

biennaleofsydney

Dennis Golding

Connecting Back, 2026

earthenware, stoneware, stains, oxide, ochre, steel, clear glaze

Courtesy of the artist

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Education Resource (K-6)



Former Aboriginal flag mural, Eveleigh Street Redfern, circa 2003.

Photograph: Patricia Baillie.

Courtesy City of Sydney Archives.

Overview



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Have you ever played with a bead maze toy in a doctor's waiting room? You know, the one with colourful wooden beads that you slide along twisty metal wires? Dennis Golding, a Kamilaroi and Gamilaraay artist, remembers playing with that exact toy when he was a little boy waiting for the doctor in Redfern, Sydney.

For Dennis, Redfern was a very special place. Even though his family's traditional Country was far away, Redfern was where Aboriginal families from all over Australia came together to help each other and share stories. But when Dennis was growing up in the 1990s, things were difficult. Houses were being knocked down, and families were told they had to move.

Dennis felt a bit like the beads on that toy — stuck on a wire, unable to change direction, just watching his neighbourhood change. Now that Dennis is an adult, he decided to use art to take control of that memory. He recreated the toy, but he made it really big.

Instead of bright plastic colours, he painted the beads red, black, and yellow — the colours of the Aboriginal Flag. He didn't just bend the pipes randomly either. He shaped the metal to look like his favourite happy memories: the roof of his family car, the waves at the beach, and the rays of the sun.

Dennis even used ideas from real bricks found in a broken-down building to help make the sculpture. He shows us that even if buildings disappear, memories stay. Dennis turned a sad feeling of being stuck into a strong, beautiful artwork that keeps his community's story safe forever.



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Cast in cast out, 2020
Photograph: courtesy of the artist.



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Discussion Questions

Dennis turned an important toy into a large artwork that shows how special his community is to him.

How is this **different** from the small toy version? Hint: this doesn't **look** like a doctor's office? can we **play** with this one? No!

What object would you **transform** into art? What would you like to **make** really big? Why?

What big idea do you **think** this artwork is about. Is it **waiting, moving, remembering, belonging**? All of them? Why?

Dennis uses inspiration from real bricks of an important mural that had a painting of the Aboriginal flag on it.

What do you **think** the bricks mean? How does **making** the art **inspired** by the real bricks help Dennis **remember** his home?

The metal tubes are shaped like patterns. What do they **look** like to you? What do they **remind** you of?

Colours aren't just colours. They often have a meaning that is important to us.

What might have Dennis chosen to **colour** the beads to match the Aboriginal flag?

Practical Activities

Activity 1

Using a paper and pen, think about all the paths you take around your suburb. This can be to school, to a friend's house or to your weekend sports game.

Get ready to close your eyes. You're going to draw your journey just by feel!

Without taking your pencil off the paper, close your eyes and trace the path you walk along.

Let your hand remember your journey even with your eyes closed.

Open your eyes and look at your path. Did anything appear in your head while you walked along it? Any place that stood out? It could be a tree, a house, a park bench, a barking dog, or a funny neighbour.

Draw the start and end of your path, as well as five places you find along the way.

Have a think about what made these places stand out in your head.

Maybe they bring up a certain memory or feeling? Or maybe something about them always grabs your attention. You can even feel connected just because you see it all the time!

How would you feel if one day they got taken off your path? Would you feel sad or not? Why?

Turn to a friend and share your journey, encounters, and feelings. Do any of you have shared paths or places?

Activity 2



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Think of one place that is special to you. Some examples include your home, school, the park you play in, or the toy shop.

With a new piece of paper, you are going to fold your paper into an accordion using the zig-zag method (4-5 folds).

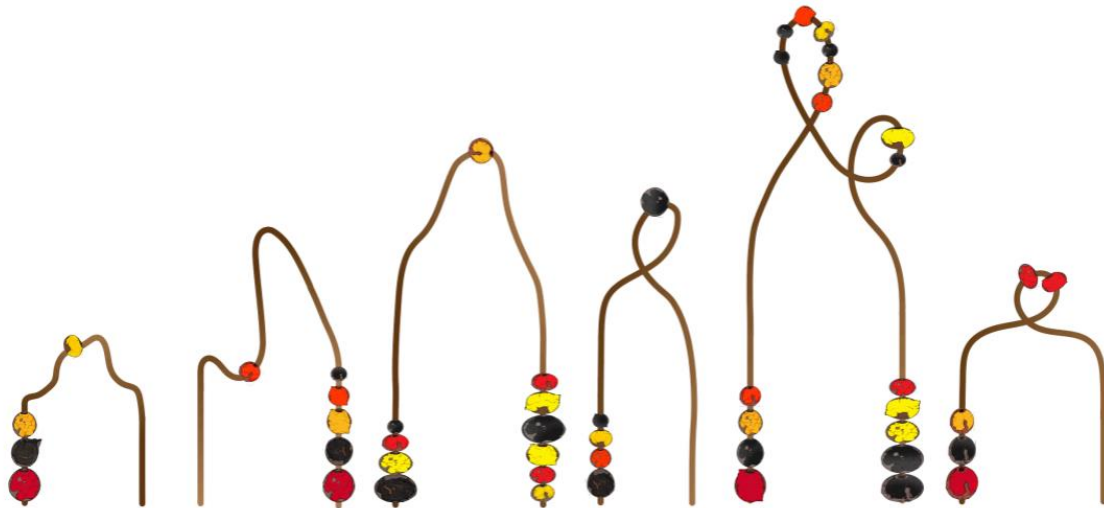
Unfold your paper so you can see separate sections.

In each section, take your time to draw a memory, object, or person from that place. After you finish drawing, have a think about what their special connection is to that place.

Find a friend and share your place and drawings with each other. Explain why you chose this place, people, and objects.

Refold your paper and write the name of your place on the front.

You now have a portable memory you can carry and share wherever you go.



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Progress design

Photograph: courtesy of the artist.

