



# National Arboretum has commissioned its first piece of public art

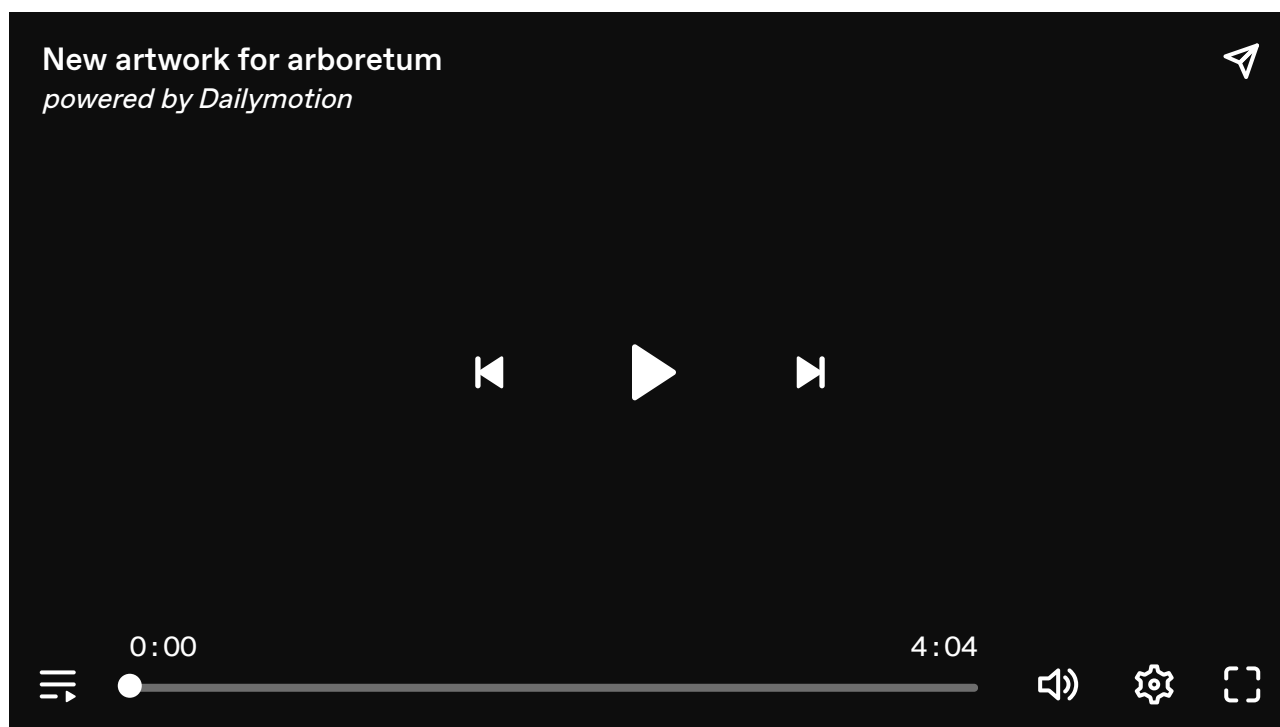


By [Megan Doherty](#)

October 18 2023 - 5:30am



2 Comments



Watch a hint of the new arboretum artwork

The National Arboretum Canberra has commissioned its first piece of public art – an abstract work that will sit on the water of one of its dams, changing colour as the sun works its way over the site from east to west.

The work – *Drawing Breath* – will be five metres high and 15 metres long and stand in the Gingko Dam at the entrance to the arboretum, visible from the Tuggeranong Parkway.

Watson artist Hannah Quinlivan, currently a PhD candidate at the ANU School of Art and Design, was on Tuesday announced as the successful

artist.

Her work was selected from 49 expressions of interest from national and international artists.



📷 Watson artist Hannah Quinlivan, with son Eli, and a model of her work *Drawing Breath*, a sculptural installation that will sit on the Gingko Dam at the National Arboretum. Picture by Elesa Kurtz

A maquette or model of her work was unveiled on Tuesday.

