

# Public Art at the Rail



City of  
Mount Gambier

# Public Art at The Rail

## Mount Gambier Railway Lands

The City of Mount Gambier, funded by SA Government's Department of Planning Transport and Infrastructure, has developed *Public Art at The Rail*, a public art park located at Mount Gambier's Railway lands. The project is well poised to position Mount Gambier as a major cultural focal point, and represents one of the more interesting developments in Australian public art. And indeed, *Art at The Rail* has been in the making for the past ten years, since Council took formal ownership of the land in 2005. The master plan, a four hectare site stretching between Wehl Street Sth to Bay Rd, created predominantly internally by the City of Mount Gambier, was in the making for the past 7 years, basing itself on open green space and parkland theme.

*Public Art at The Rail* is also a commitment of the artists and community to risk-taking and inventive experimentation. In the words of Arthur C. Danto: *Public art is the public transfigured: it is us, in the medium of artistic transformation.* In this spirit Public Art at The Rail presents us with innovative and challenging ideas. Artists exhibited at the Public Art at The Rail include: Karl Meyer and Exhibition Studios, Trevor Wren & Danica Gacaesa McLean, Ben Brumby, Diana Wiseman, Sam Wass, Ivo Tadic, Ant and Hat Martin, Robert Miles and Mark de Nys, and Laura Wills with Demakersevan (see descriptions of artworks below).

The above mentioned artists have successfully related to the landscape, reclaiming the railway lands, by using materials ranging from steel/concrete, to airbrush and print on AC sheet, to carved rock, limestone and red gum. The Public Art at The Rail project has already started to play an important role in investigating the domain of the public, contributing to the transformation of our urban Mount Gambier landscape, as well as responding to spatial notions of the lived experiences of our city. It also provides an artistic response to cultural and historical contexts, and provides a framework for engaging with other communities at the Limestone Coast, South Australia and nationally.

The project relates in a meaningful way to the spatial construction of the social space, reflecting on notions of what constitutes our contemporary existence, and expanding the notion of the arts. In this respect it is worth referring to Maurice Merleau-Ponty who insists that: *We must therefore rediscover, after the natural world, the social world, not as an object or sum of objects, but as a permanent field or dimension of existence.*



The creating of artistic practice outdoors, enabled by public art, liberates it from the confines of the gallery spaces, integrates it with the surrounding space, and re-engages art with important socio-political issues. Further, public art requires a phenomenological approach to art, that we experience it by the entire body, conscious of the surrounding and a plethora of sensations including a tactile relationship with the artwork. Leading Phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl become thus guides in this respect. For in the words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *The body is our general medium for having a world.*



Heidegger in *The Origin of the Work of Art* argues that art is not only a way of expressing the element of truth in a culture, but the means of creating it and providing a springboard from which it can be revealed. According to Heidegger: *Works of art are not merely representations of the way things are, but actually produce a community's shared understanding.* Each time a new artwork is added to any culture, the meaning of what it is to exist is inherently changed. Husserl on the other hand declared phenomenology to be the study of the structures of consciousness that enable it to refer to objects outside itself. He named the study of the substance of the mind phenomenological reduction, which does not assume that something exists, a state that allows pointing the mind en route for real, but also absent, or imaginary objects. For us, this creates the possibility of linking the structures of consciousness through our personal experiences in a very wide range of human activities, including those of the arts.

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**Works of art are not merely representations of the way things are, but actually produce a community's shared understanding.**”

Finally, I would like to thank artists for their accomplishments in Public Art at The Rail by referring to Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgment, where he argues for a special kind of pleasure that goes with enjoying works of art. In addition to this, they have undertaken the concomitant task to reveal the world through their artworks, by presenting to us the phenomenological folding of embodied and mediated space into felt space or experienced time, representing simultaneously a multi-nodal structure of space, bodies, time, and otherness.

**Dr. Melentie Pandilovski**  
**Mount Gambier, SA, 19 October 2016**



**Artist:**  
**Title:**

Year:  
Materials:  
Location:  
  
Project:  
Commissioned  
by:

**Sam Wass**  
**Pobblebonk and Muddles**

2016  
Carved Limestone  
Beside nature play shade shelter, and  
in creek  
Artistic Nature Play Works  
City of Mount Gambier with  
additional funding from Department of  
Planning, Transport and Infrastructure  
(DPTI) through their Open Space  
Funding Program.

