

The Architect's Newspaper

EVER RESOURCEFUL

Artist Simon Denny explores the effects of digital and physical mining

By DREW ZEIBA • June 19, 2019



Simon Denny's *Mine* at Tasmania's Monart museum explores the entanglement of resource extraction, labor, automation, technology, and extinction. (Monart, Jesse Hunniford/Courtesy Monart, Museum of Old and New Art)

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Artist Simon Denny is digging into data as a landscape, unearthing the possibilities of extracting material both physical and informational in *Mine*, a show at the [Australian](#) museum [Monart](#). The show has found itself a fitting setting at Tasmania's iconoclastic museum, the privately-run brainchild of entrepreneur David Walsh, that is itself a winding maze of darkened corridors partially carved into the Triassic sandstone of the Berriedale peninsula. The mine-shaft feeling is only increased by the museum's new Nonda Katsalidis and Falk Peuser-designed underground extension—a level of subterranean spaces connected by circular stone tunnels with metal ribs that they're calling Siloam.

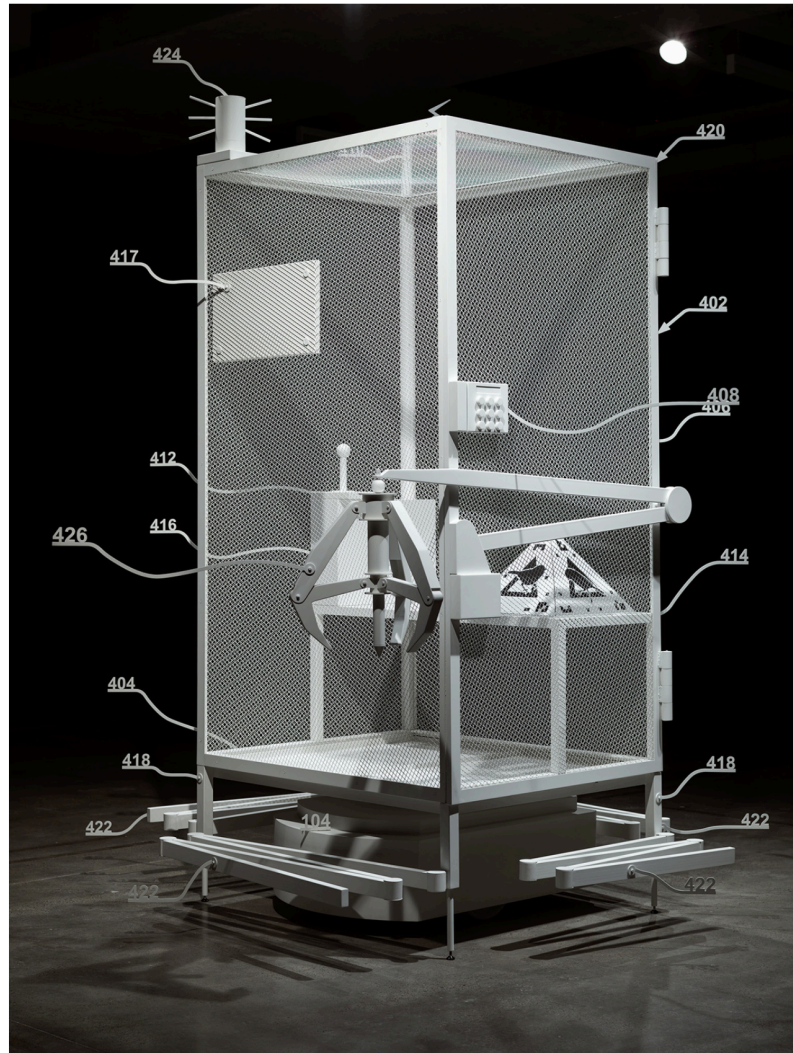
Denny, whose previous work has fixated on cryptocurrency, the dissolution of borders, and other complications of our increasingly computerized world, works in the space between the two meanings of mine—both the extraction of physical material, like rare earth metals and lithium necessary for our devices, and the data mining and mining for bitcoins which has increasingly clear environmental impact in the form of outsize carbon emissions and land use. *Mine* looks at technological shifts and their impact on the IRL environment, as well as the entanglements of colonization and economics that have propelled resource extraction and all its environmental impacts.

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Instead of a canary, Denny's mine features an AR version of the at-risk King Island brown thornbill. (Mona, Jesse Hunniford/Courtesy Mona, Museum of Old and New Art)

Instead of a canary in a coal mine, *Mine* will feature an [augmented reality](#) version of the nearly-extinct King Island brown thornbill, which researchers have recently discovered in Tasmania [outside of its normal habitat](#), living inside a 3D version of a patent diagram of an [Amazon](#) warehouse cage that's in actuality been designed for the company's notoriously overworked and underpaid human workers. On the walls, the bird is overlaid onto pages of the patent and the AR bird, whose habitat has been all but destroyed by industry, flits throughout the exhibition on visitors' phones or on "[The O](#)," the museum's unusual electronic guide.

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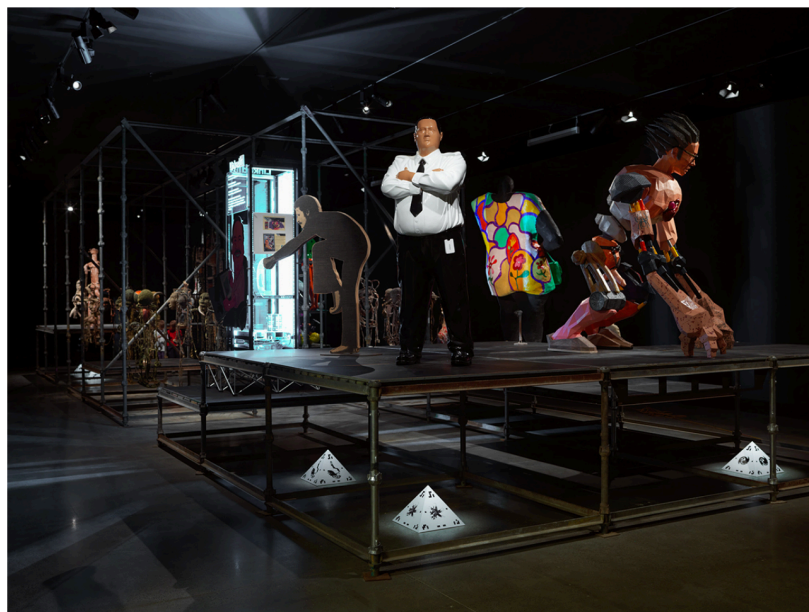
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Denny created a giant version of the classic Australian board game Squatter with large sculptures of mining machines. (Mona, Jesse Hunniford/Courtesy Mona, Museum of Old and New Art)

The exhibition has been designed as a trade show-*cum*-board game, where various devices that extract resources from the land and from human labor are displayed on a giant version of [Squatter](#), a classic Monopoly-style Australian board game about raising sheep. Another board game, called "Extractor," will act as exhibition catalogue.



The exhibition features figurative sculptures from other artists. (Mona, Jesse Hunniford/Courtesy Mona, Museum of Old and New Art)

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Figurative work from other artists who investigate work and automation will be displayed, including Li Lao's 2012 *Consumption*, which recalls the artist's own experience working for the manufacturer [Foxconn](#), and Patricia Piccinini's 2002 *Game Boys Advanced*. The curators Jarrod Rawlins and Emma Pike hope, taken together, these sculptures will evince a "metaphorical workforce."

Mine is on view through April 13, 2020.