Arboretum executive branch manager Scott Saddler said the work was part of the emerging Forest Sculpture Garden, a contemporary art trail nestled among its thousands of trees.



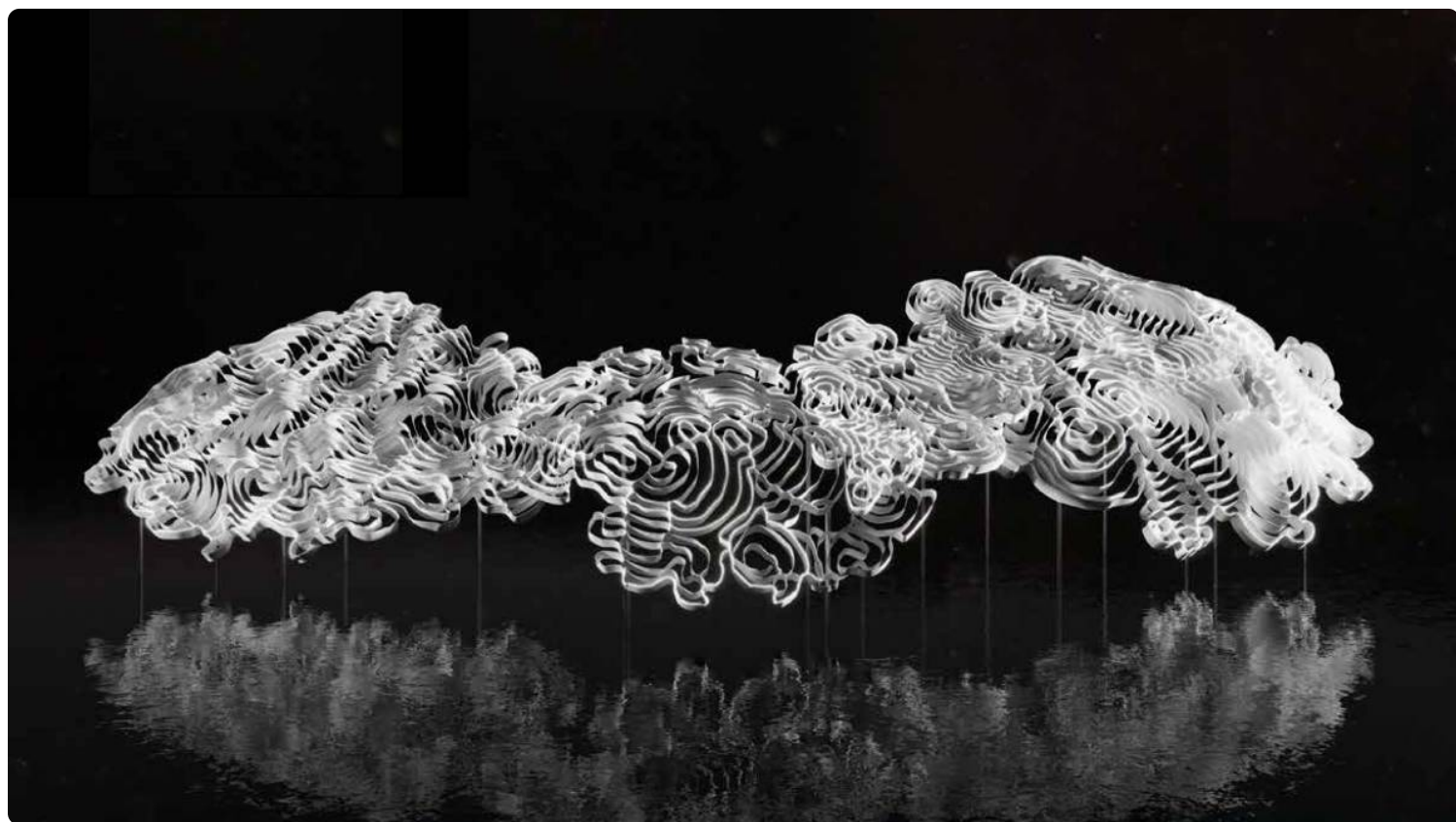




📷 A concept image of the work to be installed on Gingko Dam at the arboretum. Picture supplied

"Over the coming years, the Forest Sculpture Gallery will attract a mix of over 30 permanent, temporary, donated and loaned artworks," he said.

