



"It's the combination of something very active and contemplative - you actually can get completely lost" . . . Jennifer Turpin and Michaelie Crawford with their installation. Photograph by PALANI MOHAN

Artists' tunnel vision blurry, but bold and baffling

By ANNE SUSSKIND
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There used to be Mark Foy mannequins posing behind the glass panels in the historic tunnel going from Castlereagh Street to Museum station.

Now the dark passage under what is the Downing Centre feels filled with light and moving water, smoky and blurred and subterranean, water behind glass in shifting patterns.

How they have achieved this play installation artists Jennifer Turpin and Michaelie Craw-

ford will not say. It must remain enigmatic, and must be experienced to be understood.

"A large part of the fascination is the intrigue," Ms Crawford said. "Is it light or water? We *absolutely* don't want people to know."

The pair, who also created the water courtyard at the New Children's Hospital at Westmead, said the water imagery was related to Sydney's old subterranean water courses, the Tank Stream and Busbys Bore, and, said Ms Turpin, to "reveal-

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ing what is underneath, the wonderful drama about being underground in the city”.

“The whole thing is a tribute to water - a particular type of water - on the one hand working water and on the other a view of the emotive quality

of water,” Ms Turpin said. Ms Crawford said she hoped people would spend some time in the tunnel, so that it “slows their passage” before they entered their hectic lives.

For her it's mesmerising, like looking at a bushfire or down

through water. “It's the combination of something very active and contemplative . . . you actually can get completely lost.”

On one side, the tunnel has panels of historic text in display cabinets, excerpts from legal judgments about water over the past 100 years. For example, in *Dickenson v The Grand Junction Canal Company* it was decided that “if a person possesses a right to a stream *jure natura* he has a right to its subterranean course”. Visible behind the text are 19th century

outlines of plans for Sydney, and its water-pipe systems.

The pair's one regret is that the tunnel has to be lit brightly for safety reasons. Because of heritage requirements, the lighting also could not be chased into the ceiling, and had to be in a continuous line down the centre.

The work, which was commissioned by the Attorney-General's Department with a budget of about \$180,000, will be opened to the public on Monday.