Time to stop and reflect

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AFTER working furiously to prepare MONA for the official opening, visual arts curators Nicole Durling and Olivier Varenne were able to sit back yesterday and reflect on what they have achieved.

An "ecstatic" Ms Durling said the long-awaited opening weekend had been "such an overwhelming success" as she watched David Walsh's grand vision finally come to life.

"It's everything I hoped for and more," she said.

"I think all the staff feel the same way – we're just overjoyed to finally be open and have the public coming through and experiencing it.

"The feedback I've had is that MONA is a gift to artists and to the general public, a

ECSTATIC: MONA visual arts curators Olivier Varenne and Nicole Durling yesterday.

Pictures: CAROLYN DOCKING

IDEAS MAN: David Walsh keeps in touch during MONA's opening weekend.

very generous space and a generous collection from a generous individual."

But it's not just locals who have been impressed, with visiting artists and media from around the world now heading home to share glowing reviews of the art world's new star attraction.

"The international artists who came were very impressed by the architecture, they were mind-blown. It's so unique," Mr Varenne said.

"People from art magazines were very impressed, [they thought it was] very well put together and very unexpected.

"Most collectors around the world just collect famous name after famous name, but we've achieved something great by putting famous names alongside new discoveries, which is very refreshing."

And it seems there are

many more discoveries still to come at MONA – the opening exhibition, MONANISM (which runs for six months), features only about 450 artworks from Mr Walsh's 2200-piece collection.

"We actually hope to change the current exhibition while

it's still up. It will evolve," Ms Durling said.

"The nature of David is to come in with an idea he had during the night and want to mix things up. It will be very subtle ... but we will constantly push the envelope with what we want to do."