

Thursday April 13, 2023

Powerful last work of renowned First Nations artist leaves legacy for Queen's Wharf Brisbane

The last powerful artworks by esteemed Indigenous artist Wukun Wanambi will be prominently featured at Queen's Wharf Brisbane as an enduring public legacy.

The Yolngu artist from Eastern Arnhem Land, Mr Wanambi completed the design for his super sculpture, which is a totem of three large mullet fish he titled *Destiny*, before passing away in May 2022.

The large-scale five metre high, aluminium sculpture will be perched on top of a bull shark-shaped shelter at The Landing, the \$3.6b tourism and entertainment precinct's grassed riverfront public space.

Will Stubbs, Mr Wanambi's representative agent at the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala, Northern Territory said, "This piece is very personal and emotional for the artist's friends and family."

"He spoke of the mullet representing his clan and of their journey up rivers and creeks as them searching for their destiny."

"These fish are modelled on a mullet that was speared by one of his young relatives, Donga Maymuru, who was following his direction and which was caught on video," Mr Stubbs said.

"That fish was then captured in three dimensions by the technology of our digital studio of which he was the Cultural Director."

Prestigious fine arts foundry Perides Arts Projects, based in Brisbane, has now been given the responsibility of completing the sculpture.

The skin of the mullet sculpture will be formed from aluminium sheets laser cut to incorporate a pattern from one of Mr Wanambi's paintings.

Before passing, Mr Wanambi had carved a highly regarded artistic career.

He had exhibited nationally as a solo artist and his work is in most major Australian galleries, including the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of NSW and the Art Gallery of South Australia.

He had won multiple prizes in The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards and featured in international exhibitions including in Singapore, the USA and at the British Museum.

Leading Indigenous curator and arts administrator Avril Quail, part of the Specialist Arts Advisory panel, which is curating the comprehensive collection of artworks to be installed

across the tourism precinct's 7.5ha of public space said *Destiny* is a culturally important piece for Queensland.

"The sculpture significantly will sit on that reach of the Brisbane River (Meanjin) once known to be of clear water and white sand traditionally traversed by local Turrbal, Jagera and Quandamooka peoples," Ms Quaill said.

"The sculpture is highly symbolic of the artist's totem; the mullet fish, which also has cultural associations to local First Nations."

"It was once described to me that the spirits of unborn children are said to reside in the little fish. When they are in the early stages of growth, they are translucent, not fully formed, neither in this world or the next, that is in transition."

The Star Entertainment Group's Managing Director and CEO, Robbie Cooke said the artworks will be in place for the development's planned staged opening from December 2023.

"We are so honoured to be the custodian of Mr Wanambi's final work and pay homage to his astonishing talent and contribution to the Australian arts community.

"All of the artworks are extraordinary and will be proudly showcased to the millions of people who will soon begin to visit this city-changing precinct, including for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games."

"Brisbane already has a vibrant cultural footprint and with the Neville Bonner Bridge linking our resort to the Southbank precinct it will only become more significant."

The Specialist Arts Advisory panel is being led by highly regarded art figure Philip Bacon AO and as well as Avril Quaill includes former Director of the Institute of Modern Art Liz Nowell.

Other artworks already announced include:

- ***Being Swallowed by the Milky Way***, An eight-metre high, eight tonne bronze sculpture by internationally renowned artist Lindy Lee
- ***Lungfish Dreamz***, A supersized mosaic wall mural of Australian lungfish by local artist Samuel Tupou
- ***A Cottage Year***, A high-tech interactive digital light installation for the heritage listed The Printery Office by husband-and-wife team Alinta Krauth and Jason Nelson
- ***Sheila***, A larger-than-life five tonne goddess-like bronze sculpture by Justene Williams
- ***Inhabitant***, An enormous 15 metre floating art garden depicting native plants by exciting First Nations artist Tony Albert

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