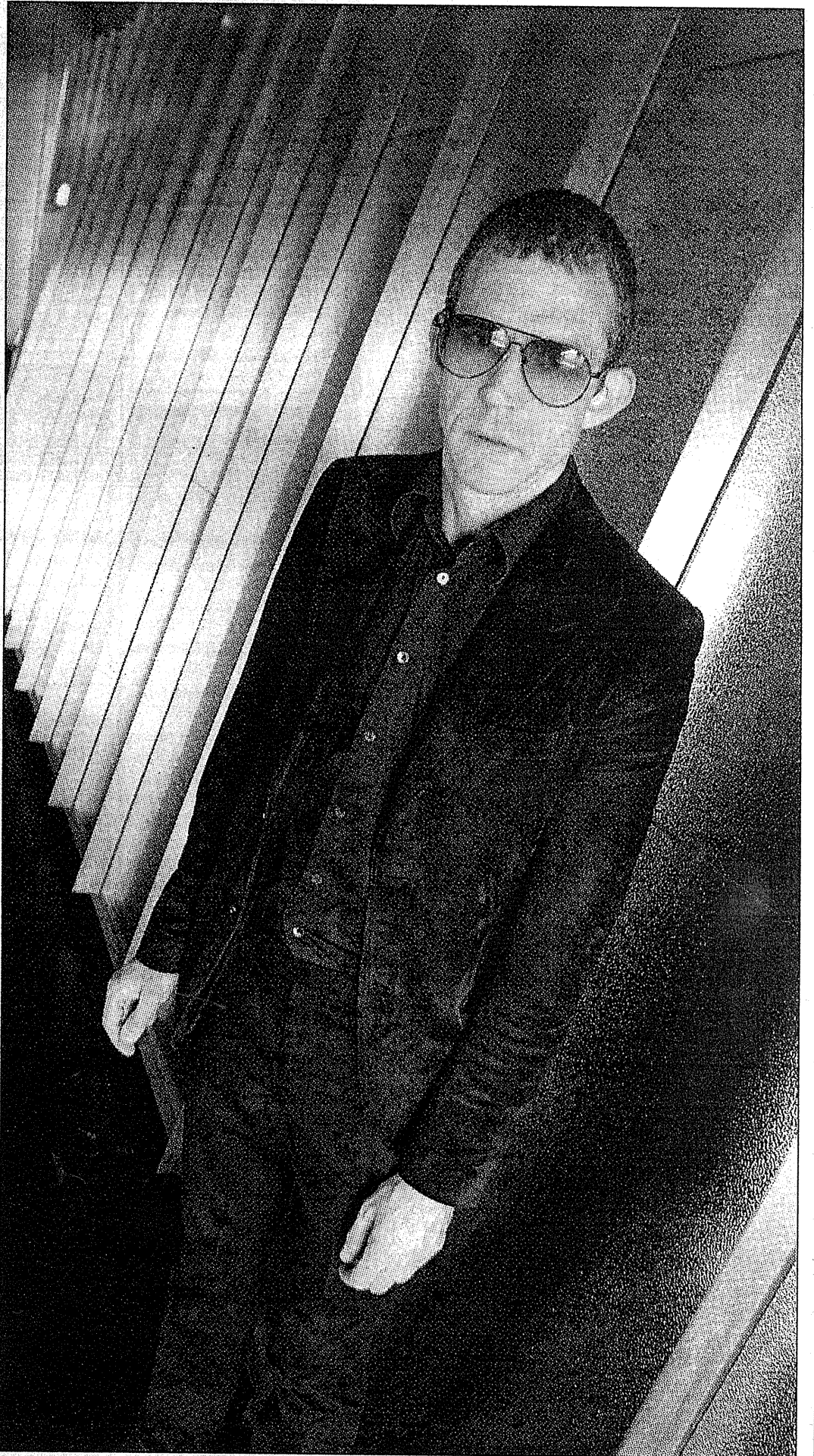
"I consider work to be a desperate attempt to fill my life; my work comes out of a desperate attempt to fill the emptiness. It's one of the most horrible things in the world to look at yourself and realise your own nature."

*The Lights Off* suggests Creed is a dark soul, but in person he doesn't come across that way.

He was deliberately unprepared for his lecture.

"I think it's good not to try to think. Thinking is easy ... it's feeling that's difficult." He pulled out his guitar and sang.

"I'm feeling pink, I'm feeling light, I'm feeling buff, I'm feeling white, I'm feeling off-white, I'm feeling grey, I'm feeling mixed up, I'm feeling OK."



**Lights out:** Martin Creed, enfant terrible. Picture: NORM OORLOFF