Referencing diverse local fauna, Pobblebonk the Eastern Banjo Frog and Muddles the Bare Nosed Wombat appear to delight in the space they command. These figures appear as playful characters inviting physical connection, whether for children to climb upon the frog as they enter the creek, or to pat the seemingly serene wombat.

The curvaceous finish carved from large limestone boulders softens each of the sculptures, and invites tactile inspection. These are the largest carvings to date, by local sculptor Sam Wass.



**Artist:**  
**Title:**

Year:  
Materials:  
Location:  
Commissioned  
by:

**Trevor Wren & Danica Gacesa McLean**  
**Signalling Change**

2016  
Steel  
On shared path adjacent to nature play area.  
City of Mount Gambier with additional funding from Department of Planning,  
Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) through their Open Space Funding Program.

Artists Trevor Wren and Danica Gacesa McLean are recognised for their sharp observations on civic life, detailed in their public art installations. Signalling Change is no exception, its oversized railway signal barriers a reminder of the activity and rail dependent industries that once utilised the Railway space in Mount Gambier.

The sculpture references railway signals, crossing barriers, indicator lights, railway sleepers and visual communication through shape, colour and light. The bright indicator colours of STOP, WAIT, GO, are playful elements we may all relate to. This sculpture adds to the line of communication already established along the Railway Lands redevelopment through the reinstatement of old telegraph poles and signal wires.

With a nod to the past, the sculpture denotes changes over time, including the present as the Railway Lands morph into a new public space for a new time.





**Artist:**

**Laura Wills**

**Title:**

**Mount Gambier Lace Fence**

**Year:**

2015

**Materials:**

Woven Galvanised Steel

**Location:**

Old Passenger Platform

**Project:**

Major Art Commission

**Commissioned by:** City of Mount Gambier & Department of Planning, Transport & Infrastructure. Seed funding for the development stage of this project came from Arts South Australia.

This artistic design laced into the wire platform balustrade portrays both the modern and the historical train platform. Figures can be seen walking, waiting and cleaning the station platform. Other objects are depicted, such as bicycles, ducks and flowerpots.

On the northern side of the platform, a late 1800's South Australian Railways Y Class Locomotive is depicted, indicative of the type that frequented Mount Gambier in the early days.

The 'Lace Fence' technology used for this artwork was initially developed by young Dutch designer Joep Verhoeven. Verhoeven wove intricate patterns inspired by traditional Dutch lace-making techniques into anonymous chain-mesh security fences, creating works of art from these normally mundane industrial objects.

For the Mount Gambier Railway Lands, it is produced here on a grand scale. This project is the first of its kind to use this technique in the southern hemisphere.



**Artist:**

**Robert Miles and Mark deNys**

**Title:**

**Ants**

**Year:**

2016

**Materials:**

Powder Coated Fabricated Mild Steel

**Location:**

Sand Pit - Nature Play Area

**Project:**

Artistic Nature Play Works

**Commissioned by:** City of Mount Gambier with additional funding from Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) through their Open Space Funding Program.

In a sand pit we may be more used to ants crawling through our toes, than ourselves crawling around them, but this is exactly the experience local collaborators Robert Miles and Mark de Nys have delivered



with their family of giant steel ants. We've not been encouraged to think of ants as playful. They are industrious, curious creatures reputedly purposed to the collective good of their colony. Always building. Always working.

With this work featuring three enormous red ants made from fabricated mild steel, the artists encourage our intrigue of the subject, and invite children and adults alike to have fun engaging with the sculptures, reminding us that a nature play is about both discovery and imagination.

**Artist:** Karl Meyer and Exhibition Studios

**Title:** Tracks

**Year:** 2016

**Materials:** Steel and concrete

**Location:** Bay Road Railway Tce. Corner

**Project:** Major Art Commission

**Commissioned by:** City of Mount Gambier with funding from Arts South Australia

Tracks is an ambitious addition to Mount Gambier's public art landscape. From a distance the work appears to be two large wheels or rings, but upon closer inspection reveals itself as constructed from railway tracks; giving the impression of being rolled or wound up.

