

13-23 Gibbons Street, Redfern

Integration of Aboriginal cultural
heritage values into development
design

Report to Allen Jack + Cottier

14 December 2018



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Document history and status

Revision	Date issued	Reviewed by	Date reviewed	Approved by	Date approved	Revision type
1	27 November 2018	Aliza Teo, AJ+C	30 November 2018			Draft 1
2	5 December 2018	Alyce Haast, Artefact; Aliza Teo AJ+C	5 December 2018	Aliza Teo, AJ+C	13 December 2018	Draft 2
3	14 December 2018					Final

Printed:	
Last saved:	14 December 2018
File name:	Aboriginal cultural heritage design input report_13-23 Gibbons Street Redfern
Author:	Carolyn MacLulich
Project manager:	Carolyn MacLulich
Name of organisation:	Artefact Heritage
Name of project:	13-23 Gibbons Street, Redfern
Name of document:	13-23 Gibbons Street Redfern, Aboriginal cultural heritage design input
Project number:	18220
Document version:	Final

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Trust Company (Australia) Limited ATF WH Gibbons Trust (The Trust) are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed redevelopment of 13-23 Gibbons Street, Redfern. The project has been identified as a State Significant Development under Schedule 2 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011 (SRD SEPP). The project would be assessed under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

The site location for the proposal is 13-23 Gibbons Street, Redfern (Strata No. 60485) (Figure 1). The site is located within the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA). The site is bound by Gibbons Street to the west, Margaret Street to the south, private property to the north and a petrol station to the west. The site is currently used as a four to five storey residential apartment block which includes existing basement facilities. The study area falls within the boundaries of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Metropolitan LALC). The study area is located within the Parish of Alexandria and County of Cumberland.

The proposal would involve the demolition of existing structures on the site and associated work, and the construction of an 18-storey building comprising non-residential uses (retail/ offices/common areas) at ground floor and residential units above for use as student housing. The existing basement structure will largely be retained with additional excavation within the central portion of the basement.

The Trust, through Allen Jack + Cottier (AJ+C), engaged Artefact Heritage to prepare an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR), a Statement of Heritage Impact (SOHI) and a Heritage Interpretation Strategy (HIS) as required by the SEARS to accompany the EIS. In addition, Artefact Heritage has been engaged to assist The Trust/AJ+C in addressing the inclusion of Aboriginal heritage values and stories into the development design as a part of the Design Excellence Program.

1.2 Project framework

AJ+C is working through the Government Architects NSW Design Excellence Program as a preapplication requirement. As part of this process, the Government Architects NSW Panel reviewed and commented on initial plans for the development on 12 September 2018 and concluded as follows:

Culture and heritage

The Panel noted that a stronger cultural response is needed which may become apparent following a more thorough contextual analysis.

The Panel requests further information on Aboriginal culture and heritage which is especially important given the area's demographics and diversity. A more thorough understanding of how culture and heritage can inform a longer-term vision for the site and the built form is needed. Evidence is also required to understand how Aboriginal culture and heritage is incorporated into the design. The Panel suggested the Pemulwuy project as a precedent.¹

¹ Letter from Olivia Hyde, Director of Design Excellence, Government Architect NSW/Chair SDRP to Chris Wilson, Planning Services, 21 September 2018 re first review of 13-23 Gibbons St project

In addition the ACHAR recommended that 'the proposed development should continue to investigate methods to incorporate Aboriginal cultural heritage values into the proposed design'.

This report therefore outlines the process of addressing the above requirements and comments through the integration of Aboriginal culture and heritage into the design of the project.

Figure 1: Study area



Figure 2: Proposed development (Source: AJ+C)



Figure 3: Proposed building level one including outdoor public domain area (Source: AJ+C)



2.0 ABORIGINAL HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The following section contains a summary of the Aboriginal historical and archaeological context of the vicinity in which the site is located. This information has been summarised from the ACHAR (Artefact 2018²) and 'Central to Eveleigh Corridor: Aboriginal and Historic Heritage Review' (AHMS 2015³). Information about registered aboriginal sites in the vicinity of the site are contained in the ACHAR, however it is noted that no registered sites are located within the development site, with the closest, a midden, being located approximately 100m southeast of the site, though there is some uncertainty to its exact location.

2.1 Historical background

Prior to the settlement of Europeans in 1788, areas surrounding Sydney Harbour were occupied by the Eora people. The name Eora is derived from *Ea*, meaning yes and *ora*, meaning this place or here. The Eora inhabited a territory bordered by the coast to the east, Pittwater and the mouth of the Hawkesbury River to the north and the Georges River and Botany Bay to the south. Their geographical location meant that the Eora subsisted on a predominantly marine based diet of fish, shellfish and edible plants from the shoreline. Today their occupation is evident from various middens, rock shelter art and engravings along the coastline.

The Eora were distributed into family and clan groups, which included different languages and varying settlements around the harbour. Upon initial contact, the population of the Eora is likely to have been around 1,000 people; however some estimates put the figure at between 3,000-5,000. The arrival of Europeans had a rapid effect on the Eora population due to introduced disease and dislocation and disruption of traditions and established behaviours. In 1789, the area was hit by an epidemic of smallpox or similarly contagious disease leading to a significant drop in population and by the 1820s, the number of Aboriginal people inhabiting the area had been irreversibly reduced.

Of the Eora clans, the Gadigal people occupied the land closely associated with the study area. Their traditional occupation of the Sydney Basin is believed to have been for at least 20,000 years prior to European arrival in 1788. The territory associated with the Gadigal people stretched from the south side of Port Jackson from South Head to Petersham.

