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EXTRA

Matt Wade

Sydney not yet a true global city

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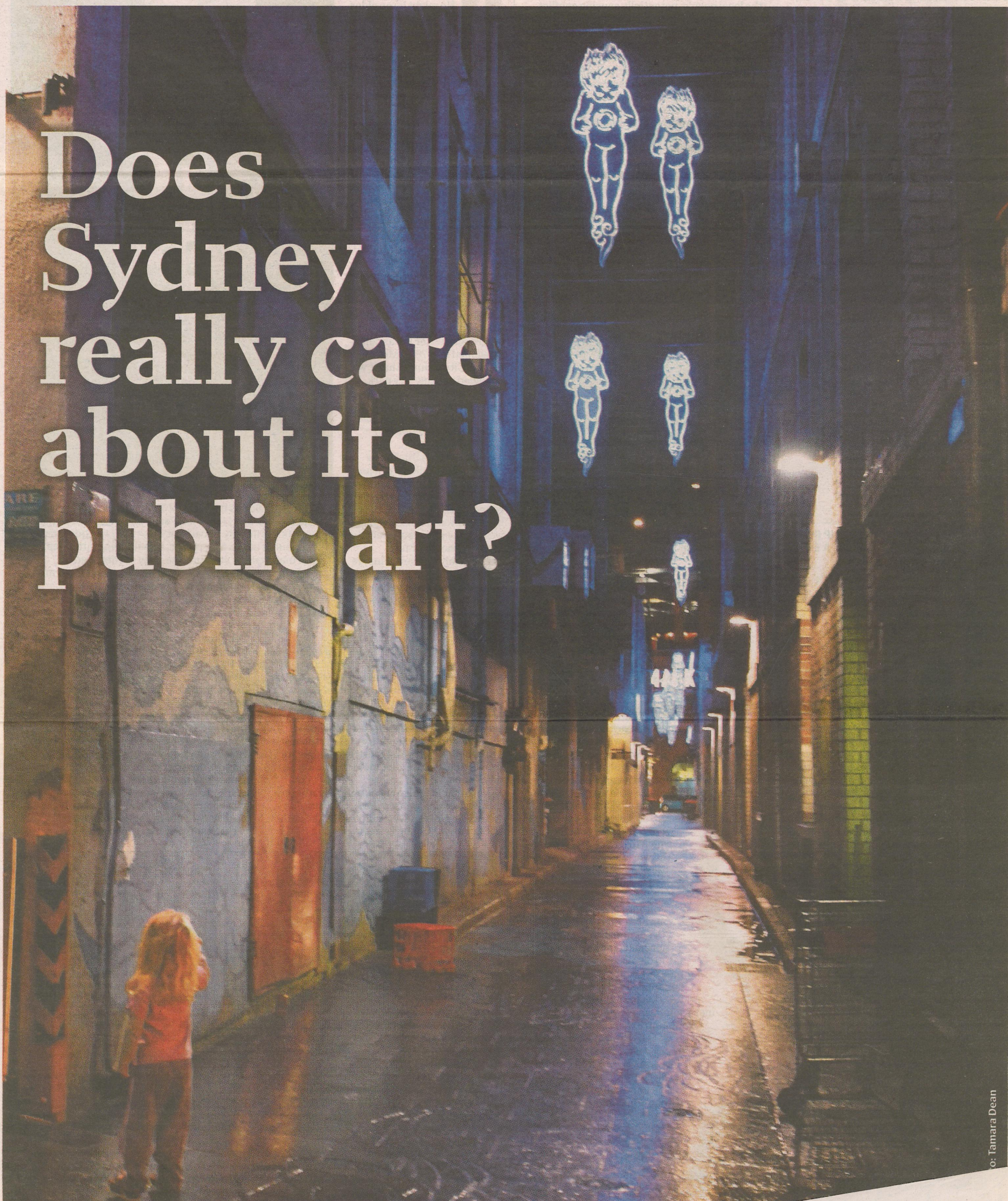
Annabel Crabb

Carr's diary of obsessive oversharing

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Does Sydney really care about its public art?



