



Well-known Australian contemporary artist Nike Savvas stands underneath Papillon, her new suspended artwork at Barangaroo. Picture: Peter Rae

ARTS

Artist hopes Papillon will bring calm to busy Barangaroo

Elizabeth Fortescue, Arts Editor, The Daily Telegraph

October 23, 2017 4:51pm



Artist Nike Savvas wants her new artwork to give Barangaroo office workers a reason to flop down on a giant bean bag and de-stress.

Office workers will hardly be able to avoid the work made of coloured streamers, suspended centrally above Exchange Place next to David Jones where it will remain until December 8.

“Barangaroo is a busy place, people are stressed. They can just lie back and escape into the work,” Savvas says.

Called Papillon, the French for butterfly, the work is the latest in a series of contemporary artworks installed around Barangaroo to attract people to Sydney’s new precinct.

Papillon is made from 3750, five-metre long plastic ribbons that flutter and flap in accordance with prevailing winds and breezes.

The blue, black, white, yellow and pink ribbons, viewed from underneath, remind Savvas of a strange sea creature. But it can be whatever you want it to be.

“It could be a butterfly or a target or a flag,” Savvas says.

“It could be a painting as well, and in fact it is a painting.”

But the artist doesn’t like to suggest too many meanings for the work, preferring everyone to experience Papillon individually.

“They need to be engaged with the work on their own terms because it works on many different levels,” Savvas says.

“It’s a slow burn work. It has impact as well, but you need to spend time with it.”

Savvas has always been interested in breaking the rules around the business of painting, and in Papillon her plastic strips replace paint strokes.

Savvas used the same technique for Rally, her popular 2014 installation in the Art Gallery of NSW foyer. Rally was done in memory of her sister who had passed away the year before, and is now part of the AGNSW collection.

Papillon does not reference her sister, Savvas says, but it does have personal and political meanings that she would prefer not to reveal for fear of “shutting down” other interpretations.

“It works on many levels, in many different ways, and I want it to be like that,” she says.

The work was commissioned by the Barangaroo Delivery Authority, which has also provided the enormous bean bags for the public to use.

All that viewers need to bring to Papillon are curiosity and a little time.