



# Artist's live tribute to musical wife

## exhibition

### Ken Unsworth: A Ringing Glass (Rilke)

**Turbine Hall, Cockatoo Island; June 1-28,  
free, cockatooisland.gov.au/visit**

THE celebrated artist Ken Unsworth truly believes his wife Elisabeth would have chastised him for "self-indulgence" in the work that has obsessed him since she died at their Sydney home in October last year.

But Unsworth is forging ahead with vigour and determination to create his most ambitious work to date — a moving serenade to Elisabeth, who put on hold her own career as a pianist to become the driving force behind Unsworth and her late son John Mitchell Crouch.

Crouch, a promising neurosurgeon, was the product of Elisabeth Unsworth's first marriage. He died in his 30s, after which his mother established the John Mitchell Crouch Fellowship awarded by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

Ken Unsworth's project is titled *A Ringing Glass (Rilke)* and will include footage of the opening event hosted by the artist on May 28.

Unsworth and his 160 invited guests will become real-life actors in a complex, choreographed tableau vivant — all devised by Unsworth — in which music, dance and art will combine to pay homage to Elisabeth.

Four huge galleries in the Turbine Hall will contain installations by Unsworth which play on the themes of death, memory and Elisabeth's love of music, and include props such as a dismantled piano, a vintage child's cot with oars, a twice life-size skeleton, and a "ghostly image of Elisabeth" — many of them suspended from the ceiling.

At one point during the opening event, which will include dancing and entertainment, an electronic pianola will descend from the ceiling for a "posthumous recital by Elisabeth".

"You see the keys move and hear the music, and then one of her musical associates will come out — a violinist — stand beside the piano and they'll both play the first movement of the Beethoven *Spring Sonata*," Unsworth says.

Has working on the project helped Unsworth come to terms with losing Elisabeth?

"No," the artist says. "But it helped in the sense of making me be involved in doing something. I don't know what I would have been doing otherwise."

From June 1, the public will be able to visit the project, see the artworks and watch a film of the evening's performance.

**Elisabeth Fortescue**



**Keeping busy: Ken Unsworth** Picture: Bob Barker