Aboriginal occupation pre-European contact would have been concentrated around resource rich areas associated with water. A number of swamps and small waterlines were located within the low lying areas of the undulating dune landform in the region surrounding the development site. Historical sources suggest there was a large swamp to the east, where Redfern Park is today, known as Boxley's Lagoon. Blackwattle Creek and Blackwattle Swamp were also located to the northwest of the site. Many of the swamps in the area would have fed into Shea's Creek (Alexandra Canal) approximately 1.8 kilometres (km) to the southwest of the site, which is a tributary to Cooks River. The area between Eveleigh and Central Station was also part of an Aboriginal pathway or travel corridor running north-south, likely utilizing the higher ground/ ridgeline located to the east of the site.

After European occupation, the Gadigal people were displaced from many of their traditional camping grounds around the shoreline, as the town expanded. Despite this, in the 1790s the area around

² Artefact, 2018. 13-23 Gibbons St Redfern, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment. Report for Report to Allen Jack + Cottier on behalf of The Trust Company (Australia) Limited ATF WH Gibbons Trust

³ AHMS, 2015. Central to Eveleigh Corridor: Aboriginal and Historic Heritage Review. Report for Urban Growth NSW.

Belmore Park and Central Station continued to be an important meeting point for Aboriginal people where performances, ceremonies and trials were often witnessed by hundreds of spectators.

Until the mid 1800s, the area of Prince Alfred Park, known then as Cleveland Paddocks, was an Aboriginal campsite where Gadigal people lived, west of the town centre, until the coming of the railway in 1850. The areas of Redfern, Waterloo and Eveleigh became an industrial hub, with many industries and factories being established and housing for the workers being built from the 1840s onwards. The railway, first opened in 1850, transformed the area and led to a period of economic and population growth. The nearby Eveleigh Railway Workshop, built in 1875, was one of the biggest employers of Aboriginal people, many coming from the nearby La Perouse reserve, as were other local industries, such as Henry Jones & Co IXL Jam Factory, Francis Chocolates, and the Australian Glass Manufacturers.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many Aboriginal people from regional New South Wales sought refuge with relatives in Redfern, as work in rural areas became scarce. The Aboriginal population of the area expanded in the mid 1900s, and from the 1940s Redfern increasingly became the location of protests and political rallies. One result of Aboriginal rights movements and political mobilization was the establishment of a range of community-managed services around Redfern, such as the first Aboriginal Housing Company, the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service, and the Black Theatre.

The Redfern area continues to hold great cultural significance for Aboriginal people - for those who have lived here for generations and for other communities who identify with the historical and political significance of the area.

3.0 INTEGRATION OF ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES AND STORIES INTO DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

As part of the Design Excellence Program, the Government Architects NSW panel required that the new development at 13-23 Gibbons St Redfern address the Aboriginal culture heritage and stories of the area (Section 1.2). In order to genuinely address this requirement, Artefact Heritage recommended the engagement of local Aboriginal artists to produce integrated artworks/designs as part of the built form as a key heritage interpretation element in the new development.⁴ Additionally, discussion of other heritage interpretation options was included as part of the ACHAR consultation process.

In previous discussions with Artefact Heritage concerning Aboriginal art and design input in the Redfern area, the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (Metro LALC) has suggested approaching Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative (Boomalli, <https://www.boomalli.com.au>) to identify artists/designers with local knowledge and connections, whose work is of a large scale suitable for inclusion into a building development. Artefact Heritage contacted Boomalli who reviewed their artist pool and recommended three possible artists who had relevant experience and could be contacted to provide concept designs for inclusion in the new development at 13-23 Gibbons St Redfern. The Trust/AJ+C reviewed their bios and portfolios, and invited Jasmine Sarin (<https://www.jskooridesigns.com.au/>) to prepare two concept designs. The Trust/AJ+C also invited local Aboriginal artist Nicole Monks (<http://nicolemonks.com>), who had experience developing artwork for a social housing project in Redfern previously and had worked with the client's public domain consultants Turf Design on previous projects, to prepare two concept designs. One artist's design would be chosen for further development and possible integration into the new development.

Artefact Heritage briefed both artists with information about the Aboriginal heritage of the area, summarised below:

- There are deep time connections with this area over tens of thousands of years. The traditional owners of the land in which the project area is located are Gadigal people of the Darug language group. The name Gadigal was used in the earliest historical records of the European settlement in Sydney to describe the Aboriginal band or clan that lived on the southern shore of Port Jackson, from South Head west to the Darling Harbour area. The Redfern area is historically significant for the associations it has with the Gadigal people and other Aboriginal people in the past and continuing today.
- The area is located within the Sydney Basin, a large depositional geological feature that spans from Batemans Bay to the south, Newcastle to the north and Lithgow to the west. The underlying geology of the project area consists in parts of Hawkesbury Sandstone, Ashfield Shale and Quaternary sediments, and is located on the transition between the Botany sand sheet and Ashfield Shale. This position made the area rich in resources to support Aboriginal lifeways.
- Historical sources indicate that the area was both part of a travel route from the Ultimo area to Botany Bay, roughly followed by the current day Botany Bay Road, which was an important corridor for trade and movement for Aboriginal people in early Sydney; and also an area of gatherings as the area around Belmore Park and Central Station was an important meeting

⁴ Australian Heritage Commission, 2002. Ask First: a guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values.

point for Aboriginal people throughout the 1790s where Aboriginal performances, ceremonies and trials in this spot were often witnessed by hundreds of spectators from Sydney town, and the area of Cleveland Paddocks (now Prince Alfred Park) was an Aboriginal campsite until the coming of the railway in the 1850s.

