





‘Are You Looking At Me?’

Curated by Barbara Flynn
Laneway Art 2010

More often than not, art interventions in public spaces, especially when they are temporary, are random, undisciplined, uninteresting and often overtly personal to the point of being irrelevant and bewildering.

That was then and this is now: the laneways project entitled *Are You Looking at Me?* brings together the talent of nine of Australia's most original artists under the curatorial direction of Barbara Flynn with the ambition of taking the public space of Sydney to an entirely new level of meaning, attractiveness, and excitement.

One of the most memorable lines ever spoken in the history of cinema, *Are You Looking at Me?* becomes the pretext to redirect the public's attention to the fascinating history and silent beauty of Sydney's oft neglected laneways. Each project will, quite literally, get you to look at it, and to look at the laneway in which it is situated in an entirely new way.

This is the whole point: to work across several art interventions to transform laneways we had only known as dirty and disused deadends into the commanding handiwork of nine of Australia's most imaginative and adept image makers.

For the workers and residents of Sydney, the experience will be one of tremendous thrill, as if they are seeing the laneways for the very first

time.

Artists were chosen who work in a variety of ways in order to present the full range of what art can do in cities. Two of them – Nike Savvas and Jan van der Ploeg – are fine colourists who will bring an entirely new chromatic life to spaces formerly downcast and grey. One artist, Rocket Mattler, will juxtapose city and suburbia by introducing billboard-sized photographic images of the latter that will read as incongruously out of place in Tank Stream Laneway. Five of the artists – Jon Campbell, Newell Harry, Simryn Gill, Mikala Dwyer and Simon Yates – will commune with the history, lore and local language and archaeology of the laneways, but the project as a whole will read as fresh and current and avoid all historicising. Artworks need first and foremost to be convincing in purely visual terms in order to hold up when they are implanted in a city. Didactic or historicizing works tend to bore, and the emphasis will remain squarely on the artists who will be encouraged to come up with their best possible works to express their unique visions. That was then and this is now.

The projects will be temporary but our vision and hopes for and ideas about the sort of permanent works that might eventually replace them will never be far from our minds.

CITY ART

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CIRCULAR QUAY

BRIDGE STREET

GEORGE STREET

HUNTER STREET

MARTIN PLACE

PITT STREET

KING STREET

'Are You Looking At Me?' Walking Map

- 1 **Milk**
and the town that was mad
Mikala Dwyer
Underwood Street
- 2 **Woodwork**
Simon Yates
Underwood Street
- 3 **Rush**
Nike Savvas
Bridge Lane
- 4 **For Rent**
Rocket Mattler
Tank stream way
- 5 **Banker Baker**
Spangelmachine Maker
Justene Williams
Curtin Place
- 6 **Warriors**
Jan van der PLoeg
De Mestre Place
- 7 **HAR BOUR VIEW**
Jon Campbell
Wynyard Lane
- 8 **Circle/s in the Round'**
for (Miles and Miles +1)
Newell Harry
Temperance Lane
- * **Food on the Table**
Concept by Simryn Gill
Abercrombie Lane

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Milk and the town that went mad

Mikala Dwyer
Underwood street

Woodwork

Simon Yates
Underwood Street

Underwood Street seemed a street that had a feel of deathspace or nonspace. A somewhere in need of poetry and a place to smoke and day dream, even if just for a time. So a strange and simple word 'milk' inserts itself between 'under' and 'wood' to be come 'Under Milk Wood'.

'to begin at the beginning: it is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courters'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboatbobbing sea.'

'we are not wholly bad or good, who live our lives under milk wood'

Dylan Thomas

Inserting milk into the gap between 'under' and 'wood' prises open another place. An extra space is generated by listening to a story, a nondescript lane in Sydney becomes described and momentarily interwoven with Llareggub, or maybe Sydney is now remapped as a suburb of Llareggub.

