

CURATORIAL STATEMENT – YARRA CITY BILLBOARD PROJECT

Curator – Danella Bennett

Danella Bennett is a curator who works with contemporary artists and local communities developing public and participatory art. A key feature of her practice is the ability to foster connected communities while undertaking the development of innovative art programs that celebrate those connections by exploring and reinterpreting narratives of place.

Most recently she has curated public art programs that were initiated to activate and enliven public spaces with challenging works that tap into local culture and history, relate to site, comment on topical issues and reflect local community. Her accomplishments include the development and delivery of innovative and engaging projects including permanent commissions and temporary programs involving installations, gallery exhibitions, sculptures, video, participatory installations, site responsive interventions and street art. Two projects, *Between Two Worlds* and *Forgotten Songs* completed in 2012 received an Australian Award for Urban Design, Laneways, for effective integration of major public artworks into public space. In 2014 The Great Crate, commissioned for Art & About 2012 was nominated for the International Public Art Award.

Project 1 – Chloe Vallance

Transfixed by shades of the everyday Chloe Vallance captures fleeting moments using coloured pencil and plywood. Responding to the cityscape and celebrating the urban dweller, Chloe transforms the streets of Collingwood into her studio where she meticulously documents the movements of local residents and visitors.

Working in gouache, watercolour, ink and colour pencils on paper, plywood and recycled objects, Vallance's work has a sense of lightness, play and authenticity. Her work not only captures moments but also warmth and connection between artist and subject. The drawings developed during repeated visits to Collingwood record daily experiences of the population. The collection of site-specific drawings will be adapted to create a unique record of the Collingwood precinct. Genuine connections chronicled in Vallance's portraits are revealed by the tension of positive and negative space, where the audience is both the participant and the spectator.

Relationships between people and spaces are exposed and intimate engagements of everyday life are revealed. A range of works will be submitted to Council for review and selection. The preferred works will be customized to produce artwork suitable for the large-scale billboards located on Smith Street in mid January 2015. A possible extension of the current program could include the exhibition of the completed artworks created during Vallance's unofficial street side artist residency in Collingwood.

Vallance has a Masters of Fine Arts by Research from RMIT University, is a recipient of multiple grants and has exhibited widely in Melbourne and internationally. Chloe has contributed to a range of exhibitions in the public domain including Dokumak in Istanbul and live drawing as part of This is Not Art Festival at Newcastle in 2012.

Project 2 – Emma Davidson

Sydney based artist Emma Davidson complicates the conventional notions of authorship by creating posters, collage and zines reflecting idiosyncratic imperfections that echo the cut and paste aesthetic. Using archaic reference material from the 1960s and 1970s Davidson appropriates cultural materials, side stepping mainstream communication methods to create subversive artworks that are ephemeral, empowering and powerful. Emma utilizes her artistic innovation and creativity to playfully turn traditional notions of print based medium into indelible marks responding to the urban precinct of Collingwood. Heavily influenced by pop culture, in particular educational television and public libraries, Davidson will create a range of collages that initiates a dialogue with passers using text and images that inspires the possibilities of being transported from everyday life with the aid of some secret knowledge or key.

Using the photocopier, gocco prints and appropriated images Emma will create a new body of work to be submitted to Council for review in July 2015. The chosen artworks will be customised to create the large-scale billboards on Smith Street for installation in September 2015. Davidson's original works could also be exhibited to accompany the installation of the large-scale billboard works.

Graduating from Sydney College of the Arts in 2010 with a Masters of Fine Arts, Emma Davidson is the recipient of a range of awards and prizes and has exhibited nationally. Davidson contributes work as Dexter Fletcher, has been commissioned for a range of works in the public domain by the City of Sydney, publishes a range of zines as Emma D and has previously created video installations using found film footage.

Both artists propose to create new works for the Yarra City Billboard program. Each artist will produce poetic site responsive works that celebrate the Collingwood precinct. Notions of the everyday are key features of each artist's practice, which are revealed by considered mark making generated by observation, collection and appropriation. The artworks will reflect the diverse communities experiencing the urban fabric of Collingwood. By selecting these artists for the upcoming program Council will add another dimension to the current program of photographic billboards undertaken in previous installations.