

# Canal to Creek

WestConnex

Transurban

THE WESTCONNEX PUBLIC ART PROGRAM



VADEA  
NSW

VISUAL ARTS & DESIGN  
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

# NICOLE MONKS

WARANGGU | STAGE 5 WORKSHEET



Nicole Monks  
*waranggu*  
waranggu meaning rainbow (wajarri language)  
Homage to our Mothers: beautifully strong warrior women

## CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

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**VOCABULARY** - transdisciplinary, site-specific, artist-designed, homage, dreamtime, interconnections, collaborative

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## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - ARTWORK

**waranggu** is an artist designed playground commissioned for the [WestConnex Public Art Program - Canal to Creek](#). It is positioned beside Wolli Creek in the Tallawalla Street Research adjacent to the M5 motorway. **waranggu** is a series of climbing paths and frames that encourage movements around the site, integrating the audience into a closer experience with the nearby water, sky, trees and land. The climbing frames move towards the trees and land to provide a physical and visual interaction with the environment. Further the frames meander along the creek to provide a closer connection to water. The traditional owners of the land were known as water people.

Drawing on the concept of continuous interconnections, **waranggu** is a long continuous line that connects us all across time. It begins with a waranggu (rainbow) and has developed to encompass the delightful and unexpected turns of life within these unbroken connections. The long continuous lines across time, the long continuous lines connecting culture and story, the long lines for fishing that are continually tendered and added to, the continuous connection of caring for country, the continuous connections and movement to the winds and waters that have understood this land since the beginnings of time.

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Made from suitable commercial grade materials of steel and wood, the work is fabricated by AG Public Art and the artist collaborated to have the work transported and installed in the site.

Extensive community engagement and consultation was undertaken with local Lands Councils and Local Elders. The artist also held collaborative workshops with the Local Mob especially mothers were invited to nominate words and stories to be engraved onto the work, preferably in language.

### Why is it important to consult with community groups when proposing a public artwork?

Monks says *“Mothers; Beautifully Strong Aboriginal Women Warriors are known for their resilience and strength, we have never given up hope for a brighter future. The playscape is a wonderful way to continue telling positive stories that connect to this place and it is symbolic that Aboriginal women of today are still standing strong creating positive futures for the next generations.”*

### Why are mothers and storytelling important to building positive futures? How is it fostered in **waranggu**?

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - ARTIST

Nicole Monks is a transdisciplinary artist of Yamatji Wajarri, Dutch and English heritage. This cross-cultural identity is evident in much of her work through storytelling and working through a range of disciplines in both art and design.

A designer by trade, Monks crosses artforms to work with furniture and objects, textiles, video, installation and performance. Across these varied forms of contemporary art and design, her work reflects Aboriginal philosophies of sustainability, innovation and collaboration. With adeptness and sensitivity, Monk's practice weaves together Aboriginal history and philosophy with contemporary Western thought and resonates with a wide Australian audience.

In addition to her solo practice, Monks is also well known for her success as a collaborative artist and as founder of [blackandwhite creative](#).

### What has influenced the artist when making this work?

Nicole Monks says *"the things that still connect us today; the sky, the water, the wind, the waranggu : rainbows and the act of fishing, spending time and providing for our families, learning through play and connecting with our environment and seasonal change. It was these connections that are still visible across time that I wanted to express in the playscape/furniture/artwork, the positive stories and beautiful imaginings of the human experience and interaction with country. 'Connecting with the past, responding to the present to create a beautiful future for all'"*

### What do you think she means by this?

## CULTURAL FRAME

Read the following quotes:

*"The traditional owners of what is now known as City of Rockdale include the Cadigal, the Gwegal and Bidjigal tribes. These tribes were known as the 'Water people, and inhabited the Bay area for thousands of years before white settlers arrived. Valleys of local creeks, Wollie Creek and Bardwell Creek contain evidence of Aboriginal presence in smoke blackened caves."*