- The Aboriginal heritage values of the area are rich and complex, and interwoven with the European heritage values: for example, the coming of the railway in the 1850s facilitated movement of Aboriginal people into the area to work at the Eveleigh railyards and other factories and light industry around Redfern.
- Redfern is a key location, often referred to as the Aboriginal heart of Sydney, and the centre of Aboriginal activism, where major Aboriginal legal, health and community services were established.
- There are currently no recorded Aboriginal sites within the project area, the closest one being a midden site about 100m south east of the project area. However the Redfern area continues to hold great cultural significance for Aboriginal people - for those who have lived here for generations and for other communities who identify with the historical and political significance of the area.

Community consultation was emphasised as a key component in developing the concept designs. The artists were requested to record their consultation process within the community during the development of their designs, with the chosen artist being requested to provide a consultation report. The final chosen concept design would be presented to the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) at an Aboriginal Focus Group (AFG) for feedback.

AJ+C met with both artists on 19 October 2018 to provide information on the project and discuss approaches. The artists then presented their draft concept designs to AJ+C on 5 November 2018. Artefact Heritage subsequently viewed the draft concept designs and provided feedback that:

- both artists had met the brief from a heritage perspective that the artwork would incorporate Aboriginal culture and heritage into the design, albeit in different ways, and focusing on different values/stories
- any artwork chosen should not impact negatively on the surrounding heritage items, specifically the St Luke's Church, in terms of glare, reflections, view obstructions, materials and colours used.
- the artwork chosen should be contextualised by installing an artist's statement/small panel describing the values/stories being told.

After reviewing the concept designs from both artists, The Trust/AJ+C chose Monk's design *birrung*, an outdoor kinetic sculpture focusing on Aboriginal astronomy and the stars connecting all people across place and time (see Appendix A). The primary image is 'The Emu in the Sky', a constellation seen from across Australia with many stories associated with it, though it is little known in western society. The Trust/AJ+C's outlined the following reasons that they chose this artwork⁵:

⁵ Summarised from communication from AJ+C, 30/11/2018

- Placemaking: an opportunity to create a significant contribution to the Redfern art scene; a 'destination' artwork that could be on the Redfern art walk and attract users as a 'must see' piece; significantly bolster the night scene of the local area with night lighting as a key factor of the piece.
- Values and stories: Reflecting Aboriginal concepts of astronomy is a great story to tell – how we are all connected under the one night sky, evoking an emotional response of good will and togetherness.
- Architectural/design elements: the work is integrated and not applied; during the day sun and shade patterns dancing across the pavement expand the work to the ground plane enriching and enlivening the work so that it is experienced not just observed; kinetic movement, light and shadow, and night lighting would make this an engaging immersion piece; the structure would serve to moderate building downdrafts reducing wind buffering calming the wind effect on the plaza; raising the structure to around 7-12m will enhance and accentuate its relationship to the constellations high above; the structure could also be extended across the full width of the plaza engaging and connecting with the architecture of the building,

As well as engaging Aboriginal artists as a key component, other options for possible Aboriginal heritage interpretive elements were outlined in the ACHAR and, together with the concept designs provided by Monks, were discussed at the Aboriginal discussion group on 28 November 2018 (see below).

Consultation

A key component of successful interpretation is stakeholder consultation. The development of the concept designs for the artwork requires the input of community members and RAPs. It is noted that, in developing the initial concept, Monks has already

- discussed the concept designs for the artwork with Charles Madden, respected Gadigal elder, and is collaborating with him on the artwork.
- contacted Metro LALC and will be discussing the concept with them
- contacted an Aboriginal astronomer associated with the Observatory and will be involved in further consultation with them.⁶

In addition, RAPs provided comments both in writing and through attendance at the Aboriginal discussion group (see ACHAR). Two RAPs attended the discussion group, and gave the following feedback on the artwork concept designs:

- asked if the emu within the design was male or female, as male emus were the ones who cared for the eggs. Suggested the design could include a motif to represent eggs as well.
- the name of the artwork should be in Gadigal. Suggested 'Birrung' (stars) may be appropriate.
- suggested any words in Aboriginal language should be in Gadigal and include their translations. The word 'emu' should also be translated into Gadigal in any explanatory panels.
- suggested the possibility of incorporating a spoken element/audio into the design

⁶ Communication from Nicole Monks, 11/12/2018

- asked what consultation within the community had been/is planned to be undertaken.

Additionally, the RAPs at the discussion group raised importance of having further interpretation addressing the changing and continuing connection of Aboriginal people to Redfern, and the significance of Redfern over time. The concept of Redfern as a central place, a meeting place, was also raised, as was the possibility of using local Aboriginal words as naming elements within the new development.

