

Canal to Creek

WestConnex

Transurban

THE WESTCONNEX PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

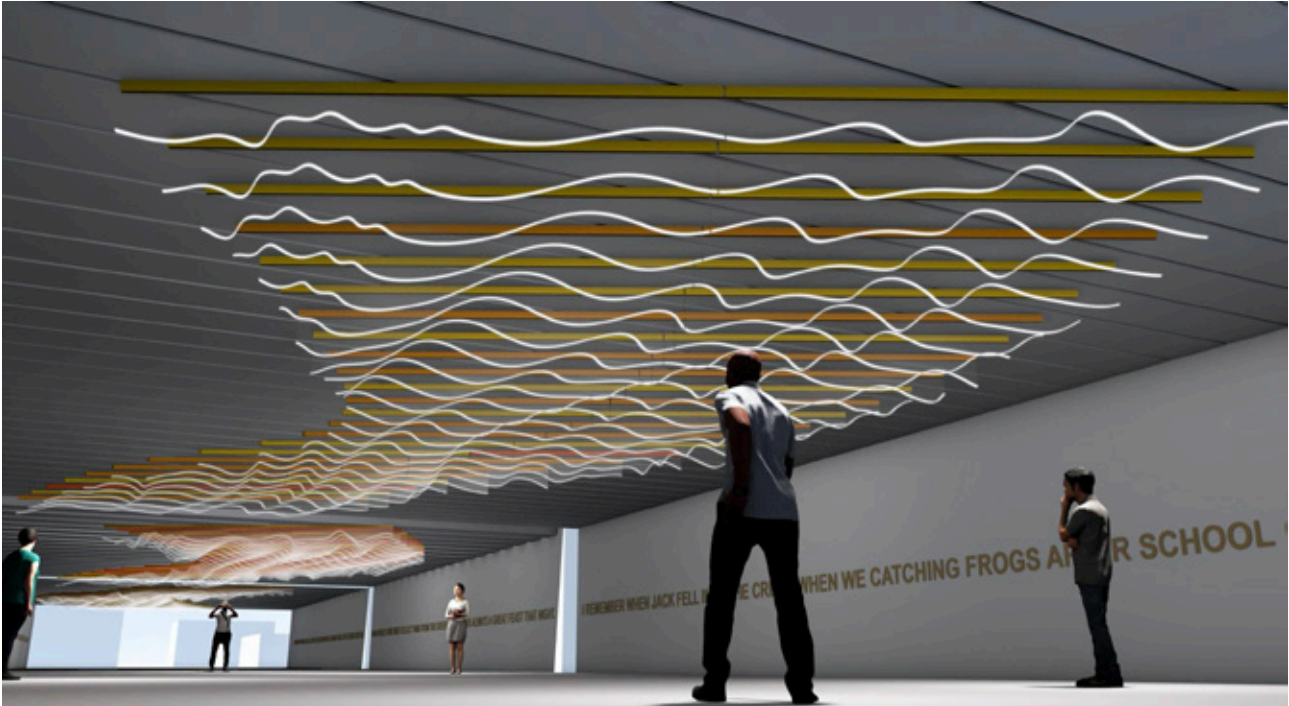


VADEA
NSW

VISUAL ARTS & DESIGN
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

WARREN LANGLEY

WOLLI | STAGE 5 WORKSHEET



Warren Langley

Wolli

2020

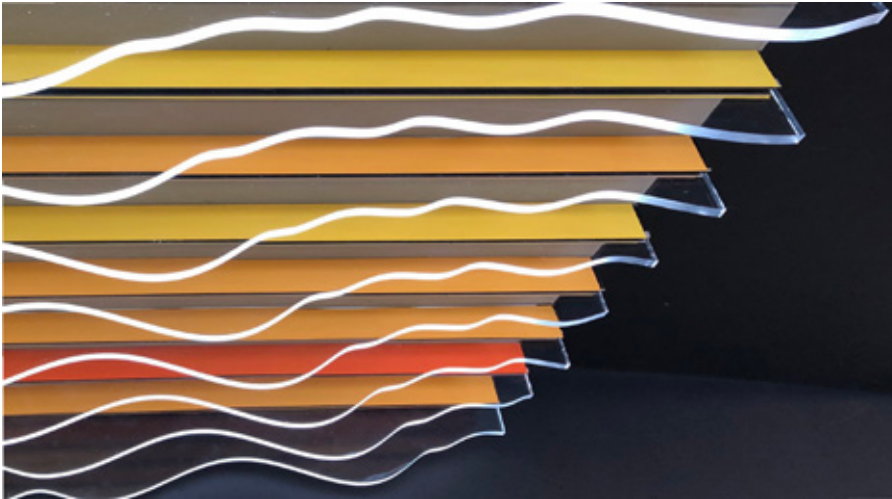
Sculptural light installation (WestConnex Canal to Creek Public Art Commission)