Hannah Quinlaven's *Drawing Breath* was the first commissioned piece for the arboretum, funded with the help of its ambassador program and by private donors including local art lovers Ursula Brightman and Susan Parsons. Other artworks at the arboretum have been donated or purchased or given on loan.



📷 The work may be lit up at night. Picture supplied

Mr Saddler said one of features of the work that helped in its selection was its ability to be seen from key locations across the arboretum.

The artwork had been commissioned to also celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arboretum this year.



📷 The installation will feature three sculptural elements from hand-beaten and welded aluminium. Picture by Elesä Kurtz

Ms Quinlivan, who also created the glass artworks for the Canberra Light Rail Network stations and is [working on a large sculpture for the extended Canberra Hospital](#), was thrilled to see her work selected for the arboretum.

She said driving twice a day on the parkway past the arboretum helped to inform her work and how it will play with different light during the day.

"It will be powder-coated in like a soft white which is a very sensitive material to the changing quality of the light from dawn, right throughout the day to the sunset colours," she said.

"We're investigating ways of subtly lighting the work at night so it will sort of glow and hum at night while being cradled in the valley."







📷 The work is designed to be seen up close and from different locations around the arboretum. Picture supplied

The piece was inspired by the contours of the landscape and how the arboretum had risen up in the wake of Canberra's bushfires.

Ms Quinlivan, 39, who went to the Orana Steiner School in Weston and who has a [bachelor of visual arts from the Australian National University](#), said it was "a great honour" to have her work selected.

"The arboretum has long been one of my favourite places in the ACT," she said.

She had planned for *Drawing Breath* to be seen up close, from different points of the arboretum and even overhead from a hot-air balloon.

Trees had been an important part of her life, both a way to grieve and celebrated.

She often planted a tree to celebrate the arrival of a new baby and also planted 2500 trees along the Murrumbidgee River when she was 25 to help cope with the news her mother had terminal cancer.

Now a mother herself to three children, the arboretum remained an important lifeforce for her and the community.

"We can plant a seed for a rich and hopeful future together," she said.

The new work is expected to be installed by late 2024.

---

 2 Comments



Megan Doherty

Journalist



FOLLOW

I like telling local stories and celebrating Canberra. Email: [megan.doherty@canberratimes.com.au](mailto:megan.doherty@canberratimes.com.au)

Loading...


---

More from Canberra




**Canberra soccer boss quits after slamming board decision**

1hr ago



**Meteor shower hits the WBBL as Mack's Strikers chase history**

1hr ago



**'Partly stupid': Undies help nab failed fast food attempted robber**


2hrs ago

**'That's what happens': Man admits killing partner with heroin shot**

2hrs ago

**Disadvantaged students falling behind in reading and numeracy**

2hrs ago



**Middle East conflict heightens rate rise risk**

2hrs ago

 1

Local News

**'Partly stupid': Undies help nab failed fast food attempted robber**


2hrs ago

**'That's what happens': Man admits killing partner with heroin shot**

2hrs ago


**Disadvantaged students falling behind in reading and numeracy**

2hrs ago




**Canberrans 'cheated' over urgent care clinics, GPs say**

2hrs ago

 4

**ACT government steps up campaign against gambling**

 3

**Health falls short of surgery, ED wait targets again**

 19

Get the latest Canberra news in your inbox

Sign up for our newsletter to stay up to date.

Enter your email

Notify me

We care about the protection of your data. Read our [Privacy Policy](#).

# The Canberra Times

TO SERVE THE NATIONAL CITY

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY MEDIA

THE CANBERRA TIMES

OUR SITES

SUBMIT

SUBSCRIBE TO THE CANBERRA TIMES

Subscribe