Further, the RAPs who provided feedback on the draft ACHAR during November 2018 supported the process of Aboriginal artists being engaged to integrate design elements within the new development, as well as the importance of using Aboriginal language, considering native plantings, and focussing on the recent history of Redfern,

In summary, the recommendations relating to Aboriginal cultural values and interpretation from the ACHAR process were to:

- incorporate local Aboriginal language/words into naming conventions within the building (room names, floor names), in consultation with RAPs
- incorporate native plant species into any landscape plantings. It is noted that the landscape design plans for the new development include plantings of: *Alpinia caerulea*, *Austromyrtus dulcis*, *Acmena 'Allyn Magic'*, *Acacia longifolia*, and *Carpobrotus* (Yellow)
- provide interpretive information regarding the Aboriginal history of the site/area within common areas, developed in consultation with RAPs

The feedback from the ACHAR was provided to AJ+C and to the artist, and will be considered in the further development of the artwork design, and the development of the Heritage Interpretation Strategy for the project.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

In order to demonstrate a genuine response to the integration of Aboriginal culture heritage values within the design of the development, it is recommended that:

- the concept design developed by Aboriginal artist Nicole Monks, the *birrung* design chosen by AJ+C, be further developed for incorporation into the design of the new development
- an explanatory panel/artist statement be included to support the artwork in the new development
- where possible, landscaping within the new development include plant species that were present in the area pre-European contact.
- use of relevant Aboriginal words or phrases or names of key figures or events be considered for naming elements within the new development (for language references see J. Troy 1994, 'The Sydney Language', and consult with Metro LALC and RAPs.).
- an interpretive panel focusing on the recent Aboriginal history of the area be considered for the foyer of the new development, to be developed in consultation with RAPs.

APPENDIX A

Outline of concept design by Nicole Monks in collaboration with Uncle Charles Madden, provided by Nicole Monks

Birrung (Stars) TBC

Outdoor kinetic sculpture

The Gibbon St project will be developed in consultation and collaboration with Local Gadigal Elder and Artist – Charles Madden (Uncle Chicka). Charles has worked and lived in the area his whole life. He is currently involved with the Sydney lands council and has welcomed many high profile people to these lands.

Charles has spoken of Aboriginal astronomy being a special to Aboriginal peoples and having a direct connection with rock art, he is happy to see these stories within the public domain. Aboriginal astronomy is very important as it connects all Aboriginal people across the land, as they would have all experienced and connected with the stars of the night sky. It also connects us all into the past and the future.

An artwork of stars drawn by Charles Madden will be represented on the night sky panels, these will be finished in charcoal/black to represent the night sky.

The integration of First nations art & design throughout the public domain creates a unique and culturally aware statement to students, staff, the local and wider community and international visitors, developing an understanding of social-cultural awareness. Further conversations with MLALC and Aboriginal Astronomers will help shape the artwork.

The external artwork would incorporate a kinetic element having an elemental connection to the sky as it gains its energy and movement from country and the wind. The materials would be metal and have some reflective/matt surfaces possibly copper and will resemble to twinkling of the stars and change/age over time. The shadow on the ground floor plane is also very important and will connect us physically with the artwork, while always creating interest and movement across the site.

The tension rods and fittings are to be bespoke and worked up to evoke the nature of the feathers and stars. Integrated lighting will also be developed to further enhance the stars in the sky, the nature of this work is to be viewed from below. The framework gives a sense of security and cocooning and once the gabion wall is removed will still well define the space. It will also work as partial shade element and some information about the artwork will be developed with community and integrated into the space.

The flooring would be developed to further layer the concept by bronze inserts into the concrete finished flush and/or shaped paver's to accentuate the pattern of the artwork.

Background information provided by Nicole Monks

STARS SKY

Indigenous Australians have interpreted objects and shapes in the night sky for tens of thousands of years. In Australia, the evidence suggests early Aboriginal people observed the stars and composed stories handed down by their ancestors through songs and dance and images of the sky recorded on bark and rocks. The more accurately they knew the position and movement of the Sun, Moon and stars, the better they could predict when to hunt, harvest and come together.

The Emu in the sky has featured in Aboriginal stories for thousands of years is composed of the dark spaces in the Milky Way. From the East to West coast across Australia different language groups have their own interpretation and stories that have different meanings, the rising of the celestial emu at dusk can inform the observers about the bird's breeding behaviour (when to collect emu eggs) to that of culture heroes.

Below is the emu engraving at the Elvina engraving site, in Kuring-Gai Chase National Park, near Sydney. The constellation is positioned above the engraving as it appears in real life in Autumn.



Many Aboriginal groups have stories about the “Coalsack” – the famous dark cloud next to the Southern Cross. Some see it as the head of a lawman, or a possum in a tree, but many groups tell stories of a great emu whose head is the Coalsack, and whose neck, body, and legs are formed from dust lanes stretching across the Milky Way. It’s easy to make out the emu in a dark autumn sky, and once you’ve seen it, the Milky Way will never look the same again.

The "emu in the sky", consists of dark clouds in the Milky Way, stretching from Scorpius to the Southern Cross, features in many Aboriginal cultures and storytelling for thousands of years right across Australia.

Many different language groups have their own interpretation of the Emu's heavenly fate, along with a rich and diverse range of stories about mallee fowl, parrots, fish, stingrays, hunters, men, women, girls and boys.

For WA artist Margaret Whitehurst, the emu in the sky is a sign to go hunting for emu eggs: "As children, it was always a competition to see who could find the first nest and the most eggs. Then we went home where mum always made a cake out of the first egg and the others were made into omelletes. The emu egg is like gold to our people."



Gugurmin - the emu in the Wiradjuri night sky. Wiradjuri artist Scott 'Sauce' Towney.

Across the Pacific, the Indigenous Tupi people of Brazil see the same shape as a rhea, a large, flightless bird that is native to South America and related to the emu.

The rhea's behaviour is nearly identical to that of the emu and the Tupi and Aboriginal traditions are remarkably similar.

The 'STARS SKY' Artwork looks at the shape and form of the milky way, the local story and connection of this place across Australia and world, creating community, unity and strength with connected knowledge and storytelling.

