

# Canal to Creek

WestConnex | Transurban

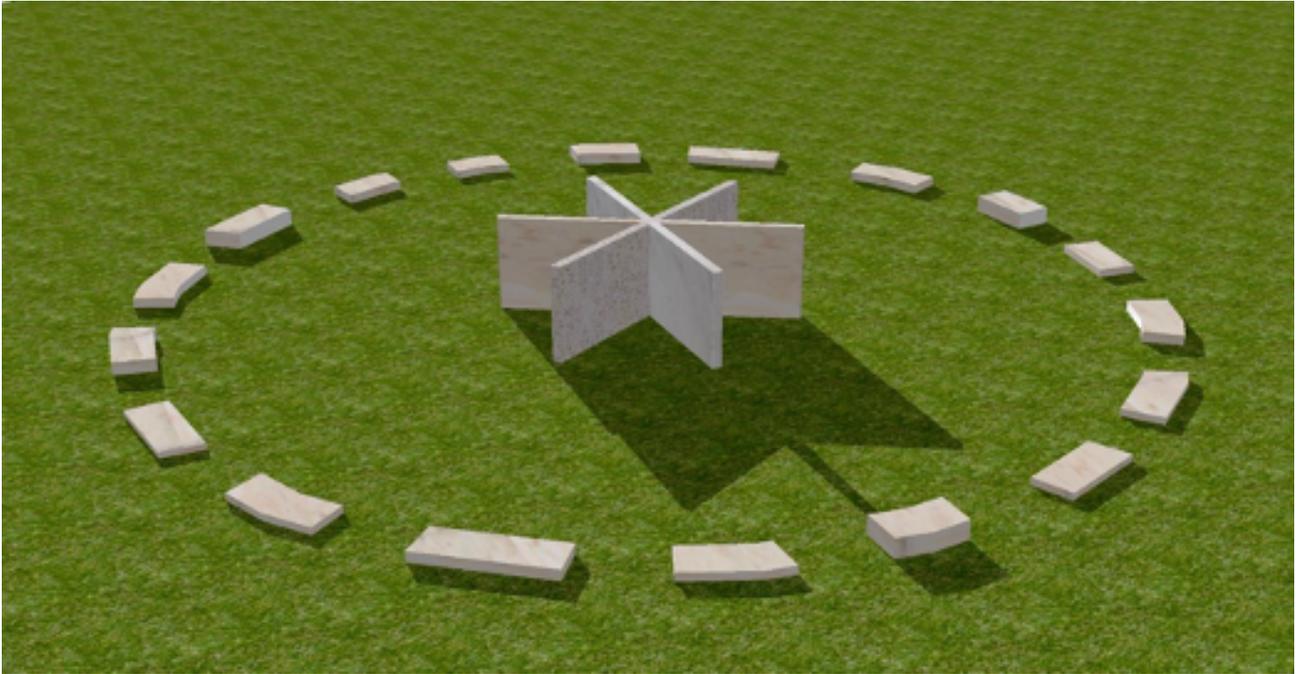
THE WESTCONNEX PUBLIC ART PROGRAM



VISUAL ARTS & DESIGN  
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

# GILL GATFIELD

ASTERISK | STAGE 5 WORKSHEET



Gill Gatfield  
*Asterisk*  
Public Art Commission 2019/2020  
Sydney NSW  
WestConnex Canal to Creek Public Art  
Australian stone (Pilbara marble, Chillagoe marble, Sydney 'Tunnel stone', heritage sandstone)  
Approx. 12m Dia. x 1m H

## CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

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**VOCABULARY** - Public art, Commission, Collaboration, Sculpture, Installation, Site-specific, Landscape, Symbolic, Abstract, Geometric, Minimalist, Asterisk, Compass, Interactive, Texture, Tactile, Monumental, Timeless, Ancient, Heritage, Celestial, Navigation, Astronomy, Inclusive, Point of view, Augmented Reality

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## RESPONDING TO THE ARTWORK

Visit the artwork on location or virtually.

1. What do you notice about the artwork?

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2. What are your first thoughts or questions when you look at this artwork?

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3. What does this artwork remind you of? Why?

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4. What signs or symbols can you identify in **Asterisk**? Brainstorm possible meanings.

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5. What do you find most interesting about this artwork? Why?

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## ARTWORK CONCEPT

Named after the Ancient Greek word 'asteriskos' meaning 'little star', the distinctive star shaped sculpture **Asterisk** makes connections across cultures, time and place. Combining ancient stones and celestial form, the



sculpture explores the metaphysical realms of earth and sky. It speaks to human journeys and ancient stellar navigation systems used to guide Indigenous travellers on journeys far and wide. Made from four unique rock types sourced from across Australia, the sculpture's intersecting planes reveal markings that trace the history of the oldest continent in the world. One plane is a composite of stone discovered during construction of the WestConnex M8 tunnels, found deep within the earth below the site of the sculpture. This stone, anchored by rock from the North and the West, holds the memory of this land, reshaped to enable new destinations. **Asterisk** is orientated to Ginan, the smallest star in the Southern Cross, recently officially given its Australian Aboriginal star-name. Situated on Cadigal and Kameygal land, welcoming visitors at the entrance to new sculpture parklands, **Asterisk** is a modern compass placing equal value on different perspectives.