Aussies set to dig at the heart of Borneo

Coal projects in Indonesia risk damage to one of the world's great natural treasure troves, writes **Jenny Denton**.

Australian companies are pushing ahead with plans to construct open-cut coalmines in a conservation area of Borneo described by the World Wildlife Fund as "one of the planet's richest treasure troves".

Brisbane-based Cokal announced it has secured funding to pursue its Bumi Barito Mineral joint venture, from which it plans to mine 200 million tonnes of coking coal over a 10-year period.

The BBM project, covering 15,000 hectares of forest, is one of five coalmines Cokal hopes to develop in the remote north of Indonesia's Central Kalimantan province, where it has permits covering 62,000 hectares of land, part of which falls within the boundaries of the Heart of Borneo — a 220,000 square kilometre area said to be the largest remaining expanse of trans-boundary tropical forest in Southeast Asia.

A far bigger player in the area is BHP Billiton, which, with its Indonesian joint venture partner Adaro Energy, holds seven Coal Contract of Work concessions over 350,000 hectares in Central and East Kalimantan, mostly inside the Heart of Borneo area.

The Heart of Borneo (HoB) initiative is recognised by the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. In 2007, they signed an agreement to protect the region from the deforestation and degradation wrought on much of Borneo's landscape by oil palm plantations, logging and mining.

The zone, roughly the central third of the island of Borneo, includes a mosaic of different forest types, where WWF says three new species on average have been discovered every month since 2005. It is home to vulnerable and endangered species such as pygmy elephants, Sumatran rhinoceros, proboscis monkeys, clouded leopards, sun bears and orangutans.

British naturalist David Attenborough has written of the Heart of Borneo: "All of us who value life on this planet should support the efforts to conserve it. It is truly a world heritage and the world should respond to its needs."

But the area is not technically protected, and WWF, which is driving the conservation initiative, works with the governments and industries operating in the region on "sustainable land use" and practices.

BHP Billiton, which has contracted Leighton Holdings subsidiary Thiess Indonesia to build a major road, river port and facilities for 550 workers for the first of its planned Indomet mines, estimates there are 1.3 billion tonnes of coking and thermal coal in its project areas.

According to the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI, by its local acronym), in addition to releasing huge volumes of carbon dioxide through deforestation and min-

ing, the new Australian coalmines will disrupt and pollute two major river systems, destroy tens of thousands of hectares of natural forest in an area of high biodiversity and have disastrous impacts on the land and resources of the local people, potentially causing conflict.

A spokesperson for BHP Billiton said the company's sustainable approach could make a positive contribution to the region and that it would only proceed with developments consistent with the company's charter, internal standards and external commitments.

Indonesia last year mined 421 million tonnes of coal, most of it from Kalimantan.

In the East and South Kalimantan provinces, from where most of the coal has come so far, mining has polluted the rivers and groundwater, caused major flooding, reduced agricultural land and increased poverty, according to Indonesia's Mining Advocacy Network, JATAM.

The exploitation of Central Kalimantan's



The BHP Billiton loading dock on the Barito River in Kalimantan. Below: A Sumatran orangutan, four months old.

Three new species have been found per month on average since 2005. World Wildlife Fund

coal reserves, until now limited by their remote location, was a policy under the Indonesian government's 2011 master plan for economic development.

A public-private partnership has been signed to build a coal railway from the interior of the province to the port, which the national government estimates will boost coal production in Central Kalimantan six-fold.

In a report last year, Greenpeace labelled Indonesia's planned increase in coal exports from Kalimantan as one of 14 fossil fuel projects that were "the worst of the worst" around the globe, which together would push the world's climate beyond the point of no return.

The largest of BHP's Indomet concessions is within a few kilometres of an area where the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation has released more than 100 displaced orangutans, and for which the organisation has applied for an ecosystem restoration permit to reintroduce more animals.

