

# THE POOL

## ARTWORK LABELS

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## ***The Pool***

The Australian pool is a public space that takes many forms. In the bush it can be a waterhole, a dam or a billabong; in the city, a backyard pool, sports facility or city baths; and on the coast, a beach house, a concreted grotto in a rock shelf or an ocean bath washed by surf. Mysterious and familiar, tame and wild, natural and man-made, pools are where the communal and the personal intersect.

The Pool explores how Australia's modern identity has been shaped by these important places in our physical environment. Eight prominent Australians share their pool stories – personal and collective tales of achievement and struggle; childhood memories; campaigns for survival and battles for democracy.

Conversations about Australian architecture can cover broad terrains, including some we do not immediately associate with the discipline. This exhibition presents a conversation that sheds new light on familiar, everyday public spaces that are in fact steeped with cultural significance.

By looking at places, landscapes, people and situations through the lens of architecture, we can better understand the profound effect that our physical environment has on us. The Pool urges viewers to consider the importance of our built environment as a setting for cultural exchange, discovery, refreshment and reflection.

The Pool was originally commissioned for the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale by the Australian Institute of Architects. Guest curators, Aileen Sage Architects (Isabelle Toland and Amelia Holliday) with Michelle Tabet

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# Entropy

‘The pool is a vital force in Australian life, not only as the setting for formative childhood memories, family gatherings and community events but also as the stage for sporting feats that fuel the nation’s pride. A backdrop to the good times, the pool is also a deeply contested space in Australian history, a space that has highlighted racial discrimination and social disadvantage.’

**ISABELLE TOLAND, AMELIA HOLLIDAY AND MICHELLE TABET**

Photo: Narelle Autio, Entropy from the series New Colour Works, 2006. Courtesy of the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery

**Amelia Holliday** designer

Australia 1980–

**Michelle Tabet** designer

USA 1984–

**Isabelle Toland** designer

Australia 1978–

## **The Pool**

2017

timber deck, compressed fibre cement sheet, fibre reinforced plastic grate, PVC pool liner, steel, paint, lighting, speakers

*The Pool* was first designed for the 2016 Australian exhibition at the Venice Architecture Biennale, where it invited visitors to explore Australia's cultural identity through its pools – natural or man-made, inland or coastal, temporary or permanent. Utilising physical objects, sounds, scents and light, *The Pool* seeks to recreate a pool setting within the context of the Gallery. In this communal gathering space, viewers can both listen to and share their own stories about pool environments and their significance to Australia. *The Pool's* original lighting sequence in Venice was designed by Nick Schlieper and Sian James-Holland to evoke changing light over the course of a day.

## For kids

This exhibition explores the importance of pools as places. There are many different types of swimming pools: in the country there are waterholes, dams and swimming pools, and in the city there are lots of pools in people's backyards, as well as sports facilities. Along the coast, some of the most exciting pools are ocean baths that sit on the edge of the beach and which are washed by the surf when the tide is high.

**Bree van Reyk** sound artist and  
composer

Australia 1978–

**Paul Cutlan** musician

Australia 1964–

**Kate Montague** audio producer

Australia 1979–

## **The Pool**

2016

sound recording, 25 min.

*The Pool*'s composition references the melody from 'Djilile' (1986) by Peter Sculthorpe, which in turn is based on an Indigenous melody with a name that translates as 'whistling duck on a billabong'. The core elements of Sculthorpe's melody have been separated and reassembled into eight new melodic lines, which interweave among the voices of eight storytellers: Tim Flannery, Anna Funder, Shane Gould, Paul Kelly, Hetti Perkins, Anna Plunkett, Luke Sales, Ian Thorpe and Christos Tsiolkas. The voice of each person is situated in a different location around the pool and overlaid with the composition inspired by the sounds of water environments.

## For kids

The stories you hear in this exhibition are about eight Australians' experiences and memories of pools. Their voices are heard in different places around the pool, and are mixed with music made by a composer from Sydney.



# Melbourne Olympic Pool

‘Australians always knew they lived in a small isolated country but they also knew that their country had people with imagination, great skill and ability. As a young group of Australian architects designing the Melbourne Olympic Pool, we were typical of that era in that we had tremendous confidence in ourselves. We did not flinch from that and were proud to make a building that represented the idealism of what it is like to be an Australian. The Olympic Swimming Pool represented the identity of the Australian Olympic athlete. It was strong, taut and full of tension. Ready for action.’

## **PETER MCINTYRE**

‘Sixty years ago, the worldview of Australian architecture was not one of refined design. Yet, for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Pool Competition our team designed an innovative building, which included glass walls at each end to flood the interior with natural light and create a sense of airiness and sophistication.’

## **PHYLLIS MURPHY**

Architecture: John and Phyllis Murphy, Peter McIntyre, Kevin Borland and engineer Bill Irwin, Melbourne

Photo: Wolfgang Sievers, courtesy of National Library of Australia, Canberra

## For kids

This exhibition was first presented in 2016 in the Italian city of Venice, as part of a big exhibition of architecture that happens every two years. The exhibition happens in the Giardini, an area of Venice where countries have their own small buildings where they present exhibitions of art and architecture. Australia has the newest building in the Giardini. It is a simple black box that sits next to a beautiful canal.