<http://www.wollicreekresidents.com.au/local-information/wolli-creek-history>

*"We've been doing it [fishing] in this country thousands of years more than white men put together have been doing it; we know how fish react, we know how they travel, we know where they travel, we know what time of year they travel. Our parents taught us, we were brought up living off the sea."*

### Tom Butler, Murramarang Elder and retired commercial fisherman, 2016

*For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, fishing is as natural and as necessary as breathing. It forms part of the deep cultural and spiritual connection many communities have with their waters and marine resources, whether saltwater or freshwater. Fishing is a matter of cultural practice, and is informed by traditional knowledge.*

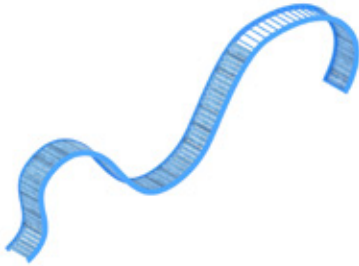
<https://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/brief-history-indigenous-fishing>

**What insights do these quotes give you into a cultural view of the work *waranggu*? What other cultural references do you see in the work?**

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - AUDIENCE

Monks has considered the ways in which children might engage with and play within **waranggu**. A broader audience can interact with the work and simultaneously connect with the environment in a playful way to experience and gain a sense of the presence of the waterways, trees, birds and earth. Monks has investigated how the site had traditionally been used by the Gadigal people and intends for the audience to experience the site immersed and moving in nature in similar ways.

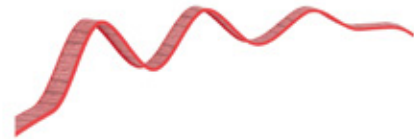
**How do you imagine audiences engaging with the site?** Consider parents, families, local residents, visitors to the site and tourists.



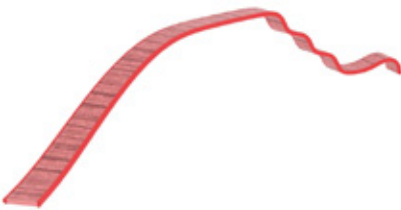
**CLIMBING & HANGING**  
Sections with higher heights and greater variation in levels, with incorporation of climbing bars in some sections. Suitable for older children.



**TUNNELLING, BALANCING**  
Loops for children to climb through  
Planks for children to run along and balance on  
Suitable for smaller children with adult supervision



**BALANCING, WALKING & SLIDING**  
Peaks and troughs for children to climb, slide and balance on  
Reasonable incline challenges for older children



**STEPPING AND SLIDING**  
Sections with higher heights and greater variation in levels. Suitable for older children.

**NICOLE MONKS**  
LONG CONTINUOUS LINE play elements with powdercoated metal edge detail and stained timber slats  
Fall heights to be limited to 1.5 m maximum  
If selected, during DD artist would like to investigate further play opportunities that could be incorporated within the ribbon and rainbow forms, such as spinning abacus beads (in natural materials).  
If selected, during DD artist would like to investigate some engraving local language words developing on the concept in timber and for textural play opportunities



Image from National Library of Australia. The engraving was believed to have been created in 1802 when the Baudin expedition visited Sydney. It shows Sydney Harbour and local Gadigal peoples cooking and fishing in canoes.

## ARTMAKING TASK

Look at the above image. It is an etching created in 1802 documenting the local Gadigal people on the banks of Sydney Harbour at the time of colonisation. Artworks are sometimes the only way we know what places looked like in the past.

There are lots of images like this, as well as old maps of Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour). They can be found on the internet along with images and maps of how Sydney Harbour looks now. Print out a number of images of past and present Sydney Harbour.

Go to this website to see some fantastic examples of contemporary collage art - <https://www.leafandpetaldesign.com/>

Notice how they cut out their shapes and objects carefully so that when they overlap them together, they feel like they somehow belong, even when we know they don't.

Create your own integrated collage using the images of past and present.

**What do you think these artworks will communicate to audiences?**