



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

MEDIA CONTACTS: MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, NGV
MARION JOSEPH | 0427 147 999 | MARION.JOSEPH@NGV.VIC.GOV.AU
BONNIE HORNE | 0448 369 260 | BONNIE.HORNE@NGV.VIC.GOV.AU
BRIANA TOMASINO | 0408 333 399 | BRIANA.TOMASINO@NGV.VIC.GOV.AU
SIENNA TAYLOR-GIBSON | 0455 579 397 | SIENNA.TAYLOR-GIBSON@NGV.VIC.GOV.AU

Reimagining Birrarung: Design Concepts for 2070

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia | 23 August 2024 to 2 February 2025 | FREE



17 July 2024: *Reimagining Birrarung: Design Concepts for 2070* invites eight leading Australian landscape architecture and design firms to reimagine the lands and waters of the Birrarung (Yarra River) and create an exciting vision for how communities can better access, engage with and care for this important living ecosystem.

Presented by the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in association with the Birrarung Council and guided through consultation with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elders, the exhibition showcases provocative and innovative design proposals by: **Aspect Studios, Bush Projects, McGregor Coxall, Office, Openwork, Realm Studios, SBLA** and **TCL**.

Through a thought-provoking and visually-arresting exhibition featuring renders, illustrations, 3D models, design objects, interactive maps and multimedia, each studio will present their vision for a site along the river corridor in the year 2070 – spanning from the city centre, the eastern suburbs and through to the river source in the Yarra Ranges.

Teams were invited to explore how design thinking, emerging technologies, policy innovation, science and First Nations knowledge systems might influence or enhance the relationship between Victorians and the Birrarung over the next five decades. Teams will present both speculative and real-world solutions to revitalise and reconnect the river corridor, highlighting the valuable role and impact of landscape architecture and design in reimagining the future of Australia's waterways.

- Presented through cinematic images and animations, **Aspect Studios** have conceived of a vivid future designed around a broadened river corridor, supported by expansive parklands made possible by the removal of the Eastern Freeway. Aspect Studios proposes a river landscape at the heart of the city where big trees and swimmable waterways are at the core of the community.
- **Bush Projects** transports visitors into a future where increasing pressures on land use, climate change and biodiversity loss have eroded natural ecosystems to a critical point of national priority. In response, the Upper Yarra catchment area is established as a biodiversity protection zone only accessible by Traditional Custodians and the River Rangers whose role in protecting the environment is respected and revered by the community at large.
- Using advanced data modelling of population growth, urban development, public sentiment and environmental change, **McGregor Coxall** literally and figuratively project a vision of the future of the Birrarung. Presented as an animated projection across a large-scale topographic model of the Birrarung catchment, the proposal presents a visual timeline where decision making relating to the river and its lands is based on data-based research, cultural knowledge and environmental conditions.
- Shining a spotlight on the inequity in land and water use along the Birrarung, **Office** will premiere a new video work that questions how the lands surrounding the Birrarung are used for private and public activities such as golf courses, viticulture and farming.

-continues-

They explore where the river's waters are siphoned to, while asking us to consider a future that transforms access to the enjoyment of vast amounts of public land across the catchment.

- **Openwork** envision a radical moment in the governance of Greater Melbourne that sees the Birrarung catchment area secede from the current structure of local governments to form an autonomous territory with independently agreed behaviours and strategies for future infrastructure development. In their proposal, key infrastructure, including major roads, drains and transmission towers within the catchment boundary are repurposed for use by human, plants and animals.
- Using urban density and heat mapping analysis, **Realm Studios** have designed an alternative to Melbourne's current trajectory of increasingly overheated urban conditions. Instead, through a series of postcards from the future, the designers invite audiences to imagine a city where land has been given back to the Birrarung, historic buildings become the site of aquaculture and autonomous robotic entities help care for the landscape.
- Creating a composite map of the Birrarung made from layered photographs captured over many months, **SBLA** uncover the often-imperceptible layers that form the river ecosystem. From insects to the river's currents, household rubbish and rainwater runoff, the map presents a diagram for the river's present condition alongside future interventions, such as soft-scaped gardens and footpaths.
- Tracing the geological transformations that result from a distant future shaped by fire, drought, flood and a dramatic shift in human habitation away from the river's lands, **TCL** will present detailed core samples that offer a glimpse into the environmental events and collective cultural decisions that could occur into the future. The core samples reveal how the way we live with Birrarung can either defend or destruct the landscape far below the surface.

