

Film captures final days of condemned Australians Sukumaran and Chan

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Matthew Sleeth got to know convicted drug smuggler Myuran Sukumaran when he taught art at Bali's Kerobokan prison. He took part in the campaign against the death sentence imposed on him and fellow-smuggler Andrew Chan. And he made a film, *Guilty*, that reflects on issues that still resonate in the aftermath of that death sentence, carried out three years ago.

Guilty has special screenings at selected cinemas and art galleries across Australia tomorrow, World Day Against The Death Penalty. At each screening there will be speakers: people from the filmmaking team, opponents of capital punishment, members of Sukumaran's family, and people close to them.

Sleeth will attend two screenings, one in Melbourne and one in Sydney, alongside speakers who will include Sukumaran's mother, Raji, and Sir Richard Branson, a longtime opponent of the death penalty

Once Sleeth decided he wanted to tackle the subject, he says, "I realised that what I really wanted to do was make a film about the actual killing."

Under Indonesian law, there has to be 72 hours' notice for an execution: *Guilty* focuses on that period of time in a range of ways.

The timeframe helps illuminate the fact of capital punishment, of what it was like, Sleeth says, "watching a group of polite, well-mannered people with clipboards efficiently planning a brutal death. And knowing the date and manner of your death is something so few of us get to experience." Yet once the notice of execution was given, "the calmest person in the room was Myuran. He understood what he wanted to do

with that remaining time.”

Guilty is not a documentary, but “an imagined 72 hours, anchored in reality”. There is archival footage and scenes involving an actor, Adam McConvell, playing Sukumaran. Another structure is provided by Sukumaran’s art: his paintings, made in those final days are almost chapters in the narrative.

For McConvell, preparing to play Sukumaran, there were many questions. “What are the quiet moments? What does a person do to prepare themselves in that 72 hours?” There was also a larger story to tell, of family and loss. “Within that time is an encapsulation of 10 years, of what Myuran became. The essence of him, the essence of his story.”

For Sleeth, questions were always more important than answers in *Guilty*. He sees the film as an Australian story. He wanted to provoke “a discussion about the things that I thought weren’t being said at the time, the casualness with which so many people were calling for the death penalty. I wanted to make a film that asks questions about what kind of country we want to be, and what sort of approach we want to have to second chances, but it also wants to ask what would have happened if Andrew and Myuran were two white blond kids.”