**Elliat Rich** designer

Paris 1978–

**Centre for Appropriate Technology,**

**Alice Springs** manufacturer

Australia est. 1980

**Anerle-aneme chair**

2016

steel

*Anerle-aneme* means ‘sit a little while’ in the local Arrernte language of central Australia. The chair is a collaboration between Alice Springs–based designer Elliat Rich and the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) Enterprise Workshop – an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander–controlled business that provides training and experience to Aboriginal makers. The *Anerle-aneme* chair is a finely resolved work of pool furniture which captures the unique colours of the central Australian landscape: the vibrant blue of the sky; the ochre of the earth; the soft green vegetation; and the shimmering silvery grey of heat-refracting light.

## For kids

This simple steel chair was made in Alice Springs. It is called *Anerle-aneme*, which means 'sit a little while' in the local Arrernte language of central Australia. The chair was made by a designer and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as part of a workshop. The chair uses the unique colours of the central Australian landscape: the blue of the sky, the ochre of the earth, the green of vegetation, and the silvery grey of the light.

**Lyn Balzer** scent artist

Lismore, Australia 1967

**Tony Perkins**

Lismore, Australia 1965

**Maison Balzac** scent designer

est. 2012 (Sydney, Australia)

**L'Étrangeté**

2016

scent

*The Pool* is a multi-sensory experience designed to trigger memories and associations of place. Two scents are released into the exhibition via diffusers. *L'Étrangeté* is an olfactory interpretation of the subtropical rainforest that surrounds the artists' favourite pool – a volcanic sinkhole with a waterfall in the rainforests behind Byron Bay. The scent seeks to evoke the Australian bush, from the smoky residue after a bushfire to petrichor – a pleasant smell that emanates from the wet earth after summer rain.

**Lyn Balzer** scent artist

Lismore, Australia 1967

**Tony Perkins**

Lismore, Australia 1965

**Maison Balzac** scent designer

est. 2012 (Sydney, Australia)

**L'Obscurité**

2016

scent

Each of the scents featured in *The Pool* evokes memories of the unique Australian landscape. *Obscurité* is the artists' translation of the smell of volcanic black basalt rock pools around Kiama, New South Wales, warming up in the sun.

## For kids

Two scents were designed for this exhibition to remind people of the natural world outside. One is a smoky, damp smell that reminds us of the Australian bush; the other reminds us of the smell of rock pools on the beach.

## **Shane Gould, Olympic swimmer**

spoken word, 25 min 15 sec

1972 Olympic gold medallist Shane Gould shares her memories of competing on the international stage, and comments on her legacy in competitive sport, which includes advocacy for health, education, water safety and personal development.



## **Ian Thorpe, Olympic swimmer**

spoken word, 25 min 15 sec

Ian Thorpe is a five-time Olympic gold medallist who competed at the 2000 and 2004 Olympic Games. A highly trained sportsperson, he is attuned to the sensorial experience of swimming and the spatial awareness of his body in water. He shares his experience of spending many years of his life in the pool.

## **Hetti Perkins, Indigenous art curator**

spoken word, 25 min 15 sec

Hetti Perkins, daughter of the late Aboriginal activist Charles Perkins and member of the Eastern Arrernte and Kalkadoon Aboriginal peoples of central Australia, sheds light on the significance of pools in rural and remote Indigenous communities. Perkins sees the opportunity for the pool to serve as an effective social leveller, with unfulfilled potential to enhance engagement between Indigenous communities and the rest of the country.

## **Anna Funder, author**

spoken word, 25 min 15 sec

Anna Funder, author and essayist, considers the significance of pools in our towns and cities. Positioned as a form of communal space, perhaps a secular alternative to religious spaces of communion, the pool is an important building block for our communities and a great leveller of difference.

## **Christos Tsiolkas, author**

spoken word, 25 min 15 sec

Author Christos Tsiolkas tells the story of the pool as a place of self-discovery. For him, the private pool is a place of alienation and the awareness of difference, in stark contrast to the public pool, which he sees as a lively and empowering public space.

## **Paul Kelly, musician**

spoken word, 25 min 15 sec

Musician Paul Kelly is known for his prolific songwriting and inspired collaborations. For him, the pool is a place for family gatherings, celebrations and everyday meditations on life and love.

## **Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales (Romance Was Born), fashion designers**

spoken word, 25 min 15 sec

Designers Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales, of cult fashion label Romance Was Born, explain the significance of the pool as a backdrop for growing up, for friends and for family. They relay the colourful memories that inform their design work. Part nostalgia, part celebration of youthfulness, the pool is a central artefact of their collective childhoods.

## **Tim Flannery, environmentalist**

spoken word, 25 min 15 sec

Influential environmentalist Tim Flannery discusses the history and continuing relevance of the Great Artesian Basin as one of the largest natural pools in the world. Flannery was originally a paleontologist, and his work is now focused on advocacy for a responsible relationship with nature and respectful use of our resources in Australia.

