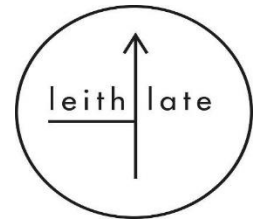


Speaker: Rabiya Choudhry (Artist)

Mural: The Leith Aquatic

Audio 00:02:49



My name is Rabiya Choudhry and I am one of the artists that worked on the Leith Aquatic mural.

It was made in a very wet and windy week in July 2013.

We wanted to create something that reflected Leith's history as well as referencing the changing face of Leith whilst making something that had a contemporary look.

We had community consultations with groups before we painted the mural.

From this we were inspired by various memories which had an influence on making the overall piece.

The mural became something that reflects both new and old but in a way that is still unknown.

We worked collaboratively on it by sharing research, our influences and ideas which were developed over a period of several weeks with a succession of various drawings and designs. I think this is what has made it a really diverse and interesting artwork.

At the time I was particularly interested in sea folklore and wanted to bring that element to create a new mythology for Leith's future.

I had seen a poster of the actor Bill Murray's head filled with sea life from the film Life of Aquatic and thought it would be great to create a subtle head shape rising from above the water which was painted in by Fraser Gray.



Leith was changing so fast at that time we made it. This mural is almost a question mark to what it might become. This head rising from the sea looking forward to the great unknown.

I worked mostly on the bottom areas of this mural. I painted in the tentacles, the fish eyes and the sad crab because My name is Rab and I was a sad crab at the time! It is a self-portrait of a cancerian in the rain.

It's been nice to see people take photos of themselves with the crab. I think it's also quite apt as a portrait of the face of change.

I remember some of the suspicion and comments both positive and negative when we started it. I think people could see the benefit but worried that it would get vandalised as it was a previous tagging spot. I particularly remember one person who was really angry at the time as he felt he hadn't been consulted personally.

I later met him one night in Leith a few years ago and he apologised and shook my hand and said he loved it and that he feels like it's his now and is protective of it.

Working on scales like this are difficult, specifically when it's so public and the weather is sometimes not great. It's like the studio canvas becomes magnified and you have a crowd watching it happen. I learned a lot from working with the other artists and from chatting to people passing by.

I am proud to have contributed towards making this work in the place I love and call home. It wasn't until I moved to Leith over a decade ago that I felt I had found that. I really love Leith and I'm proud to be part of the community.