Orangutan expert David Chivers, who ran a study project in the area over many years, says it is essential the forests in the area are not further disrupted.

"It's impossible that orangutans would not be impacted by [BHP Billiton's] mining, especially with all the released animals in the area," Dr Chivers told Fairfax Media.

"It's a key area for such releases, which must be maintained."

Conquering or

With the City of Sydney embarking on an expensive program of public art investment, **Andrew Taylor** looks at what makes a popular public artwork and asks if we even need them.

Poor Ken Unsworth. He might be an elder statesman of Australian art, but his reputation is forever blighted by his notorious *Stones Against the Sky* in Kings Cross.

Not even Sydney's Lord Mayor Clover Moore, who is pouring millions of dollars of ratepayer's money into the city's public art, has kind words to say about the installation colloquially known as Poo on Sticks.

"I think that possibly hasn't been successful," Moore says. "If people don't like it they give it a name."

At one time, Australia's most unloved piece of public art was Ron Robertson-Swann's *Vault* in Melbourne, better known as Yellow Peril.

The canary yellow abstract sculpture, also nicknamed Steelhenge, stirred so much controversy after it was commissioned in 1978 by Melbourne City Council that it was banished to a tiny city park. It reportedly attracted the disapproval of the Queen and inspired the book *Peril in the Square: The Sculpture that Challenged a City*.

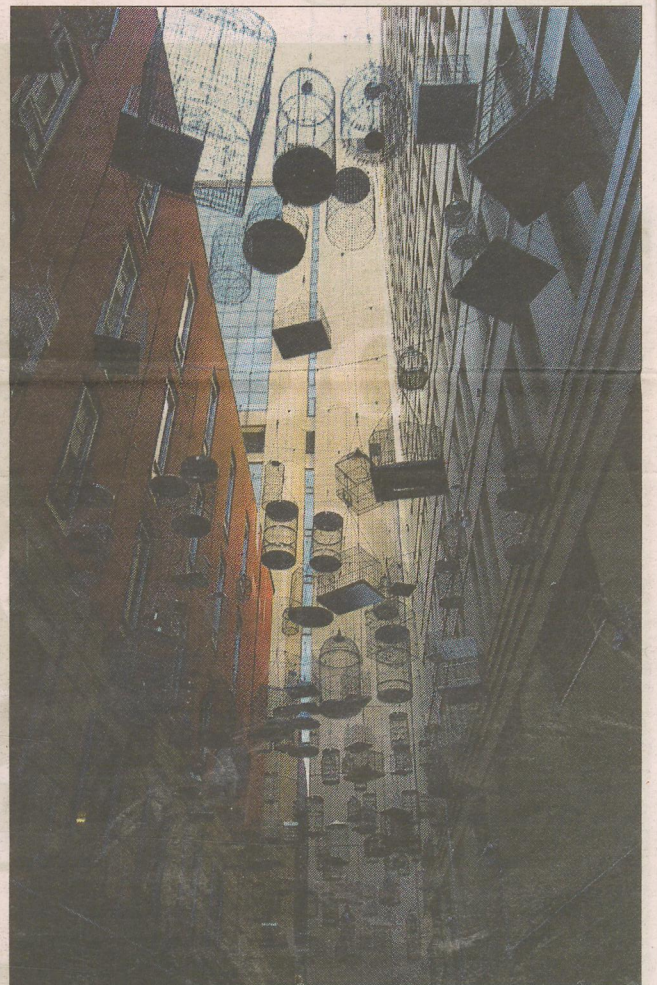
Unlike Poo on Sticks, the reputation of Yellow Peril has been rehabilitated in recent years, but the drama surrounding the artworks, both by respected artists, suggests we may not always appreciate the art created for us.

Politicians, however, imbue public art with powers to generate urban renewal, economic growth and even happiness, according to public art expert Dr Ruth Fazakerley from the University of South Australia.