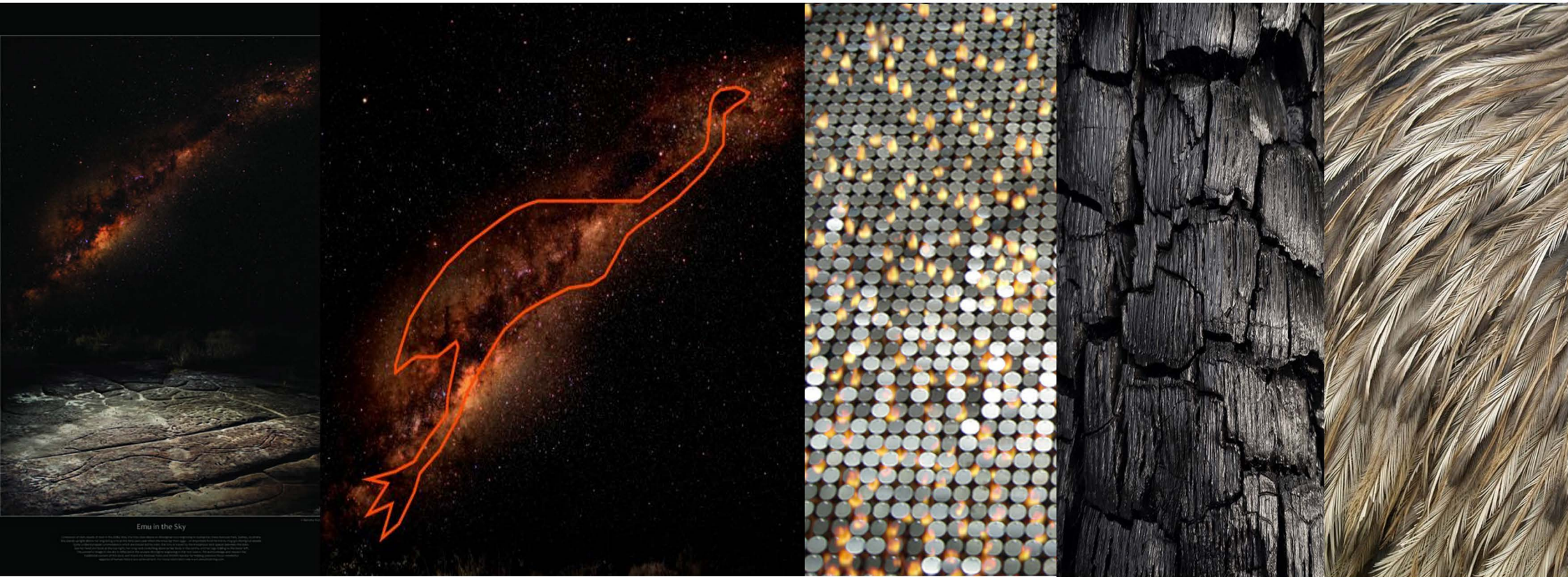
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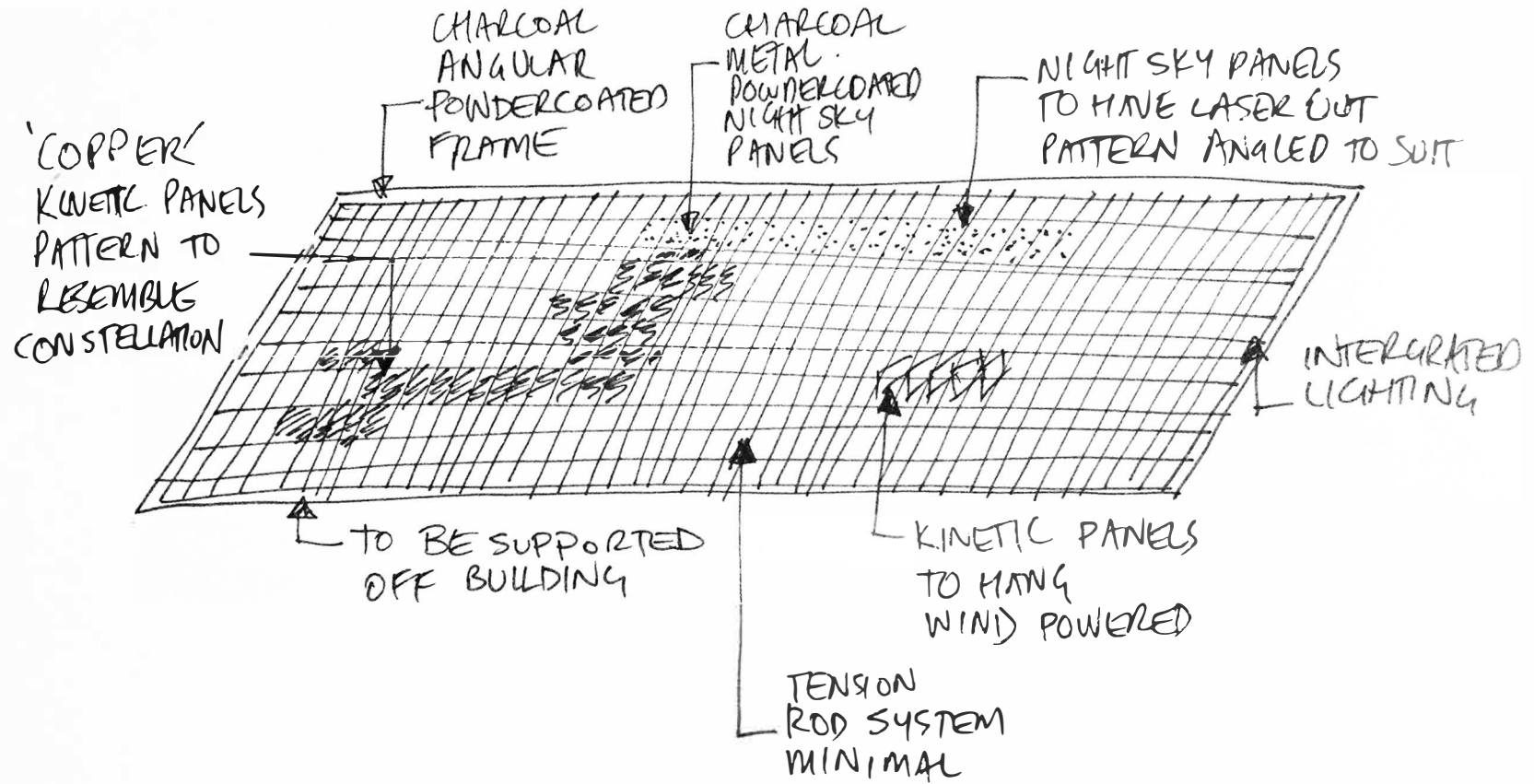
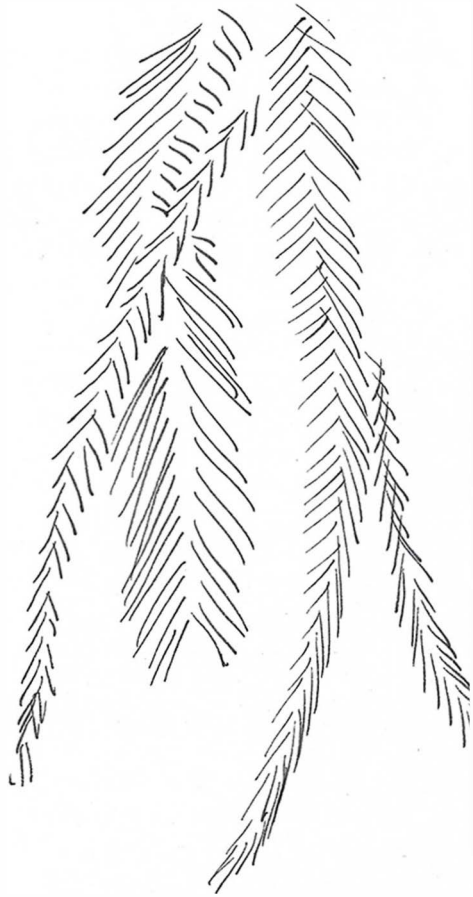