# Villa Marittima

‘Villa Marittima is a house marked by its relationship to water. The main living space is positioned between the ocean on one side and the pool on the other. Thus we have both elements to observe and become a part of. The pool becomes a room in the house filled with water, but open to the ever-changing sky and light conditions. It is our protected body of water: a safe haven that can be enjoyed at all times – even when the ocean is rough and at its grandest.’

## ROBIN WILLIAMS

Architecture: Robin Williams Architect, Melbourne

Photo: Dean Bradley



## **Architecture for the many**

As an architectural device, the pool represents not only a physical edge but also expresses a social and personal frontier. This is explored through eight storytellers' narratives broadcast in the exhibition space. Their interviews reveal stories of fulfilment and accomplishment, of segregation and inclusion, of learning from the past and reflecting for the future, all through the lens of the pool.

# For kids

This exhibition comments on our values as Australians, and explores how these shape our architecture. Every Australian has a story to tell about a pool – we love them!

**Brett Boardman**

Australia 1971

**Shane Gould**

**Anna Funder**

**Christos Tsiolkas**

**Hetti Perkins**

**Paul Kelly**

**Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales  
(Romance Was Born)**

2015

reproductions of original photographs

'I think in order to measure the social capital of the pool you need to conceive of the pool as a place in a different way. You need to understand that it is not just a place for people to swim but it's a place for people to gather together. That's how democracy works. That's how a community is built, when people get together. At the pool, teenagers learn how to relate and how to behave, children see old wrinkly people and young babies. It can really help people understand the community and the world.'

**SHANE GOULD**

'I love to be around the pool, but I don't need to be in the water. I love the sound of water, the reflection, the play of light. The pool is like an art installation, the light, the sound, the visual appeal of it, the immersiveness of it. It has a powerful cultural significance.'

**HETTI PERKINS**

'As you move through life, it seems to be like a series of steps into deeper and deeper water. What comes along in life are the things that we don't know. The things that everyone goes through but are not known until you do it yourself. The loss of a parent, the birth of a child, the beginning of love, or the end of love. All those things. You don't know them until they happen to you. It's all deep water when you get there.'

**PAUL KELLY**

'I grew up in Albury and I have fond memories of the local pool. There was nothing special about it, it was super suburban, it had one main pool and a kids' pool and a diving pool. I remember the feeling of going into a race, the adrenalin and how nervous I was about competing. Everyone was yelling and screaming for their team colour, it was such a fun, spirited place.'

**ANNA PLUNKETT (ROMANCE WAS BORN)**

'I think the pool is really pivotal for a local community, like a public library. They are the pillars of a community. The library is a place where you can go and dive into knowledge for free and endlessly, and in your own time, and the pool is as well. I think they are incredibly important places.'

**ANNA FUNDER**



'I think we are living in such an age of consumption and excess, and the pool is still a marker of status. I think the question of what is public space and what is communal space is becoming increasingly important. All of my favourite pools in this city, whether it's Brunswick or Northcote, are full of life. They are full of kids jumping in and old women gently paddling in the water. It's the conversations in the change rooms, it's alive and I think that's important.'

**CHRISTOS TSIOLKAS**

## **A setting for life**

The pool is a vital force in Australian life. It serves not only as the setting for formative childhood memories, family gatherings and community events but also as the stage for sporting feats that fuel the nation's pride. At the same time as being a backdrop to the good times, the pool is also a deeply contested space in Australian history – a space that has highlighted racial discrimination and social disadvantage.

**Benjamin Ducroz** cinematographer

Australia 1980

**Steven Protuder** cinematographer

Australia 1978

**James Wright** cinematographer

Australia 1984

**Matthew Richards** cinematographer

Australia 1973

## **Pools**

2017

video, 15 min. loop

This footage captures several swimming pools featured in publications produced to accompany *The Pool* at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale. Each one was selected to represent a different aspect of swimming culture, and to encourage thinking about pools as levellers of people's age, backgrounds and education. The pools are: Fairfield House Pool, Fairfield, Victoria, by Kennedy Nolan Architects; Villa Marittima, Saint Andrews, Victoria, by Robin Williams Architect; Fitzroy Swimming Pool, Fitzroy, Victoria; Bondi 'Icebergs' Baths, Bondi, New South Wales, restored by Marchese Partners; Prince Alfred Park Pool, Surry Hills, New South Wales, by Neeson Murcutt Architects; and North Sydney Olympic Pool, North Sydney, New South Wales, by Hassell.

## For kids

The pool is vital to Australian life. It is the setting for childhood memories, family gatherings, community events and great sporting achievements which fuel the nation's pride. As well as being a backdrop to the good times, however, the pool is also a space that has highlighted racism and social disadvantage in Australia.

# ***The Pool* music playlist**

1. Harmonic Zoo, 'Fixed Point', *Signals* (2011)
2. B. Gilbey, 'Life Cycles', *Tomorrow Now: Science, Technology & The Future*
3. Hiroshi Yoshimura, 'Time After Time', *Soundscape 1: Surround* (1986)
4. This Is Your Captain Speaking, 'Gathering Pieces', *Storyboard* (2005)
5. Angus MacRae, 'Icelandic Landscape', *Cinematic Textures* (2015)