<https://www.gillgatfield.com/asterisk/>

## ARTIST'S PRACTICE

New Zealand artist Gill Gatfield creates conceptually-powerful, abstract sculptures and installations, exploring ideas and narratives drawn from history, philosophy, politics, science and psychology. She has exhibited widely in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and Europe, gaining national and international recognition and commissions for place-making work.

Gatfield was recently recognised by CODAworx as one of 25 'Creative Revolutionaries'; leaders of positive change in the field of commissioned art. As she notes:

*'all artists at heart are creative revolutionaries...we're engaged in the process of often collaborative, disruptive change with an objective of setting a better tomorrow for all'.*

Gatfield is informed by her earlier 10-year career in public policy and law reform, focused on human rights. She founded and directed Equity Works Ltd., advising government and private organisations on equality and diversity strategies. An activist at her core, Gatfield aims to create inclusive artworks that bring meanings and voices to public spaces and build connections between people and their communities. She views public art as an important means to prompt action and dialogue across time and place

Gatfield's minimalist sculptures and installations are characterised by an inventive use of materials, forms, scale and site. She uses highly symbolic materials such as rare stones, unique timbers, glass, fibre and native grass to construct her often large-scale artworks. For example, her artwork [Native Tongue](#), 2011, consists of a totemic I-figure carved from the heartwood of a 45000-year-old ancient kauri and her installation [Glass Ceiling \(NZ Aotearoa\)](#), 2019, involved 16.5 tonnes of smashed glass displayed within a disused silo.

Gatfield is 'motivated by the beauty of form and materials and what they also speak to'. Through her use of simplified, abstract geometric forms, Gatfield creates bold, monumental sculptures and installations that invite touch, provoke thought and create reflective spaces within urban and natural environments.

## AUDIENCE

This site-specific public artwork acts as a significant place marker for locals and visitors within the community. Audiences may:

- enter the space of the artwork to gather and connect
- use the sandstone blocks as 'stepping stones' for imaginative play or places to sit and rest
- observe the effects of changing light and shadows on the three-dimensional forms
- explore the contrasting textures between the different stones
- think about the meaningful re-use of heritage stone from local community roads
- connect to history, memory, identity and place

## VOCABULARY

Look up the following artworld terms to inform your art critical and historical and artmaking investigations. You may do this individually, in pairs or as a class (e.g. look up 1 term each and add to a class Google doc).

<b>Sculpture</b>	
<b>Installation</b>	
<b>Site-specific</b>	
<b>Symbolic</b>	
<b>Abstract</b>	
<b>Geometric</b>	
<b>Minimalist</b>	
<b>Texture</b>	
<b>Heritage</b>	
<b>Ancient</b>	
<b>Navigation</b>	
<b>Astronomy</b>	
<b>Point of view</b>	
<b>Public art</b>	
<b>Commission</b>	
<b>Collaboration</b>	
<b>Inclusive</b>	
<b>Augmented Reality</b>	

## CRITICAL & HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION QUESTIONS

1. What memories, associations or questions might **Asterisk** provoke from different audiences?

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2. How can audiences respond to **Asterisk** through different senses?

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3. How does **Asterisk** connect to time and place? Consider how the artwork changes over time.

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4. How has Gatfield communicated meanings through her artwork **Asterisk**? Consider her material choices and actions.

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5. How has Gatfield re-interpreted existing symbols and ideas to reveal new meanings?

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6. What ideas and issues inform Gatfield's aims as an artist?

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7. Discuss how **Asterisk** references ancient knowledge, journeys and navigation systems, as well as new discoveries and travel routes. Consider the earth and sky, past, present and future

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8. What does collaboration enable Gatfield to achieve through her practice as an artist? Refer to **Asterisk**.

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9. How does collaboration challenge the traditional definition and role of an artist?

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10. How has Gatfield created an inclusive community meeting place through **Asterisk**?

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11. *'A creative revolutionary project will be timeless because it will speak to any moment of time... whether it's questioning the past, reflecting on the present or proposing a different future'* - Gill Gatfield

Why is Gatfield interested in creating public art that is 'timeless'? Can **Asterisk** be thought of as 'timeless'? If so, how?

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## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Research the history and meaning of stone circles across different cultures. How has Gatfield created a stone circle specific to the history and significance of this place?
2. Discuss and/or debate the role of public art, considering Gatfield's view that *'if we could measure the political value of public art, it would be by the questions it prompts, not the answers it gives.'*  
Why are public artworks such as **Asterisk** becoming increasingly important for our community?
3. How are places signified or marked within our urban environment? Find examples of signs, symbols, signals, markers, graphics, monuments or structures that mark or map important and/or everyday places within your surrounding environment. Compare these examples, discussing similarities and differences. Consider the work of [Gill Gatfield](#) and [Aram Bartholl](#).

