

Press Release: September 2016

**Designer Brodie Neill represents Australia at the inaugural  
London Design Biennale  
7-27 September 2016**



**Thirty-eight (38) countries from six continents present newly commissioned works that explore the theme Utopia by Design.**

**London based Australian designer Brodie Neill presents *Plastic Effects*, an installation engaging with the environmental hazard and phenomenon of ocean plastic pollution. Neill's presentation premieres his work *Gyro* created using a newly fabricated material *ocean terrazzo*.**

Born and raised in Tasmania, where ocean plastic pollution is now ubiquitous along the coastline, Neill has collaborated with an international network of scientists, researchers, environmental experts, beachcombers, engineers, artisans and manufacturers to collect and reconstitute small fragments of plastic washed-up on the shores of Tasmania and around the globe to produce a terrazzo like composite for his work *Gyro*.



With curatorial support provided by the National Gallery of Victoria, Neill's presentation *Plastic Effects* alludes to an environmental dystopia where material and societal practices inherited from industrialisation are now remaking the world. Surrounded by ocean Australia is bearing witness to tonnes of plastic waste washing onto its shores. The consequences for its precious marine life and ecosystems including Tasmania's Southwest coast, a UNESCO World Heritage area are dire.

The Australian Pavilion installation comprises two parts. The first is a multisensory and immersive space where audio and image combines. Audiences encounter the endless rhythm of the ocean evoking the turning of the gyres, which carry plastic waste across the world. The gyroscopic focal point and the calming soundscape encourage viewers to contemplate mankind's impact on nature.



The second part introduces Neill's work *Gyro* created especially for the London Design Biennale. A contemporary rendition of a nineteenth century specimen table top, *Gyro* substitutes examples of precious marble, timber and ivory for the plastic composite *ocean terrazzo* developed by Neill and his collaborators. In varying hues of blue and green the composite is inlaid in a kaleidoscopic diagram to depict the Earth's longitudinal and latitudinal lines.



*Gyro* takes its name from 'gyre', which refers to the network of currents that circulate ocean water around the world. Today, at the heart of these gyres are millions of tonnes of toxic plastic waste.



Harboring an insidious condition, Gyro is not simply a beautiful object but a souvenir of humanity's neglect for the environment.



Neill says *"If Utopia, according to Thomas More, is an imaginary floating island in the ocean where every aspect of life is perfect, then we can argue that the reality we face today of living in a toxic plastic soup is by extension dystopia."*

*The problem of ocean plastic waste is not unique to Australia; this is a global issue, which has been accelerating over the past 50 years. The environmental and economic consequences are evident. Collectively,*

*we share responsibility and its time to rethink our relationships to plastic, the environment and waste"*



*Plastic Effects* by Neill is the start of an ongoing project, which seeks to inform and raise awareness of the environmental hazard and phenomenon of ocean plastic pollution. Through the design and production of unique objects using ocean plastic, that tell the story of the material and how and where the designer recovered it, Neill is attempting to inspire change in behaviour.



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## Notes to Editors

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### Website:

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### Key Details

Public opening: 7-17 September 2016

Location: Somerset House, The Strand, London

### London Design Biennale Talks Programme

Thursday 15 September, 6-7pm

*Plastic Oceans: Commodity not Waste*

Brodie Neill in conversation with Erik van Sebille of Grantham Institute of Climate Change, Imperial College London

Monday 19 September, 6-7pm

*Material Futures: Education, Industry & Culture*

Brodie Neill in conversation with Clare Brass (sustainRCA) and Simone LeAmon (Curator, NGV)

### The Australian Pavilion Collaborators & Supporters

*Plastic Effects* has been made possible through the following collaborations:

Dr Jennifer Lavers, Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, Tasmania

Johnny Abegg, Filmmaker, Sydney

Sean Hogan, Designer Trampoline, Melbourne

The Australian Pavilion at the London Design Biennale is proudly supported by the following organisations:

### Australian High Commission

The Australian Pavilion at the London Design Biennale is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian Cultural Diplomacy Grants Program of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

## **National Gallery of Victoria**

NGV is the oldest and most visited gallery in Australia. Situated over two magnificent buildings – NGV International and NGV Australia – the Gallery hosts a wide range of international and local artists, exhibitions, programmes and events; from contemporary art to major international historic exhibitions, fashion and design, architecture, sound and dance.

