

lybeat

Culture Vulture

LONELY PLANET

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 111 Sturt St, Southbank, until Feb 25. Visit www.accaonline.org.au

Mixed messages, and scavenged artefacts keep British artist Mike Nelson sane, as **ROXANNE MILLAR** discovers.

Getting to the heart of installation artist Mike Nelson requires a complicated journey through a labyrinth of passages, rooms and halls.

And just when arrival at his artistic intention seems imminent, some stray object will assault with its familiarity, altering the message.

And that is just the way the Brit likes it.

Nelson's maze-like spaces lead art fans into new worlds contained within rooms strewn with salvaged and scavenged objects.

The series of environments disorient, enthrall and encourage visitors to get lost in familiar and strange spaces.

Giving the viewer space to carry their baggage into the art is Nelson's main aim.

"The buildings of replicated spaces allow viewers to become less aware they are looking at a piece of art and to loosen their thought process and allow their imagination to roam," he said. "I try to build my structures mentally as well as literally and guide the viewer to a mindset."

And what mindset might that be?

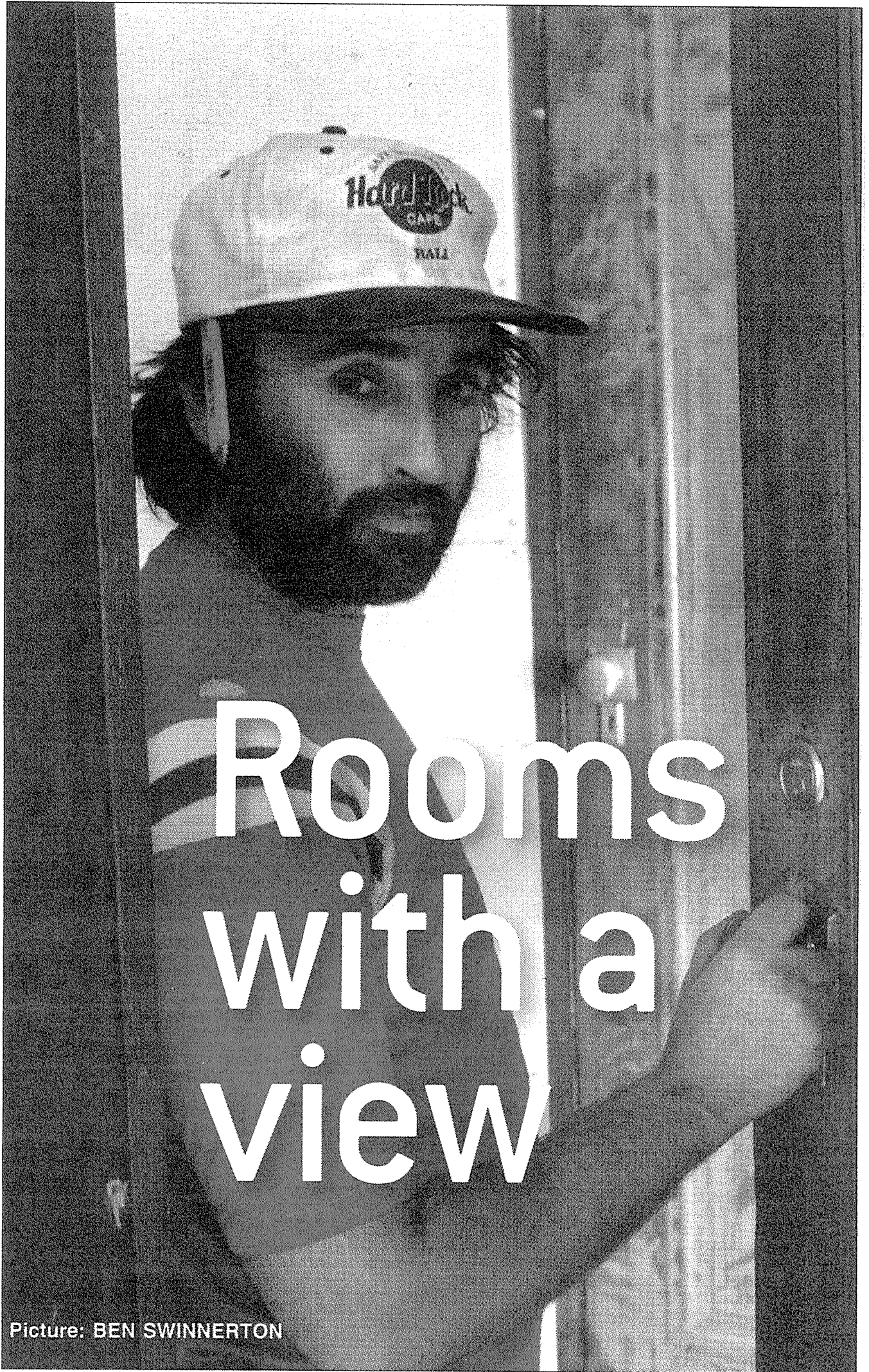
"I am just trying to make sense of the world at this point in time," he said.

Nelson's latest project *Lonely Planet* is a labyrinth of different rooms to be set up at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

He arrived six weeks ago to start scouring for local artifacts to use in the ambitious piece.

"I go to salvage yards all over Melbourne, up around Castlemaine and Bendigo, as well as markets," he said.

"Sometimes you have to hunt for the good pieces and other ones jump out at you right away."



Picture: BEN SWINNERTON

But being based in Melbourne has not given the piece any influence.

"It isn't made for Melbourne in Melbourne," Nelson said.

"But I am used to working in new cities having done it in Sao Paulo, San Francisco, Geneva and others.

"The advantage here is obviously the language and that a lot of people here can source (artefacts) for me."

Nelson said he had been inspired to fill the void created by Australia's lack of indigenous architectural monuments.

To counteract this, he has been photographing parts of the countryside to get a "certain sense about things".

"The lack of architectural monuments gives the landscape an eerie nature," Nelson said.

"When you know the earlier civilisation existed before you can sort of earmark it or pigeonhole it.

"But when there is nothing there or very little, it almost isn't fair for civilisation."

He said he did not dwell on what his intricate spaces might say about his personality.

"I don't dwell on that, maybe to stay sane," he said.

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