Underwood is the name of a famous brand of typewriter manufactured in the early 20th century and used by writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner. Underwood Lane is behind/ adjacent to a telephone exchange. This led me to think of the way an old fashioned typewriter and old fashioned dial telephone have a similar shape. Paste Ups are a form of street art, where images on paper are cut out and pasted onto a wall. I have made large photocopies of old fashioned telephones and typewriters. I have included messages hidden in the keyboards of the typewriters and number dials of the phones. The artwork is 'hidden' in this out-of-the-way lane in the same way as the remnants of yesterday's technologies are hidden inside the technology we use nowadays. For example, the organisation of the alphabet on the QWERTY keyboard.

With thanks to
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Kelly Doley

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Rush

Nike Savvas
Bridge Lane

Thousands of long, hanging, strands create a ceiling lining Bridge Lane. The wind animates and sways the individual strands to create a visually rich, colour-coded sky of incidental aerial abstract patterns whose form shifts and changes according to the breeze. As a luscious, pseudo-psychedelic kinetic painting, it heaves and flows on the passage of the air. Like Alice, those passing will be temporarily transported, immersed in an environment of escape and wonderment.

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For Rent

Rocket Mattler
Tank Stream Way

A basic human need is a secure place to live; a luxury to many inhabitants of the world.

My image represents a house from a time when life was seemingly less complex. A house where memories remain of time passed. A childhood lived within the confines and security of a solid, simple home. The memory of a neighbourhood: and all those that pass by the front gate and beyond.

The installation of my signage "Room for rent, apply opposite", questions the manner in which we inhabit our home environment. A family home can be divided into a share-house for those of us willing to encounter, and live with the company of others. Many houses throughout the inner city and surrounding suburbs have at some stage been share accommodation, or boarding houses. Home is where we make it.

With thanks to
Ultimate Sign Installations
Brendan Lakin



Banker Baker Spanglemachine Maker

Justene Williams
Curtain Place

The concept of the work is to embody the adrenalin and vibrancy of the workers in the city of Sydney. Realising a video representing the mitochondria of this city, I draw on my own work experiences, as a rag trader in the mall, an office worker and a hostess in the table-dancing clubs on George Street.

Working with the shape of the building, I have constructed sets that tower upward, echoing the dizzying heights of the city's architecture. Throughout history, mechanical creatures and robots have reflected both the discord and the connection between man and machine. The characters I inhabit within the video, assume this persona, referencing the Bauhaus and Futurism. The figure dancing up and around revolving poles, stacked with inserted plastic chairs. Articulating through action, the idea of vying for your position within a big city. These are steel and plastic trees of sorts - a man made forest.

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Warriors

Jan van der Ploeg
De Mestre place

Jan van der Ploeg's art practice involves the application of large, repetitive geometric patterns onto existing architectural structures. Often, van der Ploeg paints on ambiguous and idiosyncratic public spaces; stairwells, carpark columns, corridors, oblique side walls of buildings that are often unconsidered. These are spaces of transition, ephemeral spaces, which, once overlaid with van der Ploeg's monumental graphic designs are elevated from being secondary architectural spaces to sites of permanence and visual intrigue.

For De Mestre Place, Jan van der Ploeg has proposed a billboard along the length of the northern wall. This billboard will be covered with a succession of black and white posters of repeating graphic patterns designed by van der Ploeg.

This graphic and monumental solution would enliven the dark lane, make the vista from the Hunter Arcade opposite visually stimulating and the view from George St more intriguing.

With thanks to
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery
Kelly Doley



HAR BOUR VIEW

Jon Campbell
Wynyard Lane

Circle/s in the Round' for (Miles and Miles + 1)

Newell Harry
Temperance Lane

What's in a view? Obviously a view of Sydney Harbour from your balcony is the most desirable, but HAR BOUR VIEW, installed as a large scale text banner in Wynyard Lane, encourages the viewer to think about other views as this is clearly no HAR BOUR VIEW.

There are many different kinds of views. Other people's views, the view from the bus window, the view across the bar or the view down a city laneway during your lunch break, where you discover a familiar text has been rearranged. Maybe HAR BOUR VIEW is just funny, har har, or boring/bouring.

As a kid I recall my mother amping up her weekend housework to Jim McLeod's 'Jazz Track', or doing 'the Bump' with Aunt Vin to EWF or the Pointer Sisters in the kitchen. Like jazz, our home was entwined order and chaos.

My work takes its title from the breakthrough Miles Davis album, "Circle in the Round" ('67). The first studio recording in which Davis shifts from the acoustic structure of a jazz quintet, to that of electronic composition and 'fusion'. The album heralds the beginning of Davis's 'electronic period'; continuing to his death, ending with the Hip Hop inspired, "Doo-Bop" album (1991). Incidentally, neon, as sculpture, finds its inception around the same time as Davis's shift – the heat of late sixties high modernism.

Back at Temperance Lane, the out-of-sync flashing circles and the textual word-play links, conceptually, to structures inherent to jazz composition, and spoken-word improvisation. Taoist philosophy fits in there, too, but without conjuring the hippy dippy it's probably best to call it quits.

With thanks to
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With thanks to
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Neolite

Food on the Table

Concept by Simryn Gill
Abercrombie Lane

My offering for the laneways project is a celebration in a sort of reverse potlatch. Let us understand potlatch to loosely mean (from Wikipedia) "a gathering...where a...leader hosts guests and holds a feast....the main purpose [of which] is the redistribution and reciprocity of wealth." If we replace 'wealth' with 'ways of being', we must try to understand how we might enact, for an afternoon, a redistribution and reciprocity of ways of being. A sharing from across various understandings of what can and cannot happen and be permitted to happen, in our civilised society, as we all try to step lightly through the tangled undergrowth of the rules and regulations which seemingly hold everything together.

What I have in mind is a genuine reciprocity through the form of a brief and open mutual giving and taking, across the boundaries and fences that keep us neatly corralled in the places and roles that we chose for ourselves, or that society gives us. I propose a meal to be made from produce and products from refuse sites - supermarket and restaurant dumpsters.

Many of us know that what goes in these bins is often governed by the rules of commerce and the regulations of shelf life. Often this has nothing to do with the edibility of this stuff. But once they are discarded by the language of value, they become 'dirty', and inedible. To bring them back onto the table in a public event would require a navigation of these restrictions, so that we all have to confront the deep structures of the 'system', but also our deeply seated notions of 'common-sense' and normal habits, like our well recorded resistance to recycled water. This process will take us into categories, which in the main we receive as givens: about what is good and bad, clean and dirty, possible and impossible. We will find ourselves at that door we often reach in our activities, alone and collectively, as individuals and as card-bearing members of various walks of life, interest groups, even nations, which has a sign on it that says: can't be done; impossible; wrong way, go back. In my line of work, this is often the most important door to open.

There are many people who take food from dumpsters, or at any rate, food that has been thrown out: neighbourhood bag-ladies, security

guards as they knock off work, students who live cheaply on very little and happy to have this stuff for free, others who just describe themselves as cheap, people who chose not to be joiners, who chose to shield themselves from all the wants that surround us and so live a little beyond the feeding frenzy of money; there are the 'refuseniks' who see their actions as a statement, the organised collectors who hold weekly cook-ins for any takers, the NGO's who distribute some of this waste-food, and people who live off the streets. They will all tell you that you cannot go to bins with a shopping list. You take what you can get, sometimes its mountains of lettuce and cucumbers, at other times a glut of bread. There are the cartons of this and that just past their use-by dates. You eat what is available, and give the surplus away to your friends. So this will be the spirit and the nature of any celebration built on the largess of waste: what you will find cannot be known in advance, you cannot make definite plans, just a general one: we will feast on what is to be had. A kind of awkward mirror image of the time when we ate what grew in the season - the bins offer to their gleaners feasts or famines formed in the weather patterns of consumers' whims.

So here we are, at this door through which we will have a carnival out of dustbins, all of us together. The people who fill the bins, the people who will collect out of them, the people who will cook this produce, the people who make the rules about bins being bins, the people who enforce these laws, the people who live in the lanes, the people who will perhaps make new businesses there: we all live along this alimentary canal we call society. There are those on the inside and those on the outside, but it's all connected in the end.

Do we have the courage to bend some rules and break bread together? Can we find ways to take hospitality and comfort from each other, from people who we might think of as 'the other side'?

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