Moore says the City of Sydney's public art investments, including \$4 million for Green Square, will create a "wonderful sense of place" to attract people willing to spend time and money in the area. Her sentiments are shared by councillor Rohan Leppert, the chairman of arts and culture at the City of Melbourne.

"Melbourne's residents, workers and visitors benefit from the interest, excitement and intellectual debate generated by arts in the city," he says.

Both councils also encourage private commissions of public art, such as the James Angus *Day In, Day Out* sculpture at the corner of Bent and O'Connell streets.



Forgotten Songs by Michael Thomas Hill (2011), Angel Place. "This one I like a lot. Partly because I'm a bird nerd but primarily because it's diurnal: changes over the course of the day, poetic, a seductive shift in scale and materials as you turn the alley corner. And it encourages reflection on deep history: what birds are still here, where did the others go?" - Dr Chris McAuliffe Photo: Wolter Peeters

Public art that provokes discussion, if not dislike, is part of the agenda for Leppert.

He points to *The Three Businessmen* on the corner of Swanston and Bourke streets as an example of an artwork that has popular appeal, but critical disdain.

"For many artists and lovers of public art, this work is problematic and perceived as being literal and simplistic, and thereby not reflecting what public art can be," Leppert says. "Contestation such as this is the heart and soul of public art."

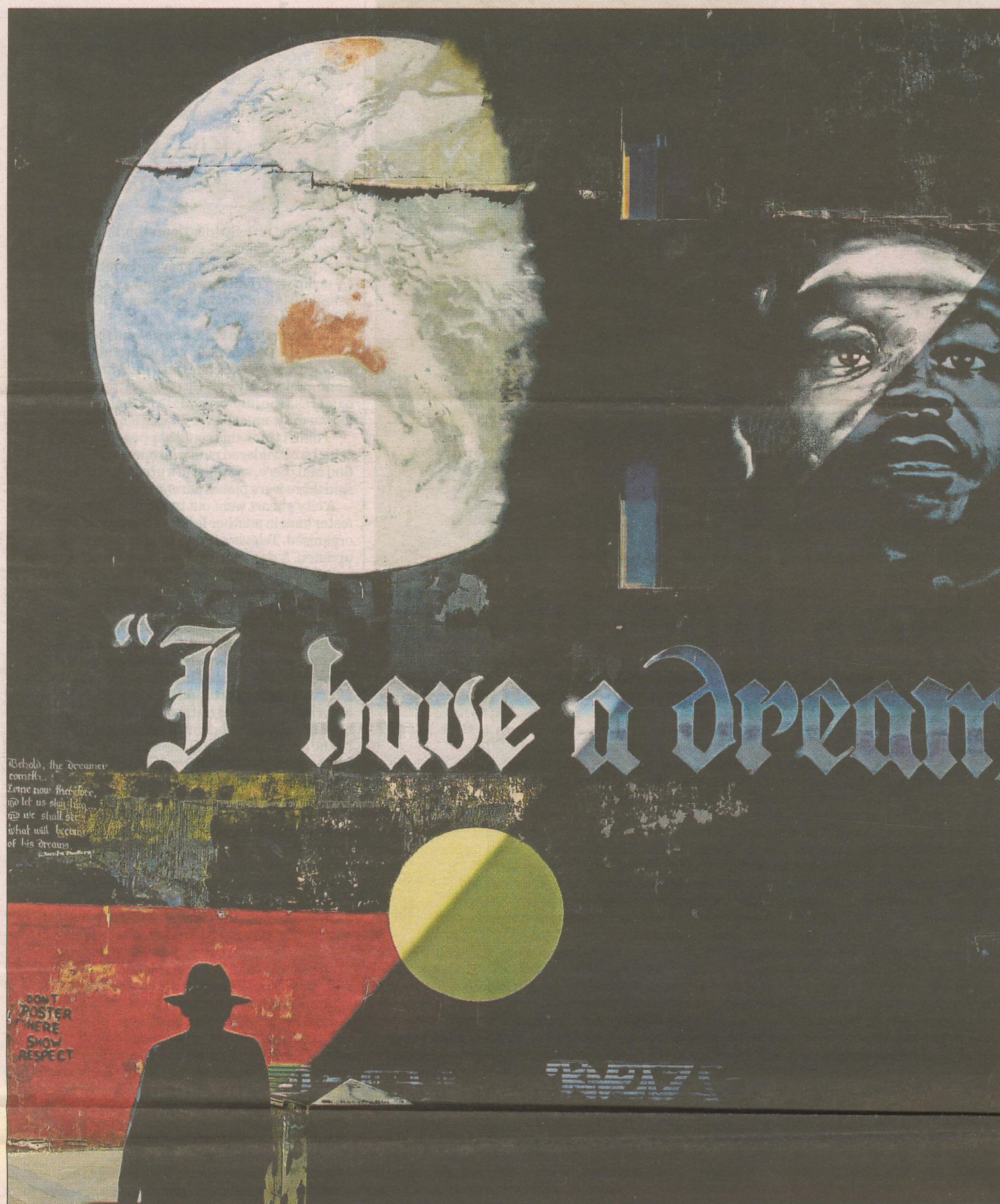
Fazakerley is cynical about the mantras of vibrancy and revitalisation regularly repeated by urban planners and politicians.