Kindilan pedestrian underpass, Linear Park, Sydney NSW

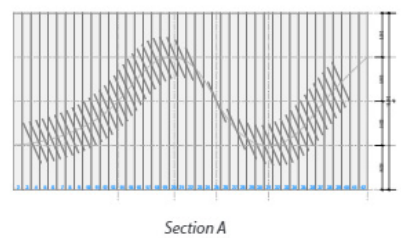
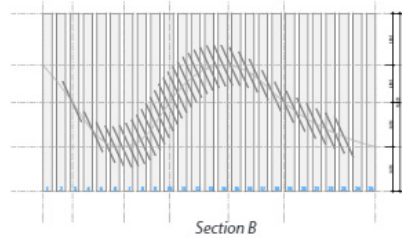
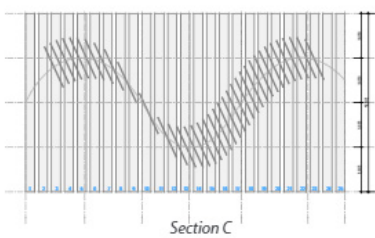
Materials: polycarbonate, concealed LED lights, powder-coated aluminium brackets, paint (walls, text), anti-graffiti coating (walls)

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

VOCABULARY - Public art, Commission, Collaboration, Sculptural, Installation, Transform, Site, Site-specific, Context, Psychology, Architecture, Engineering, Interdisciplinary, Colour temperature, Experiential, Progressive, Form versus Function, Physics, Transitory, Permanence, Continuity



Laser carved polycarbonate light blades with concealed LED lighting (edge lighting)



RESPONDING TO THE ARTWORK

Visit the artwork on location or virtually.

1. What do you notice about *Wolli*?

2. What are your first thoughts or questions when you look at *Wolli*?

3. What does *Wolli* remind you of?

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

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

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Sydney-based artist Warren Langley addresses the ideas of 'sight' as well as 'site'. Through his career, spanning over 35 years, he has created artworks for the built environment using a diverse range of materials, gaining international recognition for his many large-scale works using glass and light. In the past 16 years, he has increasingly used light as a principal design element to create public art interventions which undergo day to night transformations. Major projects include artworks located at the Australian Parliament House, the Maison de la Opera (Amiens, France), The Museum of Contemporary Art (Tacoma, USA), the Australian Pavilion at the 2011 Shanghai World Expo and Hong Kong airport.

Langley's practice is focused on the creation of site-specific artworks, usually large-scale installations that directly respond to their particular location and site. He starts by visiting and exploring each site, talking to locals, spending time within the area and getting a 'feel' for the site. As he explains, 'What I do is really a very direct response to the site. It's not like I've got this idea and I'm just looking for somewhere to [put] it. Usually, it'll be something inspired by the site that brings about the idea.'

ARTMAKING PROCESS

Langley's public artworks blur boundaries between the practices of sculpture, architecture and engineering. **Wolli** was developed through an interdisciplinary process that involved spatial research, structural, wind and lighting engineering, prototyping, 3D modelling and drawing, sculptural light installation and on-site electrical work.

Wolli involved a high degree of material research, experimentation and planning over time. As the artist describes, 'there's multiple things happening at the same time. It's only right at the end when it all comes together, when you finally assemble all the bits and pieces...As an artist, you're a professional in the same way that an architect is, or a doctor is, or anybody else.' For example, Langley had to source polycarbonate from Israel, due to the 3m lengths required to construct the lighting blades essential to **Wolli**.

ARTWORK CONCEPT

Wolli, installed in February - March 2020, is a site-specific sculptural light installation designed by Warren Langley as part of the WestConnex Public Art Program - Canal to Creek. Located in the Kindilan pedestrian underpass within the M5 Linear Park, **Wolli** is an 'experiential artwork' where 'the artwork and the viewer are co-dependent', as the artist highlights. Conceptually, the artwork is not just about creating a lighting installation. Rather, the artist uses light to create a sculptural form that provides a gentle, calming experience as park users move through the underpass. Key aspects of the artwork include:

- **SUNLIGHT ON RIPPLES**

Wolli consists of a series of approximately 150 uniquely shaped light blades suspended from the ceiling of the pedestrian underpass. These refer to the reflection of sunlight on ripples in the surrounding waterways. Their undulating curves and lines create a ripple effect throughout the installation. Each light blade has been made from a 3m length of laser-carved polycarbonate attached to a bracket holding it in place. Each blade contains hidden LED lighting that lights up the edge of each blade. This is due to an optical effect created by simple physics - light travels in straight lines and any obstruction in that path will be illuminated.