The double rings represent the dual railway tracks that once travelled through this space. From some angles the double rings appear to be leaning against each other, symbolising they are now at rest. Their immersion into the ground represents the passing of time and aging.



Beyond visual monument, this sculpture has been an ambitious feat of engineering. The adaptive reuse of discarded railway tracks provides a connection to Mount Gambier's industrial past. It connects us also, to a slower time of quiet reverie endured by the many passengers peering out of carriage windows upon those journeys long ago.

**Artist:** Ivo Tadic  
**Title:** Untitled (14 Rock Carvings)

**Year:** 2016

**Materials:** Carved Rock - Basalt and Limestone

**Location:** Creek

**Project:** Artistic Nature Play Works

**Commissioned by:** City of Mount Gambier with additional funding from Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) through their Open Space Funding Program.

Well known local sculptor Ivo Tadic carved 14 artworks onsite from the limestone and basalt rock landscaping which was placed along the creek wending through the Railway Lands.

The sculptures feature Australian animals, reptiles, fish, amphibians, mammals and a monotreme. Their subtle placement within the landscape has been chosen to delight the intrepid young explorers who are encouraged to look carefully as they rock hop through the space in order to seek them out.

By carving directly into the rock Ivo has revealed the colours and potential which exist below the aged surface.





**Artist:**

**Diana Wiseman**

**Title:**

**Rail Birds**

Year:

2016

Materials:

Print on SC Panel

Location:

Southern wall facing into the Railway Lands from adjacent property

Commissioned

City of Mount Gambier with additional funding from Department of

by:

Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) through their Open Space Funding Program.

Rail Birds features a window view of a wetland landscape which pays homage to the natural and historic heritage of the region. The seven birds depicted are derived from the names of the rail cars once used by the Bluebird Rail Service at Mount Gambier.

A skilled printmaker whose bold lines scratch across the surface of this unique largescale art work,



Diana used drypoint and monoprinting techniques to produce dozens of small scale prints in the development of the piece.

The final artwork was achieved when the prints were photographed at high resolution and printed locally on an industrial scale, spanning over nine metres wide across several panels. The inclusion of text is a homage to Diana's own history as a primary school teacher.



**Artist:**

**Ben Brumby**

**Title:**

**Untitled**

Year:

2016

Materials:

Airbrush Paint on AC Sheet

Location:

Southern wall facing into the Railway Lands from adjacent property

Commissioned

City of Mount Gambier with additional funding from Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) through their Open Space Funding Program.

by:

Featuring exquisite air brushed detail in the central semi-realist figure, Ben's work is bold, edgy and different to anything already seen in Mount Gambier's public arts realm.

A tattooed musician appears cross legged and focussed, playing an old Bears Grant guitar. Indeed, this is the very guitar Ben's Grandfather used to strum out old jazz tunes and country music from, over 4 decades ago. Ben describes his Grandfather as 'a true artist' stating that music was crucial to him, like it remains for so many decades on. Music provides a release, a passion and something that allows people to extend beyond themselves.

Although the anonymous musician here is almost faceless, he could be many people.



**Artist:**

**Anthony (Ant) Martin and Hat Martin**

**Title:**

**The Lizard**

**Year:**

2016

**Materials:**

Carved Red Gum

**Location:**

Western side of Nature Play Area

**Project:**

Artistic Nature Play Works

**Commissioned**

City of Mount Gambier with

**by:**

additional funding from Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) through their Open Space Funding Program.

Though large in scale, the body of the carved lizard was created with exquisite detail, as can be seen in the delicacy of the feet and the wonderful texture of the scales.

Lovingly chain-sawed and sanded The Lizard is a two tonne red gum creation by husband and wife collaborators Anthony (Ant) Martin and Hat Martin. Spanning four metres in length the slab was initially sourced from Strathalbyn, prior to being shifted to their Millicent studio. Sturdy and robust and frighteningly lifelike, the lizard's scale and surface have been designed to encourage people to engage with it, as it basks itself in the open.