The NGV permanent collection includes many key pieces of contemporary design including Brodie Neill's sculptural *Cowrie Rocker*, which was acquired during the recent Rigg Design Prize exhibition for which Neill was a finalist.

## **University of Tasmania**

UTAS has made the pursuit of the extraordinary an enduring commitment that drives a world-class approach to teaching and learning. This distinctive mission is informed by the University's unique place in the world: an island of great beauty, splendid isolation and rich challenges. The University's research capacity draws upon this context yet is varied – from population health to southern ocean and climate science – including great strengths in creative arts and design, particularly between and across disciplines.

Brodie Neill is an honours graduate of the University of Tasmania in the field of Furniture Design and recipient of the Foundation Graduate award for excellence in 2012.

## **Riva 1920**

Riva 1920 has been crafting quality Italian furniture with the upmost respect for wood for almost 100 years. Together, designer Brodie Neill and Riva 1920 have realised signature furniture pieces such as the *Curve* bench. Visitors to the Australian Pavilion at the London Design Biennale can sit on the *Curve* bench to view the video work being presented within the installation.

## **Research Support**

Dr Jennifer Lavers, Research Fellow at Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, Australia

Lavers is an applied conservation biologist with expertise in avian ecology and eco-toxicology. Her PhD research addressed issues relating to indigenous harvests in remote areas of northern Canada. Her postdoctoral fellowships investigated the impacts of fishing activities on non-target (by catch) species and interactions between wildlife and

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marine debris. Lavers is currently working as a Research Fellow with the University of Tasmania investigating the impacts of oil pollution on the marine environment.

### **About Brodie Neill**

Designer Brodie Neill has forged a strong signature aesthetic over the last 10 years: striking, seemingly unattainable, furniture forms which are as sinuous as they are sculptural.

The Australian-born designer honed his designer-maker skills at the University of Tasmania, followed by a Masters at the acclaimed Rhode Island School of Design, where he harnessed the potential of computer-aided design. Brodie entered the international design scene at Milan's Salone del Mobile in 2005 to great critical acclaim; later that same year he established a studio in London's East End.

Brodie Neill produces designs in a variety of scale and scope, using a range of materials and technologies, from production pieces for international brands such as Kundalini and Riva 1920 to high-profile one-off projects for global brands such as Swarovski Crystal Palace and Alexander McQueen.

His studio is regularly commissioned to create sculptural projects for public spaces, international developments and prestigious fashion brands as well high-value, collectible edition pieces for galleries and private collectors. Each design is rooted in comprehensive research, experimental technologies and boundary-pushing processes.

[www.brodieneill.com](http://www.brodieneill.com) #brodieneill @brodieneill



### **About London Design Biennale**

The inaugural London Design Biennale will be held at Somerset House from 7 to 27 September 2016, bringing design installations and exhibitions from over thirty countries from the world's nations to the heart of the capital.

The Biennale presents an extraordinary opportunity for countries and representative cities to create design statements that address the 2016 theme, 'Utopia by Design'. It will provide a prestigious, global stage for the world's leading contemporary design and design-led innovation, creativity and research.

The presentations will occupy the entirety of Somerset House, including the famous Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court. Situated on the banks of the River Thames in the heart of London, the former royal palace is a world famous cultural centre and is one of London's most visited attractions with more than 3.2 million visitors in 2015.

The Biennale will run in partnership with Somerset House and is supported by the Mayor of London. An International Advisory Committee and Jury composed of leading figures from design has been appointed and will award medals to the Biennale's most significant national contributions.

[www.londondesignbiennale.com](http://www.londondesignbiennale.com) #LDB16 @londonbiennale