

Willurai Kirkbright

Willurai Kirkbright is a contemporary aboriginal artist who spent a month at the gallery delving into the nature of Islands and geographic isolation. Willurai began her residency in the gallery studio from Tuesday 3 July to Friday 28 July 2017. A Wiradjuri woman based in the Blue Mountains with tribal roots in Northern NSW, Willurai is a multi-disciplinary artist who studied film at Eora College, Sydney TAFE and identifies foremostly as an installation artist.



Having spent time on Cockatoo Island Willurai was keen to investigate the historical and cultural significance (both European and Aboriginal) of Susan Island by exploring its Aboriginal heritage as a sacred women's site along with European settlement's use of the island. Willurai worked in conjunction with National Parks and Wildlife to access Susan Island and having already made connections with local Aboriginal women who allowed her to access the island (with respect to the island being a sacred women's site).

As part of her residency Willurai held two children's workshops and an Aboriginal women's workshop. The children's workshops included a walking excursion to view Susan Island from the banks of the mighty Clarence, resulting in the participants taking home their own handmade Susan Island inspired snow dome. Snow domes come to mind for Willurai when she visualises islands and their isolated nature.

Artist Statement

'My name Willurai Ngrumbi Karramarra means Sweet winter rain. Born during heavy rainfall, I am drawn to water my whole life. My work often uses water as a metaphor and or material. I am Wiradjuri so am strongly connected to rivers. My heritage is from the intersection of three major rivers near Wellington, NSW. I also have Maori heritage giving me a strong connection to the sea. My European heritage is Scottish like that of many of the Cedar Getters who travelled up the Clarence River and had their own connection to water. During my time in the Clarence Valley I want to explore the small and rare environment of Susan Island history compacted into its mere 57-acres. An Island once covered in subtropical rainforest that is now almost half cleared. I'm interested in the first cedar recognisance ship the island was named after by European settlers.'

The Grafton Regional Gallery's Artist in Residence Program is supported by Create NSW.

