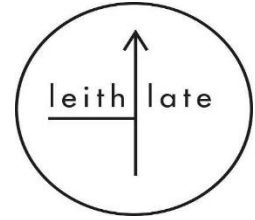


Speaker: Cameron Foster (Guide)

Mural: Wronger Rites

Audio 00:03:10

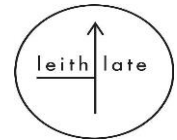


Ok, so here we are in Dalmeny Street with Kirsty Whiten's Wronger Rites mural, or what's left of it anyway. You might recognise Kirsty's work from Rough Cut Nation at the National Portrait Gallery in 2009 or from the entrance to the Bongo Club, down in the Cowgate.

This piece was installed in 2015 as part the broader Wronger Rites series that was a key part of LeithLate 15, a local arts festival. The series included an exhibition at Whitespace Gallery and various paste-ups of Whiten's trademark fantastical characters on Union Street and down Leith Walk itself. In fact, one of the few complaints LeithLate has ever had - and let me tell ya, they've been naughtier than this - but one of the few complaints was of an image of a figure in a birthing pose pasted onto a board outside a pub round the corner. The complaint suggested it was not suitable for children. Kinda enjoyed the irony of that one.

This mural, in its original form, was central to the series as a whole. It originally depicted three characters. The horse headed figure we can still see here on the left, second figure with an eagles head on the far right and a central robed figure with a staff with the head of a small simian. Around them was a vivid wreath of yellow rowan with red berries which were traditionally said to ward off evil- and all of this against this flat blue background.

The the two figures on each side represent Now People and the central figure 'The Quing' which was named formed by merging 'Queen' and 'King'. Wronger Rites itself, referenced ritual and pagan tradition while playing with gender and identity. As Kirsty says "Now People try to both accept and step into their most direct self by way of gut and of kindness." which sounds pretty sweet, right?



For me personally, one of the things I really liked about this mural was the way Kirsty was able to maintain the sense of gravitas which is appropriate for a kinda religious scene but imbue it with so much more energy. We typically think of religious paintings in the Western tradition as being quite still and austere, but this becomes a real celebration. I think that is also related in her decision to paint in a realistic, kinda academic style, now obviously, that comes with quite a bit of baggage in terms of Art History but Kirsty just takes what she wants and disregards the rest- pretty much like the Now People do. So, for me, it's a really successful bit of work.

Unfortunately, not long after its completion, the plot of land behind the mural was sold. The new owners had plans for the site that required more access and so, without warning 2/3 of the mural was lost literally overnight. Any tour about street art will naturally include discussions about graffiti and vandalism but I suppose its worth remembering that vandalism can work both ways. There is a Wronger Rites book out there by Kirsty with sketches and poems which is well worth grabbing if you ever see it but, for now, this solitary Now Person is all that remains.