

EYES OF THE LAND AND THE WATER

ALISON PAGE AND NIK LACHAJCZAK

EYES OF THE LAND AND THE WATER is a sculptural installation that centres on the notion that the land reveals stories of 'the shore' and the water reveals stories from 'the ship'.

The work will be placed on the foreshore where the Gweagal people looked out to this big, strange canoe and watched as two of their warriors encountered Cook and his men. These eyes of the community that watched this earliest encounter will be encapsulated in 'The Eyes of the Land'.

They symbolically represent the middens that symbolise occupation and survival of the people who once gathered here, and are the actual physical echoes of generations of Gweagal who hunted, gathered, sang, laughed, cried, danced and of course...ate.

The sculptural element representing these 'eyes' will be made of layers of tempered glass of various thicknesses with words, artifacts, and cultural imagery that reveal Gweagal culture etched and embedded into the material. The work will be shrouded by a berm rising out of the gently sloping foreshore providing an earthy home for the work. Several of these will be inserted into the landscape along the Kamay foreshore, suggesting eyes watching the ship from the shore. The work is illuminated from the rear day & night and accompanied by an ethereal and evocative soundscape.

The sculptural element in the tidal zone – 'The Eyes of the Water' - reveals the ribs of the ship cast in bronze, also reminiscent of the ribcage of a whale. It is essentially the skeleton of The Endeavour, which is always present in the minds of Australians, regardless of whether the place is marked. The ribs of the ship emphasise the ghostly presence of the Cook and his men, a metonym for all facets of colonialism, regardless of whether the viewer perceives it as good or bad.

Its placement out in the water will allow it to be accessible to the public and as the tide rises and falls, stories of Cook are revealed and submerged. Lighting will also enhance the read of the ribs at night. These stories about Cook the man, will be represented by symbols etched into the bronze and glass by a local Gweagal artists as well as a soundscape featuring language, song, sounds from nature and quotes from various diaries of Cook.



Community Consultation

The consultation period will include briefing to the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council and Heritage Division. Page and Lachajczak will work with the La Perouse Indigenous community to gather local histories and contemporary stories, later co-creating designs for the sculptural artwork, ensuring a more nuanced and global agency and authorship. In this way the resulting artwork will embed refreshed and revived narratives of history and connection to the land at the Meeting Place, strengthening the significance of the Kamay site to all.