



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### NGV Architecture Commission 2023: *(This is) Air* by Nic Brunsdon

NGV International | From 23 November 2023 – June 2024 | FREE



**22 November 2023:** A giant inflatable sphere – which literally breathes throughout the day – is the NGV's 2023 Architecture Commission. Making the invisible visible, *(This is) Air*, developed by Nic Brunsdon in collaboration with ENESS, draws attention to one of the universal and defining features of life on Earth: breathing air.

Utilising air as a building material, the commission morphs and changes throughout the day as it expands and then releases air in a natural rhythm. A poignant study of air and time, the fully inflated spherical structure stands over 14 metres tall, evoking a sense of uplifting optimism.

Throughout the day, the structure 'exhales', releasing gusts of air and forming an array of cloud-like configurations, before filling to capacity once more.

The structure invites audiences to consider humanity's relationship to this essential and yet invisible element. By making air seen, heard and felt, the work highlights our connection to and dependency on air – a finite resource whose quality is becoming increasingly affected.

This year's Architecture Commission forms part of the 2023 NGV Triennial exhibition, which brings contemporary art, design and architecture into dialogue, offering a visually arresting and thought-provoking view of the world today. Three key thematic pillars of *Magic*, *Matter* and *Memory* anchor the NGV Triennial, with Brunsdon's architectural concept responding to the thematic pillar of *Matter*. This theme seeks to draw together nature, material and making, reminding audiences of the interconnected frameworks of biology, geology and physics while highlighting their relationship to and reliance on natural systems.

Throughout the summer months, *(This is) Air* is the location for a myriad of public programs, performances and more in the NGV Garden.

**Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said:** 'The annual NGV Architecture Commission offers a platform for Australian designers and architects to realise an ambitious new work of ephemeral architecture that pushes their practice into new and surprising frontiers. Since its inception in 2016, these imaginative structures have created a place for the community to come together, and many of these commissions have gone on to win some of the world's most prestigious design and architecture awards. This series truly exemplifies the NGV's commitment to uplifting Australia's outstanding design and architecture practitioners and showcasing their achievements to a global audience.'

**The Hon. Colin Brooks, Minister for Creative Industries, said:** 'This magnificent public artwork will, quite literally, breathe life and creativity into the NGV Garden and will delight and inspire people of all ages. The Allan Labor Government is proud to support this work alongside the incredible NGV Triennial, which is set to attract thousands of

visitors to the gallery and Melbourne over the summer. This exhibition will be packed with awe-inspiring art and design and will be free for everyone to enjoy.'

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**Ewan McEoin, Senior Curator, Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture said:** 'The idea for this project was conceived by the architect during the global pandemic, when the air we breathed was suddenly at the forefront of everyone's mind. Taking the form of a giant inflatable sphere, this living structure inhales and exhales before our eyes, giving presence to that omnipresent yet invisible element that connects us all. Air can be understood as part of our global economic, social and ecological realities. And yet, the quality of air we breathe varies depending on where and how we live. Air is universal, yet clean air is not.'

The NGV Architecture Commission 2023: (*This is*) *Air* is on display as part of the NGV Triennial 2023 from 23 November 2023 – June 2024 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Free entry. For further information, please visit the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.com.au)

The 2023 NGV Architecture Commission is supported by The Hugh D. T. Williamson Foundation.

#### **ABOUT THE NGV ARCHITECTURE COMMISSION SERIES**

Since its debut in 2016, the annual NGV Architecture Commission has enlivened the NGV Garden, creating a place for community, programs and events, as well as respite from the summer sun. Ranging from a pink pool inspired by Australia's inland salt lakes to a thought-provoking meditation on the architectural legacy of Traditional Owners, the 2022 Architecture Commission marks the series' seventh iteration.

The NGV Architecture Commission has previously been designed by Adam Newman and Kelvin Tsang (2022), Taylor Knights + James Carey (2021), Yhonnie Scarce and Edition Office (2019), MUIR + OPENWORK (2018), Retallack Thompson and Other Architects (2017), M@ STUDIO Architects (2016), John Wardle Architects (2015).

For the NGV Architecture Commission 2023, ten practices were invited to submit design concepts that responded to the aspirations of the commission brief while considering the NGV Triennial thematic pillars – *Magic, Memory* and *Matter*. The ten invited practices were: Five Mile Radius and Julia Watson (QLD), GFA2, Supercontext and Dean Cross (NSW), Nic Brunson (WA), Office MI—JI (VIC), OFFICE of CULTURE, TECHNOLOGY and ARCHITECTURE (VIC), SPRESSER and Peter Besley (NSW), Studiobird / SIMONA (VIC), supermanoeuvre (NSW/ACT), Taylor and Hinds with Dr Lois Peeler AM (TAS), and Youssofzay Hart with Zena Cumpston (NSW).

#### **ABOUT NIC BRUNSDON**

Nic Brunson is recognised as one of Australia's leading architects. In 2015 Nic won the Australian Institute of Architects Emerging Architect Award, first for Western Australia and then nationally.

He is a past nominee for the 40 under 40 young business leaders award, a nominated thought leader for the City of Perth, the 2015 recipient of the Dulux International Study Tour for Emerging Architects, the 2017/18 recipient of the Gil Nicol Biennial International Study Bursary, and a founding Board Member of Activate Perth. He is the current Chair of the Perth Centre for Photography which is one of Australia's leading arts organisations. He is also the Director of the urban program Spacemarket, which pairs disused spaces with useful people, and has worked on policy formation and development at all three levels of government.

The studio's work has recently received recognition at the World Architecture Festival, Houses Awards, INDE awards, Loop Awards, and Australian Institute of Architects Awards programs, most notably winning both the public vote and master jury awards at the Dezeen Awards for the world's best hospitality project. The studio is committed to servicing the Asia Pacific region through its offices in Perth, Denpasar, and Melbourne.

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**IMAGES:** <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/zkf5j8j1lajwth1wxgel3/h?rlkey=e3lezipv0fwhsfvgh89ugpj4zd&dl=0>

**Image caption:** Installation view of the 2023 NGV Architecture Commission: (*This is*) *Air* designed by architect Nic Brunson in collaboration with ENESS. Photo: Tim Carrafa; Installation view of the 2023 NGV Architecture

Commission: (*This Is*) Air designed by architect Nic Brunsdon in collaboration with ENESS. Photo: Ben Hosking;  
Portrait of architect Nic Brunsdon with the 2023 NGV Architecture Commission: (*This Is*) Air on display from 23  
November 2023 until June 2024 at NGV International, Melbourne. Photo: Tim Carrafa; Estela enjoying the 2023 NGV  
Architecture Commission: (*This Is*) Air designed by architect Nic Brunsdon in collaboration with ENESS. Photo: Tim  
Carrafa

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