- **TIME**

Wolli brings the outside in, connecting to the local creeks and river systems. **Wolli** and Bardwell creeks and the Cooks River have essentially been in their current geographical positions for the past 23,000 seasons, since the end of the Pleistocene or last ice age. During this period of time they have flowed in the local landscape, even when bound by concrete channels. Throughout all of this time, the reflection of sunlight on ripples has remained an everyday sight to locals.

- **LIGHT SOURCE**

The artwork acts as the source of lighting the tunnel, being bright enough to function as the underpass lighting. By becoming the source of lighting in the tunnel, there is a guarantee that this artwork will be maintained. As the artist notes, the *'maintenance of public artworks is a real problem. Who takes on the role of maintaining these things after they have been installed?'*

- **WALL TEXT**

Alongside the light blades, a series of quirky quotes appear as large-scale text on the side walls of the underpass. Researched from oral histories of the area, these are placed at eye level and give audiences an idea of what it used to be like growing up and living in the local area:

*Wolli creek had its own swimming holes that were frequently patronised by the local skinny dipping lads
The local boys would bribe the guard on the train with billy-cans of blackberries and eggs to obtain a ride on the train
Occasionally the more daring lads would try to steal a cabbage or two from the market gardens
Mother used to make all our school hats from the leaves of the cabbage tree palms which grew wild in the creek gully
The man and his wife were seated on their knees in the canoe, in which they had a fire on a flat stone
The Chinese took their vegetables to the markets in a horse drawn wagon, in the early hours of the morning*

- **COLOUR**

Colour is essential to the impact of this public artwork. Langley based the colour palette of the artwork on direct research of the site and surrounding environment. He held a competition for members of the St George photographic society, challenging them to take photographs that best captured the colours of their local natural landscape.

AUDIENCE

Wolli creates an interactive, sensory experience for audiences. Exploring the 'psychology of place', **Wolli** transforms an otherwise dark, cold underpass into a calming and uplifting experience for park users who pass through. The careful sequencing and placement of adjacent blades, where the shape of each blade relates to the ones on either side of it, progressively reveals the artwork to audiences over time, as they move through the tunnel. Audiences activate the artwork through their simple act of passing through the space, making the relationship between the artwork and viewer inseparable. As the artist highlights, 'What you experience depends on exactly where you are...As you move through the space, the artwork appears to transform along with you'.

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).

Public art	
Commission	
Collaboration	
Sculptural	
Installation	
Transform	
Site	
Site-specific	
Context	
Psychology	
Architecture	
Engineering	
Interdisciplinary	
Colour temperature	
Experiential	
Progressive	
Form versus Function	
Physics	
Transitory	
Permanence	
Continuity	

CRITICAL & HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION QUESTIONS

1. How does the artist start his artmaking process? Why?

2. Define 'interdisciplinary'. What value does an interdisciplinary approach have for contemporary artists such as Langley?

3. Why is *Wolli* an 'experiential' artwork? Consider the relationship between the artwork and audience.

4. Define psychology. How does *Wolli* address the 'psychology of place'?

5. What elements from nature does *Wolli* draw upon? Describe how.

6. How might the appearance and impact of *Wolli* change if audiences were:

- walking through the space
- running through the space or
- cycling through the space?

7. What ideas and meanings can light symbolise? How does *Wolli* incorporate light in a symbolic way?

8. How does *Wolli* represent the cultural identity and history of the local community?

9. What questions might *Wolli* provoke from audiences? Consider how it connects to the past, present and/or future.

10. In small groups or as a class, Discuss and/or debate the role of public art, considering how *Wolli* asks something of the viewer's rather than proposing or giving answers.

ARTMAKING TASK

Visit the artwork on location or virtually.

Observe the installation from different points of view and positions within the space.

If you are on location, try viewing the ceiling light blades from a worm's eye perspective (low angle), by crouching or lying down and looking up.

Walk through the tunnel from each end, observing any differences in light, shadows, colour, mood and the appearance of the light blades on the ceiling as you move through the space. (* For video recording of installation walk-through go to <https://canaltocreek.com/wcx/art/wolli>)

1. EXPERIMENTAL DRAWING

Experiment with a range of drawing techniques to capture different visual and emotional qualities of the space. Try using viewfinders or your mobile phone to frame different points of view and crop interesting or abstract details and compositions. You may choose to explore:

- Line and/or tone – using continuous line drawing, hatching, cross-hatching, line build up or pointillism
- Positive and negative space
- Light on dark ground versus dark on light ground
- One-point perspective drawing

Materials could include pencil, progressos, charcoal, ink, pen, markers, oil/chalk pastels. Extend or start your drawings by monoprinting or painting with palette knives, string or rulers.

