

# **JAMES GEURTS FLOODPLAIN**

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## **James Geurts: *Floodplain***

*Floodplain* identifies a series of sites and cultural institutions along the floodplain of the 242 kilometre Yarra River (Birrarung) to examine conceptually where the ancient river and the contemporary city collide.

Based on more than six months of field and archival research undertaken by Geurts at the State Library Victoria and Melbourne Water, this project explores the impact of floods on the environment and their residue. *Floodplain* examines where the river has been significantly rerouted or widened over time, in order to influence the potential of future floods, and it draws out unique connections between the river and key cultural institutions situated within the Yarra floodplain.

This project suggests the natural power of great floods through a series of photographs capturing site-specific light installations. The neon sculptures by Geurts signal the high-water marks of historic Yarra floods, and represent the debris and residue left after the water has subsided. His photographs, taken at the intersection of day and night, give form to the invisible force and breadth of floods.

Supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, Melbourne Water, Georges Mora Fellowship and the State Library Victoria (2017).

# James Geurts

Australia born 1970

## Upper Yarra Reservoir

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

Reefton, Victoria. The Upper Yarra Reservoir, Melbourne's largest water supply, was completed in 1957 after nine years of construction. The monument depicted in the photograph commemorates the centenary of the damming of the river, which reduced the impact of flooding following the major floods of 1891.

# James Geurts

Australia born 1970

## Flood Debris, Princes Bridge Lamps

2018

neon, transformer, wires

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Melbourne, Victoria. Princes Bridge was constructed between 1886 and 1888 on the site of one of the oldest river crossings in Australia. The previous Princes Bridge, dating from 1850, had to be replaced as the river was significantly widened to handle increased traffic and alleviate flooding.

Top row, left to right

## **James Geurts**

Australia born 1970

### **O'Shannassy Aqueduct Sluice**

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Millgrove, Victoria. A concrete structure that is part of Melbourne's water supply system. Below the reservoir, the natural flow of the river was diverted via the O'Shannassy Aqueduct before its confluence with the Yarra River (Birrarung).

### **Mechanics Hall, Upper Yarra Arts Centre**

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Warburton, Victoria. Originally the Mechanics Hall, the stage measures the height of the last great floods of 1934.

# Yarra Glen Trestle Bridge

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Yarra Glen, Victoria. The Yarra Glen Trestle Bridge stands just above the 100-year flood line, and signifies the height of the Great Moorool, an ancient expanse of water that once occupied the Yarra Glen and Tarrawarra region as told in a Kulin Creation Story.

# Pound Bend Tunnel

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Warrandyte, Victoria. In 1870, the Evelyn Tunnelling and Mining Company dug through 145 metres of hard rock at Pound Bend to divert the Yarra through a tunnel, leaving five kilometres of riverbed that could be mined for alluvial gold.

Middle row, left to right

## **Heide Museum of Modern Art**

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Bulleen, Victoria. Heide is unique within the context of Melbourne's cultural sector as it brings together modern and contemporary art, architecture and a sculpture park, as well as possessing a rich social and artistic history. The grounds at Heide still flood today. The mezzanine of Heide II is the height of the 100-year flood line.

## **Dights Falls**

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Abbotsford, Victoria. In 1895, a weir was built to generate power from a water-turbine for the 'Yarra Falls Roller Mills'.

# **C3 Gallery, Abbotsford Convent**

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway

Art Gallery, Adelaide

Abbotsford, Victoria. During the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century, one of the largest convents in Victoria occupied a 6.8-hectare site on the riverbank. Today the old convent is an art, educational and cultural hub. The door-stone entrance of C3 Contemporary Art Space, situated on the ground floor of the original convent building, marks the height of the 1934 flood that swept the nuns' three-tiered fountain into the river.

# **Herring Island Environmental Sculpture Park**

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway

Art Gallery, Adelaide

South Yarra, Victoria. Herring Island was formed in 1928 by cutting a channel through an old basalt quarry, creating a more direct route for boats.



Bottom row, left to right

## **National Gallery of Victoria – The Ian Potter Centre**

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Melbourne, Victoria. Overlooking the Yarra, the galleries of The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia allow the river to directly 'enter' the narrative of the exhibition space, creating a conceptual dialogue between the two.

## **Queens Bridge, Melbourne**

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Melbourne, Victoria. The site of a waterfall, which divided salt and fresh water and was a significant meeting place for Aboriginal people. The basalt site was blasted and excavated in 1883 for the construction of the bridge and to extend shipping access.

# Scienceworks Museum

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Spotswood, Victoria. A world-renowned science museum located at the historic 1890 Spotswood Pumping Station, significant in its engineering of Melbourne wastewater under the Yarra mouth.

# The Mouth of the Yarra River (Birrarung)

2018

Inkjet print

Collection of the artist, courtesy GAG Projects/Greenaway  
Art Gallery, Adelaide

Port Melbourne, Victoria. From 1879 the Lower Yarra's course was significantly altered to alleviate floods. The rock bar was blasted and the river was widened and straightened. The original wide loop in the river, west of today's Docklands, was removed in 1886 through the construction of the 1.5 kilometre Coode Canal at Fisherman's bend, allowing the river to flow more directly towards Port Phillip Bay.