

Curatorial Statement

In the past few years of working three main themes have become prevalent that summarize my main curatorial interests, themes which on inspection dominated the two years of my Masters in Art Curatorship as well by being the main topics of essays and presentations (relevant experience can be seen in attached CV and link to blog).

I am interested in the blurred boundaries between different art forms and the convergence of different art viewing spaces, the inescapable fusion of art and technology and the subsequent *need* for contemporary viewers to experience immersion to engage with art, and work made by artists outside the boundaries of official culture.

The reasons for my expression of interest for the Public Art Billboard program stem from the first and third of these main themes.

Firstly, my interest in the blurred boundaries between different art forms and the convergence of different art viewing spaces is something I have written on extensively in relation to new media art installations and the blurred boundaries between art and film, the gallery and cinema. In a similar way, I have an interest in bringing art out of the gallery, onto the street, taking it off the unreachable pedestal it is often put upon and curating something that is for everyone, in this case, those who live, work, and socialize on Smith St in Collingwood. Blurring the boundaries between art, advertising and graffiti is something can be done with the prime position of this billboard.

Secondly, my interest in art made my artists outside the boundaries of official culture. This interest stems from my current employment at Arts Project Australia, a gallery that promotes and supports the work of artists with intellectual disabilities, advocating for their inclusion within contemporary arts practice. Culturally and politically is a very relevant time to be having discussions such as who or what dictates which artists remain outside the boundaries of 'official culture' and which are invited into the mainstream. Following the recent International Outsider Art Conference, which Arts Project Australia co-hosted with The University of Melbourne in October 2014, and following the 2013 Venice Biennale's huge dedication of space to untrained or 'outsider' artists, now is a very relevant time to present the work of these artists in public spaces, such as the Smith St Billboards.

Proposed Program

My proposed program has a few alternative options. The program for the first six months (Jan 2015-Aug 2015) would most definitely include an artist from Arts Project Australia that I work with on a weekly basis.

The first artist I would like to show is Miles Howard-Wilks¹, whose work has been consistently concerned with such themes as Australian Rules football, sharks, trains and lightning. The inclusion of such eclectic subject matter within his works gives his imagery an otherworldly quality. He paints large horizontally shaped works that I believe would translate extremely well to the dimensions required for the skins of the billboard. His works reference the contemporary mural, and invite the viewer into his dream-like worlds, something I believe the local Smith Streeter would be appreciative of.

Another Arts Project Australia artist I think whose work would translate well to being shown in a public art environment is Boris Cipusev², who mainly works in felt-tip pen and watercolour pencil, utilizing both text and shapes to create vibrant, colourful drawings. Many of his works are journalistic in nature, reflecting personal observations as well as references to pop culture and advertising slogans, and these are the ones I would select for the billboards. Two of his works side by side with different slogans specifically chosen for the area would be a very effective use for the billboards. Cipusev's work was shown at the NGV's 2013 Melbourne Now exhibition.

¹ Appendix 1

² Appendix 2

I would happily curate an Arts Project artist for each six months of the Billboard Program (for example two works by Miles Howard-Wilks for the first six months, and two by Boris Cipusev for the second six months).

If desired however I also have an idea for inviting two non-Arts Project artists to respond to a site-specific proposal for the space. The proposal references Keith Haring's Collingwood mural, and society's ever changing attitudes to what constitutes 'art' and especially public art. As with the work of Banksy, which was initially seen as graffiti or the defecation public property, and now has resulted in law-enforces constantly being forced to reconcile with the illegal activities undertaken in their creation, due to these works eventually being worth millions of dollars, and becoming culturally invaluable to the area they are in. Something that may have been seen as graffiti, such as Banksy, or that have been left to decay over time, such as Haring's mural, come to be something much more significant that unites and symbolizes an area and a time in history.

The idea of the transience of these works and the ever-changing attitudes towards accepting this with nonchalance or trying to preserve them, is something I would invite two artists to comment on in the creation of two new public art works for the Billboards. Two artists I have worked with before and who have worked together before, that I think would respond well to this proposal, are Dylan Hammond³ and Jessie Bullivant⁴.

Dylan Hammond's most recent work was an interactive multimedia installation that showed at Substation as part of SUB12, and resulted as a collaborative effort with Travis Englefield. *A Mandate From Nobody: Continuity Through The Ages* (2014) is a work built around the imagined operations of a fictive organisation called the Community of Continuity; an organisation that believes it is tasked with the maintenance of the continuity of reality. The ludicrously nonsensical nature of this work is similar to the feeling I get when I think of how easily attitudes to public art can change based on artistic, political and social trends at any given time. There seems to be no set guidelines to follow, or, as with the illogical guidelines of the absurd alternative universe that Hammond's most recent work references, the guidelines are written such that contradiction and inconsistency are inevitable.

Jessie Bullivant's most recent work was also shown as part of the same exhibition, where in collaboration with Laresa Kosloff, she produced *Artwork haiku work* (2014), a series of photographs of haiku poems written in sand. The poems are based on artworks that the artists have encountered over the years. For Bullivant and Kosloff, this format reflects the experiential and interpretive basis of art, which is neither factual nor objective. This method, which is neither factual nor objective, correlates to the public's attitudes to public art and shows therefore how varied and unexpected it can be. The artists mounted their photographs on dibond and exhibited them in poster format, located alongside didactic panels throughout the exhibition.

Alongside the exhibition, each artist pair created an additional artwork in two scales and environments: a giant version on the Transit Gallery billboards, on view to commuters passing by The Substation; and a miniature version inside the gallery to be viewed by visitors. This shows both of their experience in designing something to be viewed on a public billboard.

Monthly check-ins will be made to ensure the billboards are still in good condition and have not been vandalized. It will be difficult to ensure a graffiti-safe installation but information provided in the interpretive panels about the works, and urging people not to graffiti may be helpful. Keeping the works under surveillance so as to intercept any potential vandals is also desirable.

³ Appendix 3

⁴ Appendix 4