The exhibition is supported by Principal Partner Bupa, who in partnership with NGV will deliver a program of activities including a symposium, opening weekend talks series and outdoor activities along the Birrarung. The programs are designed to encourage audience reflection and action, and support people's health through nature restoration, in-line with Bupa's Healthy Cities initiative.

Sonya Kilkenny, Minister for Planning said: 'The Victorian Government's 2017 Yarra River Protection Act – the first and only legislation of its kind in Australia – recognises and classifies our river as a living entity. In line with its aims to safeguard the Birrarung for future generations, this important exhibition highlights some imaginative real-world solutions for how our communities can enjoy and preserve this beautiful natural and cultural resource into the future.'

Harriet Shing, Minister for Water said: 'We're incredibly proud to sponsor this important exhibition that will offer Victorians a thought-provoking experience and immersive vision for the future of the Birrarung. *Reimagining Birrarung: Design Concepts for 2070* underscores the importance of the Victorian Government's ongoing work with the community to protect this cherished waterway for generations to come.'

The Birrarung Council said: '*Reimagining Birrarung: Design Concepts for 2070* provides a forum for exploring ideas from a range of different perspectives, stimulating thinking about the future of the Birrarung. The Birrarung Council encourages the dialogue and thinking this exhibition opens, marking a step in our journey of shared stewardship to collectively shape and advocate for the Birrarung.'

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV said: 'This important exhibition of landscape architecture represents an important step in the pursuit of preserving the life, memory, and future of the Birrarung. Through the presentation of thought-provoking and real-world possibilities, the exhibition asks audiences to consider what we want for the future of the Birrarung, as well as what this river, as a living entity, wants for itself.'

-continues-

Roger Sharp, Chief Sustainability and Corporate Affairs Officer, Bupa said: ‘We know that engaging with nature and having access to clean, fresh air is good for the mind and body and that we all have a role to play in creating healthier cities. It is our hope this exhibition helps open the minds of visitors and encourages them to take an active role in the preservation of the Birrarung River as well as local green spaces in their own communities.’

Reimagining Birrarung: Design Concepts for 2070 is on display from 23 August 2024 to 2 February 2025 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Fed Square. Entry is FREE. For further information, please visit the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au)

-ends-

IMAGES: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/ng1m28u62eovsu6jyimsq/AAwrmw1cat6-6KA9OvWAnM8?rlkey=f3bvnqtas4dax6z2jal8aucib&dl=0>

Image credit: Birrarung 2070 with South Eastern Freeway removed and repurposed. Image: Aspect Studios; Manningham Road Bridge, 2070. Image: Openwork; Image: Realm

Media Contacts:

Marion Joseph, Associate Director, Media and Public Affairs, NGV

0427 147 999 | marion.joseph@ngv.vic.gov.au

Bonnie Horne, Media and Public Affairs Officer, NGV

0448 369 260 | bonnie.horne@ngv.vic.gov.au

Briana Tomasino, Media and Public Affairs Officer, NGV

0408 333 399 | briana.tomasino@ngv.vic.gov.au

Sienna Taylor-Gibson, Media and Public Affairs Assistant, NGV

0455 579 397 | sienna.taylorgibson@ngv.vic.gov.au

Reimagining Birrarung: Design Concepts for 2070 is made possible with the generous support of our partners:

PRINCIPAL PARTNER



COLLABORATING PARTNER



GOVERNMENT PARTNER



REIMAGINING BIRRARUNG: DESIGN CONCEPTS FOR 2070 IS SUPPORTED BY THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION.