Billboard Project Proposal

The curatorial rationale for Collingwood is to present a sequence of black and white billboards which skew the conventional techniques of advertising to encourage contemplation rather than consumption. Each of the artists, Sadie Chandler, Robert Montgomery and Peter Atkins are outstanding mid-career artists with a wide range of experience in presenting work in the public domain. The artists work within a limited palette of black and white which serves to both unite the artists as part of a project and to differentiate the works from conventional billboards. They present works that are both thought-provoking and widely accessible to a broad audience.

Robert Montgomery is a London-based artist who works in a post-situationist tradition, intervening in urban spaces and questioning the voices of advertising and capitalism on our streets. Since 2005 he has been engaged in the *words in the city at night* project where he covers billboards with austere black posters with white letters. His work is part poetry, part art installation, part enquiry into our collective unconscious, always written with a sense of poetry, sometimes with an air of spirituality. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions at venues including KOP, Breda, NL; Athens Festival, GR; Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR; 54th Venice Biennale, Venice, IT; The De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, UK; The Grand Palais, Paris, FR; Guido Costa Projects, Turin, IT; The Embassy Gallery, Edinburgh Scotland; and The BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle-Gateshead, UK. His art has been featured in Art in America, Flash Art and Interview Magazine. The artist has never exhibited in Australia and has agreed to compose a new work specifically for the site in Collingwood. The inclusion of his work in this program as the launch of the artist’s work in Australia is a coup and is likely to attract much interest from the public, the media and the art community. Montgomery will compose a text which will then be sent via WeTransfer directly to The Colour Factory in Collingwood.

Sadie Chandler is a Yarra City-based artist whose work is held in the National Gallery of Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria. The artist has completed several large scale public murals including *Moreart*, Melbourne, (2012), *The Lincoln Hotel*, Melbourne, (2010) and *North*, Melbourne, (2007). Chandler’s inclusion in this proposal stems from the artist’s belief that it is people who define a place. The proposed billboards consist of individual portraits painted in the artist’s distinctive pop style with ink on paper – a technique that mimics the process of making billboards. The large paper images will be translated into a file which will be scanned and printed by The Colour Factory. Chandler’s project evolved as part of an ongoing investigation of the artist’s own family tree and has become a broader project of the history of cities. This work provides numerous narratives; the social commentary underlying the stories of the people depicted in the portraits; art historical references to the traditions of Pop Art, Street Art and portraiture; and the incorporation of the existing architecture as a frame for the artwork. At the heart of this project is a democratic approach, both to art and to people.

Peter Atkins is a leading Australian contemporary artist and an important representative of Australian art in the International arena. Over the past twenty five years he has exhibited in Australia, New Zealand, England, France, Spain, Italy, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Mexico.  Over the past 20 years his practice has primarily centred around the appropriation and reinterpretation of readymade abstract forms and patterns that are collected or documented within his immediate environment, either within a local or international context. Over the past decade he has also begun sourcing material through his interaction with the internet. For Collingwood, the artist proposes to create a series of billboards based on the now extinct logos which represent houses. In this way, the artist plays with the symbolism of a house as a sign of community and of commodity. For the project the artist proposes to create two billboards in positive and negative space to emphasise the sense of three dimensional play in logo design. Like Montgomery and Chandler, Atkins proposes to translate a file through The Colour Factory for production.

I have been working as a freelance curator within the Australian art industry since 1996. In my practice, there is an emphasis on a democratic approach to contemporary art, where the work is accessible to a broad audience. As such, many of my projects revolve around the experience of art outside the gallery. This has manifested in a diverse range of projects, including the installation of sculptures at the Rod Laver Arena; the set up of a gallery in a home in Melbourne; work as the in-house curator for the Art Series Hotel Group; and work on a number of community art projects in both Maroondah and Moreland. As a result, I am well-versed in the logistical demands for public art projects.

In this particular project, my goal is to draw people’s attention to the processes and techniques inherent to much advertising signage such as the use of logos, text and bold imagery. I have tried to establish a balance between the promotion of local and international artists. The Colour Factory in Collingwood has provided quotes so that we might work with a local firm that has experience with the site. I understand my obligation to Council to execute the project according to the appropriate workplace, health and safety requirements and I possess full insurance cover with NAVA for such projects. As part of my role as curator of the project, I will endeavour to create appropriate didactic material including a short essay about each installation written in clear, accessible language. I have extensive experience promoting such projects and will contact relevant arts media in a bid to draw wider attention to the initiative. In my capacity as tour guide for Art Aficionado Tours, I also host walks in the Collingwood/Fitzroy area for groups as diverse as the Culture Mamas and CAE. I look forward to including the billboards in my itinerary on these walks and discussing the benefits of art in the public domain. I would also be more than happy to conduct curator talks for any other relevant groups or centres in the area. Included here are three artists for your consideration in the event that there is the possibility to extend the timeline of the project to August 2016 or to include three artists within the twelve month period. In addition, I am applying to the Readings Foundation (who fund text-based projects) in order to generate funds for Robert Montgomery to travel to Australia for this event, thus creating the opportunity for extensive media and artist talks. This additional grant has been auspiced by Creative Partnerships Australia through the Australia Cultural Fund and will be announced on November 29 2015.

Jane O’Neill

Relevant links:

[www.sadiechandler.com](http://www.sadiechandler.com)

[www.peteratkins.com](http://www.peteratkins.com)

[www.robertmontgomery.com](http://www.robertmontgomery.com)