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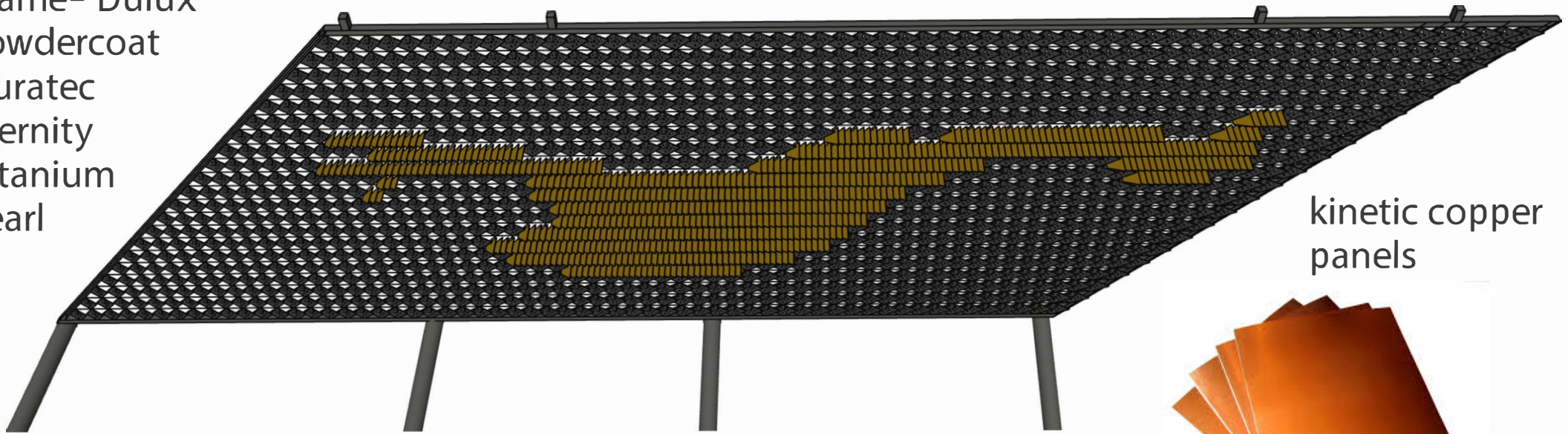
Aboriginal Astronomy - Birrung (Stars) TBC
Collaboration with Uncle Charles Madden



