

Nici Cumpston

Barkandji people, New South Wales

This series of photographs was created on a group day trip through Old Mutawintji Gorge in late July 2022. Mutawintji is a place of great cultural significance to all Barkandji/Barkindji peoples and many neighbouring groups. For millennia we have gathered here, at this permanent place of water, for cultural activities such as marriages, initiations, ceremony, and trade.

We followed the creek bed, negotiating sandy patches and clambering up and down rocky outcrops. Making our way into the gorge I was empowered by a sense of collective pride. We were in awe of the beauty and power of our Country and could sense the presence of our Ancestors through the ancient rock art all around us. Their energy guided and protected us.

I walked slowly along the creek bed and let the others forge ahead. This time alone with my camera enabled me to watch the light and capture the beauty of this ancient land. I could hear everyone high in the under crofts. Their chatter and laughter was a joyous sound ringing through the gorge. For me, this body of work is alive with this memory, it makes me happy.

These black and white photographs are printed on watercolour paper and hand coloured. I shape the colour that fills my prints through revisiting memories of this time and place. It is a meditative process and offers an opportunity to reflect on time spent learning from each other and our precious Country. When I look at this work, I think of us all mirrimpilyi, happy and contented.

Easy read

These hand coloured photographs were taken in a very special cultural place for our people, called Mutawintji, where we have always gathered for celebrations and ceremony. When I look at this work, I remember our time together on Country and feel happy. I think of us all mirrimpilyi, happy and contented.