Alternatively, you could create your drawing(s) using a digital tablet or other device.

Other options:

- Close your eyes and listen carefully to the sounds within the tunnel if you are on site. Create an artwork that responds to this soundscape. You could experiment with continuous line drawing, expressive mark-making or digital editing tools. (*Audio recording of installation is available for students who are not on-site > <https://canaltocreek.com/wcx/art/wolli>). Alternatively, explore another soundscape and represent this in a visual form.
- Explore and draw another space or environment that has interesting lines, effects of light and shadow, dramatic angles or a strong sense of one-point perspective. This could be within your school or local environment or at home.

2. EXPERIMENTING WITH TIME

Experiment with taking panoramas or 360 degree views of the installation using your mobile phone. Try capturing people within the space, including pedestrians, runners, cyclists or classmates. Observe how the space can be distorted to suggest change and movement over time. You could also experiment with lenses attached to your phone (such as fisheye, kaleidoscopic or wide-angle lenses), or objects placed in front of your phone (such as glass prisms).

Using sections of your drawings, photographs of the site and/or screen shots captured from virtual navigation of the site, create a hand-generated or digital collage that combines different points of view within the one composition to suggest the passing of time. Think of it as a 'memory map' or visual map of your journey through the space. Experiment with enlargements, horizontal and vertical lines, weaving and/or shifting sections to create a sense of visual rhythm and movement. Refer to examples of Cubism and the work of [Sohei Nishino](#), [David Hockney](#) and [Daniel Crooks](#). A cropped section of this collage could be used as the basis for a painting or printmaking work. Images could also be used to create an artist's book or zine.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Painting with light

Experiment with long exposure photography to 'trace' the ripples of light on the ceiling that are created as you move through the underpass. Alternatively, use different light sources (e.g. mobile phones, torches, push button lights, LEDs, string lights) to create light paintings in the underpass or in another darkened space. Experiment with tracing or painting different geometric and/or organic lines and shapes within the space or moving with the lights over time and performing different movements. Refer to the work of [Tokihiko Sato](#). Different effects can be achieved by keeping the camera still using a tripod compared to moving the camera by hand, panning or attaching it to a wheeled/moving object. Also try using different colours of light, observing changes in mood and atmosphere. Coloured cellophane can be used as a simple method of changing the colour of light emitted from light sources.

Light installation (suggested as a whole class project or group task)

Select a space within the natural or built environment, researching how it is used and by whom, movements and behaviours within the space and how it changes over time (e.g. light, shadows, colours, traffic). Spaces could include playgrounds, parks, stairs, tunnels, pedestrian crossings, telephone boxes, train stations or bus stops. Design a sculpture or installation that responds to this space using simple light sources (e.g. push button lights, LEDs, string lights) or even mirrors to reflect available light. A portable projector could also be used. Your sculpture or installation could be inspired by reflections, lines of movement, shapes, pathways, sounds, human interactions, conversations, patterns, memories or stories related to the site. You could attach lights or mirrors to a wire form, string or other objects that could temporarily and safely be placed within the space. Alternatively, mirrors could be placed on the ground to reflect the sky or at different angles to bring the outside in or create frames within frames. Document your light sculpture/installation over time using still and/or timelapse photography and/or video. You could capture it at different times of the day and as audiences interact with it. Also try capturing it from different points of view e.g. a bird's eye view from a high angle or drone. Present your sculpture/installation components, photographs and/or video footage as a collection of work, slideshow and/or film projected within the space.

Fluid time – Experimental film

Create a film based on the artwork or another space that interests you. Experiment with the flow of time, such as pausing, slowing down, stretching, speeding up and/or reversing video footage of the artwork/space. Consider incorporating body movements such as walking, running or cycling or even a dance performance. Observe how time can be distorted and experienced in a subjective way. Refer to the works by [Rogier van der Zwaag](#) such as [End-to-end](#) and [Escalation](#), the work of [Daniel Crooks](#) such as **Static No.11 (man running)** and **Static No.12 (seek stillness in movement)**, and works by [Francois Vogel](#) such as [Reer](#). Create your own audio/soundscape for your film, using audio recordings of sounds within, related to or contrasting with your selected space. These may include snippets of conversations recorded in the space or narration of excerpts from oral histories of the area.