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monks

Aboriginal Astronomy - Birrung (Stars) TBC
Collaboration with Uncle Charles Madden

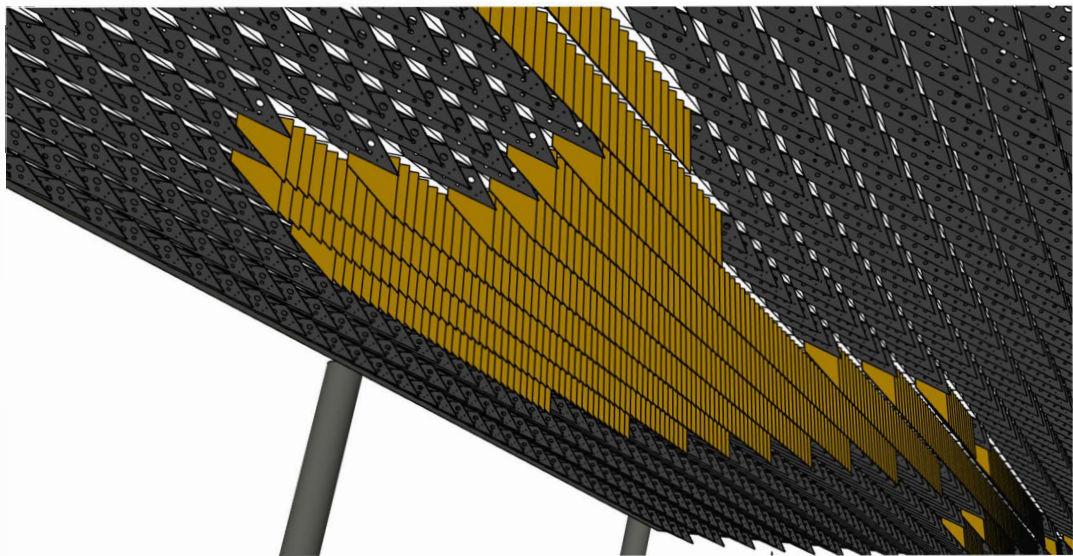
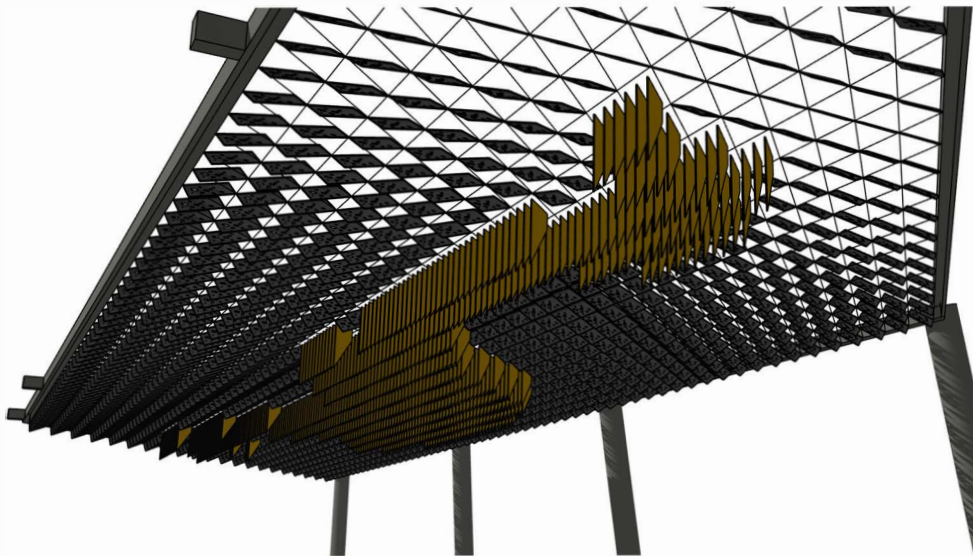
Frame- Dulux
Powdercoat
Duratec
Eternity
Titanium
Pearl



