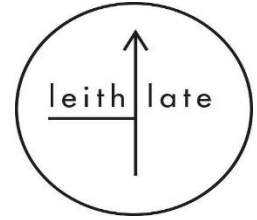


Speaker: Cameron Foster (Guide)

Mural: Untitled “The Gulls”

Audio 00:03:16



Hi folks, we're in the shadow of the grade A-listed Linksview House at the end of the Kirkgate to have a wee look at this hidden gem right here. I actually lived in one of the buildings facing Linksview house for a couple of years and never even knew this mural was here until I was stumbling home from the shore one night and took shortcut through the flat and Boom! fantastic mural - and an important one too as it turns out. This mural, officially untitled but commonly known as the Gulls, was the first created by Artists Collective as part of the Leith Project Initiative in 1983. Artists Collective who were comprised of Tim Chalk, Paul Grime and David Wilkinson would go on to paint a total of four murals across Leith. Two are now lost, both by David Wilkinson unfortunately, his beautiful Swanfield Mural on Bonnington Road was taken down due to safety concerns in 2017 and his train mural down on Halmyre Street has now been replaced. The two that survived however, this one and the fantastic Leith History mural next to Leith theatre provide us with, amongst other things, an interesting insight into the way their artistic process changed.

Artist Collective were not long out of Art School when they approached the Leith Project Initiative with a commendably ballsy proposal for a series of murals in the area. The Linksview site was to be the first and, with the desire to put public consultation at the heart of the process, the collective set up camp in a porta-cabin in the square here in order to spend time talking to the residents and figuring out what they wanted on the wall. Now, you've got to remember - as I say - these guys are pretty much straight out of art school. It's the 1980s, Thatcher's in power, despite industrial action the Henry Robb shipyards - the last remnants of 600 years of ship building heritage in Leith - they're closing down, we're on the cusp of the miners strike, tensions are running high and these



guy, these guys are gassed up on the revolutionary power of art, they're thinking Ferdinand Léger, they're thinking Diego Rivera, you know changing the world, right?.

But... all the folk in these flats wanted was something nice to look at. And you know what? fair enough. For me, it's an absolute testament to the integrity of Artist Collective that that's exactly what they did. The mural here features seagulls swooping over the water, post of an abandoned jetty and nautical flags picked for their aesthetic value rather than any other meaning. As a wee bonus, for fans of assemblage and y'know juxtaposition, the goal frame, and the 'no ball games' sign just above were, I believe, a latter addition.

What we can't see unfortunately are the mosaics that adorned the walls of the DHSS office. In true Time Team fashion you can still make out the site of the office thanks to the series of small walls on the mural's left. but when it was demolished, the mosaics, which were designed by the kids that lived in Linksvie house were destroyed too.

This mural here represents a really principled approach from Artist Collective. They understood that there would be people who looked at it every day, listened to what they wanted and put their egos aside. That's not to say that they didn't learn from the experience as the process for the Leith History Mural can testify.