

Wendy Hubert

Yindjibarndi Nyinyart at Wendy's Garden, 2025-2026

mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Juluwarlu Art Group

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Education Resource (7-12)



Palm on the country, 2025,

Photograph: courtesy of the artist and Julwarlu.

Overview

Wendy Hubert is a respected Yindjibarndi Elder, Cultural Custodian, and artist based in



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Roebourne, Western Australia. For over 40 years, she has dedicated herself to her community and Country. Her large-scale garden installation celebrates ancestral botanical knowledge through living native plants used for food, medicine, and ceremony.

Wendy's deep personal connection to Yindjibarndi and Guruma lands drives the work. In her words, "I know my Ngurra. I know it's Laws. I am a Yindjibarndi Custodian, old now, but strong in my thinking and my life". The garden becomes an act of remembering, preserving knowledge of plants that no longer grow in the region due to environmental disruption.

Living plants function as temporal materials that grow and change. The work transmits intergenerational knowledge while addressing ecological loss caused by colonisation and mining. It challenges extractive relationships to land by centering Indigenous stewardship, and positions First Nations knowledge systems as essential to environmental futures.

Wendy reframes absence as presence, bringing disappeared plants back through artistic intervention. Her work operates simultaneously as art, activism, education, and ecological repair, shifting audiences from passive viewers to active participants in knowledge transmission and caring for Country.



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Photograph: Claire Martin.
Courtesy of the artist and Juluwarlu.

Discussion Questions

Traditional art refers to artistic practices that have been handed down through generations within a particular culture or society. While traditional art often seeks permanence, Wendy Hubert celebrates her ancestral botanical knowledge in her artwork by using living plants and biological materials that grow, wither, and require care.

- How does the **meaning** of the artwork **change** when the **material** (the plants) is **temporal**? Does the art exist in the plants themselves, or in the **act** of keeping them alive?
- How does Wendy's use of **seasonal, growing** materials **challenge** this linear view of time? Can an artwork ever be finished if it is still growing?
- If an artwork requires **water, sunlight, and pruning** to remain **complete**, who is the **real artist**? Is it the person who **designed** it, or the people who **maintain** it daily?

Wendy's work challenges extractive relationships, that is, the idea that land is just a resource to be mined or used. By positioning First Nations knowledge as a technology for the future, Wendy shifts the role of the artist from a maker of objects to a healer of ecosystems.

- Can a garden be a form of **protest**? How does the act of **planting** a specific food or medicine plant serve as a **statement** against **extractive** companies that may have cleared that same species?
- Wendy calls herself a "**Cultural Custodian**" rather than just an "**Artist**." In the context of the **climate crisis**, should artists stop being creators of new things and start being custodians of what we already have?

Practical Activities

Activity 1

Choose one specific plant in the installation that looks like it has a distinct personality or character to you, perhaps one that is leaning, twisting, or flowering. Spend the first few minutes just looking at it without drawing, noticing how it creates a unique shape against the air.

Draw the plant in the centre of your page, but instead of trying to be scientifically



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perfect, focus on capturing its movement and energy. Look closely for any scars on the plant, such as a broken stem, a brown leaf, or a bite mark, and draw these details with heavier pencil pressure to emphasize them.

Write a short title underneath your drawing that describes the mood of this plant, treating it as a portrait of a living being rather than a still life object.

Activity 2

Select a view where you can see both the organic curves of the plants and the straight, hard lines of the gallery architecture, such as the floor tiles, the wall edges, or a plinth. Split your drawing style into two distinct techniques to show this contrast.

Use soft, loose, and shading-heavy marks to draw the plants, representing the natural and the living. Use a ruler or very straight, hard lines to draw the gallery background, representing the man-made and the institutional.

Your final drawing should clearly show the tension (or harmony?) between these living ancestors and the built environment.



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Yindjibarndi Straight Line People, 2024
Photograph: courtesy of the artist and Julwarlu.