kinetic copper
panels



Night sky panels - Colorbond Monument

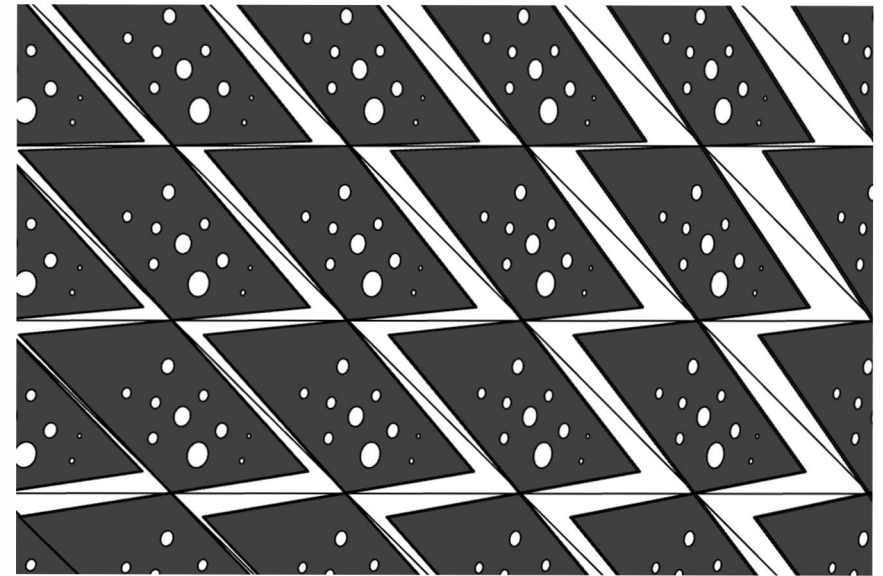
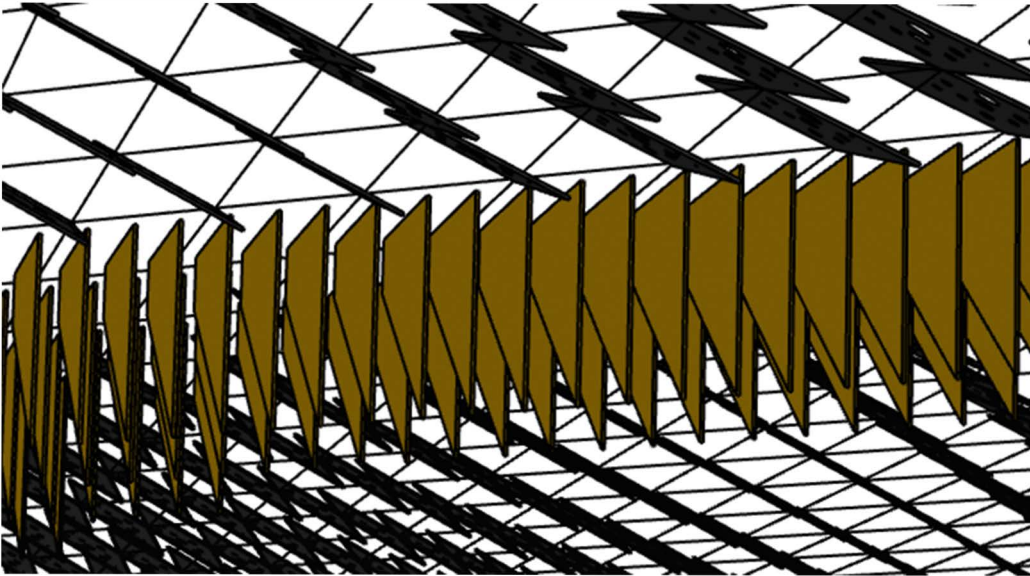
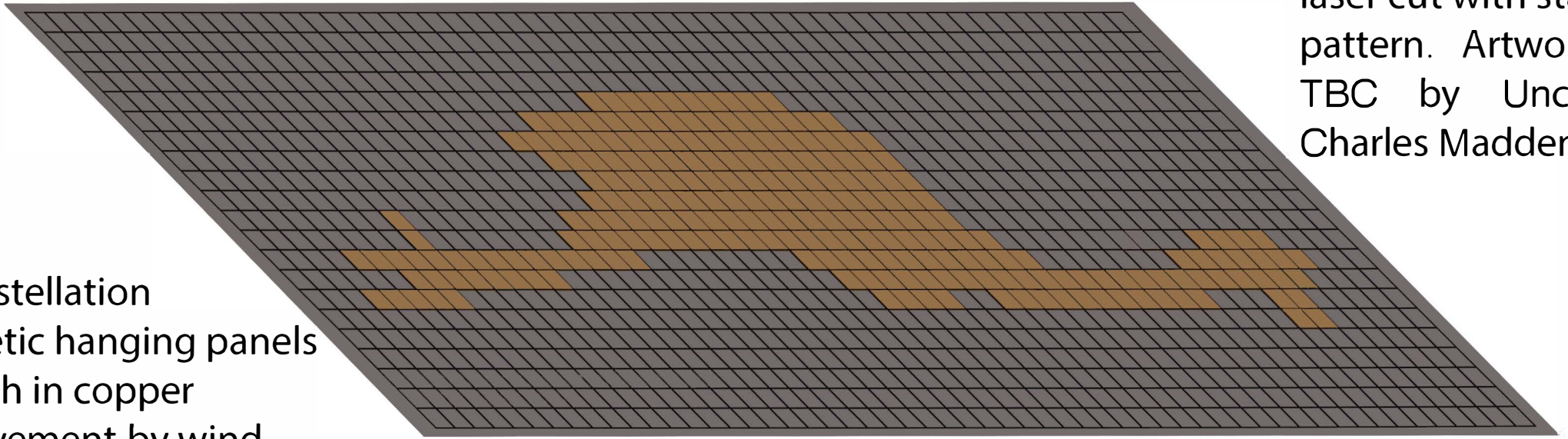


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Aboriginal Astronomy - Birrung (Stars) TBC
Collaboration with Uncle Charles Madden

night sky panels
laser cut with star
pattern. Artwork
TBC by Uncle
Charles Madden

constellation
kinetic hanging panels
finish in copper
movement by wind



Star pattern TBC Artwork by Uncle Charles Madden

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monks

Aboriginal Astronomy - Birrung (Stars) TBC
Collaboration with Uncle Charles Madden

GIBBONS STREET

EXISTING
STREET TREE

EXISTING
STREET TREE

MAIN
ENTRANCE

EXISTING
STREET TREE

RETAIL UNIT
94 m²

OFFICE
31.9 m²

MEETING
18.9 m²

RECEPTION

RL 25.050
COMMON
392.5 m²

GAMES

QUIET AREA

LOUNGE

FIRE
PUMPS

METER

MSB

CHAMBER
SUBSTATION 1

WASTE HOIST

CHAMBER
SUBSTATION 2

FIRE CONTROL

BIKE REPAIR/STORAGE
65.6 m²
RL 24.250

LOCATION OF GREASE
ARRESTORS UNDER

PUBLIC ARTWORK
CANOPY OVER
SHOWN DASHED

THROUGH
SITE LINK

MARGARET STREET

nicole
monks

Aboriginal Astronomy - Birrung (Stars) TBC
Collaboration with Uncle Charles Madden

Draft visualisation showing *birrung* in William Lane, Redfern (Source: Virtual Ideas, AJ+C)





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