## ARTMAKING TASK

Visit the artwork on location or virtually.

Observe the artwork from different angles and points of view, including bird's eye, eye level and worm's eye views. How does the artwork show the passing of time and reflect changes within the surrounding environment? Consider the effects of light, shadows, other natural elements and human interactions.

If you are on location experiment with a drone to photograph or film it from above.

### Digital time slice artwork

Photograph **Asterisk** at different times of the day or over the course of an hour (e.g. every few minutes), from the same position using a tripod. Create a composite digital collage of your photos, using different sections or panels cropped from your images in the order they were taken, to create one image showing the passing of time, similar to the work of [Fong Qi Wei](#). Experiment with cropping different sections and shapes, such as horizontal, vertical or diagonal lines, or concentric circles, squares or rectangles to create frames within frames and gradations in colour, tone and mood. Discuss the effect of combining different moments and times of the day within one composition. Extend your digital collage by translating it into an animation, creating frames based on each 'slice' of time being added or shifted.

Another site or location could be selected to form the basis of this digital time slice artwork, informed by **Asterisk**.

### Painting with light

Visit the artwork at dawn or night and experiment with long exposure photography, 'tracing' or 'painting' its sculptural forms with a mobile phone light, torches or other portable light sources. Mirrors could also be used to reflect natural sun or moon light. Experiment with different movements and gestures over time, different hues, lights flashing at different speeds and light from multiple sources. Covering light sources with coloured cellophane is a simple method for creating different hues. Refer to the practice of [Tokihiko Sato](#) and his 'photo respirations'. Keep the camera still using a tripod or experiment with moving your camera, for example through zoom bursts, panning up/down/sideways or handheld movements.

### Experimental drawings

Create a drawing that maps the movement of light and shadows over time, similar to **Asterisk** or a sundial. Select an interesting form within the natural or urban environment such as a small tree or plant, rock form, street sign, lamp post or person! Place a large sheet of paper or several sheets taped together, beneath, around or beside the form. Record the movement of shadows cast by natural or artificial light around the form, using charcoal, pencil, progressors, ink or markers to fill or outline the shadows or negative spaces created. Experiment with extended arm drawing by attaching your drawing tools to the end of long sticks,

brushes, rulers or poles. Instead of using paper, ephemeral drawings could be made directly on the surface of the ground (e.g. creating marks on soil or sand, using water or chalk on rock or asphalt). These could be photographed or filmed over time. Alternatively, drawings could be done on a smaller scale using a small natural or found object or arrangement of objects on a single sheet of A3 paper. Observe and discuss how you have recorded your subject changing over time through abstraction and distortion.

Explore natural elements and processes as a means to make or extend drawings. For example, cover paper using ink or paint and place in the rain or beside a riverbed, to record the movements and effects of water. Experiment with sedimentage; burying paper or drawings in the ground for a period of time, to allow work to record natural processes and traces within the earth. Allow tree branches to blow in the wind and draw, paint or scratch back surfaces on your work. Refer to the practice of [John Wolseley](#) and Bernard Moninot's series [The memory of the wind](#), 1999-2009.



### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

#### Site-specific artwork and installation

Brainstorm and research places where people gather, pause, meet and interact in your local community e.g. public artworks, monuments, parks, playgrounds, bus stops, traffic lights, queues, corners and benches. You could also consider locations within your school environment.

Select a specific place and observe how it changes over time. Consider light, shadows, weather, peoples' movement and interactions, sounds and mood. Why do people stop and gather? What attracts them? How long do they spend in the space? Who/what do they interact with in the space? How do they move in, around and out of the space? Record your findings in your Visual Arts Process Diary, in the form of notes, sketches or diagrams, as well as photos or footage recorded at the site.

Research the history, stories or memories of the site, considering its value and significance to you and people in the community. You could interview locals about the site and its history, making audio/video recordings and notes.

Design an abstract symbol, sign or place-marker that responds to your specific site and marks its importance and value to the community. It could be based on a simple geometric or organic form, a graphic in contemporary typography or media, text, or historical symbol. Create this symbol or marker in the form of a 2D, 3D or 4D image, object, sculpture or installation, such as a poster, print, spray painting, large cardboard or wire sculpture, a hanging or inflatable form, digital projection or sculpture made from surprising, recycled, natural or ephemeral materials that reflect or contrast with the site e.g. balloons, plastic bottles, branches, ice. These can be sourced from the site itself.

Install this symbol or marker within your site, documenting how audiences interact and respond to it over time through photography, drawing and/or video. Experiment with different times of the day, different locations and multiple copies of your sign or symbol. You could even create a map for audiences that shows the location(s) of your artwork. Refer to the artmaking practices of [Gill Gatfield](#), [Aram Bartholl](#) and Andy Goldsworthy.

Exhibit your research, artwork and documentation as a collection of work.