"On the other hand, infrastructure renewal

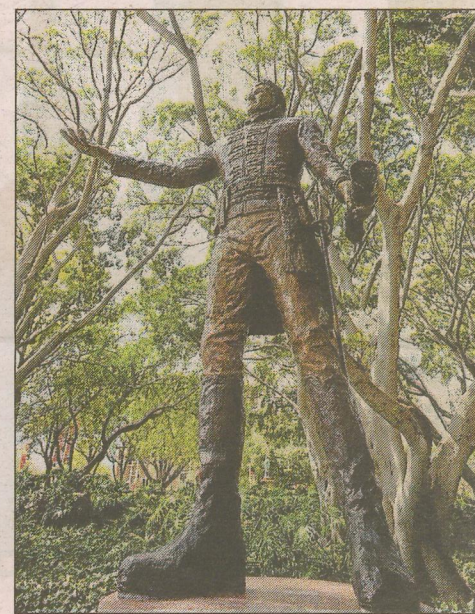


Between Two Worlds by Jason Wing (2011), Chinatown "Jason draws eloquently upon both his Chinese and indigenous heritage and is able to navigate these cultural backgrounds and translate this into public art." - Green Square public art curator Amanda Sharrad Photo: Dallas Kilponen

dividing: the effect of public art



Martin Luther King mural by Unmitigated Audacity Productions (1991), King Street, Newtown. "An iconic urban work of its time and a great marker of one's passage through Newtown." - Associate Professor Michael Goldberg Photo: Tamara Dean



Governor Macquarie statue by Terrance Plowright (2013), Hyde Park. "An amateurish attempt that represents everything a public artwork should not be. It imposes itself on one of the most beautiful park entrances in Sydney ... It is a shocking work by any standard, badly executed and clumsy." - Associate Professor Michael Goldberg Photo: Elliot Toms



Almost once by Brett Whiteley (1968), The Domain. "A classic case of a poorly positioned public sculpture. Presumably the idea is that it bask in the reflected glow of the Art Gallery. But given the admittedly sentimental theme of the sculpture it probably belongs outside Star City casino or at the Gap." - Dr Chris McAuliffe Photo: Janie Barrett



Stones Against the Sky (Poo on Sticks) by Ken Unsworth (1998), Kings Cross. "Literally crap. Badly conceived and ill-sited. All power to those who painted it black." - Associate Professor Michael Goldberg Photo: Peter Rae

and remediation really can create opportunities for artists and others," she says, "and for potentially new and sometimes unexpected things to happen, whether the mix of both delight and distress prompted by *Forgotten Songs*, or something a bit more in your face like Reko Rennie's 2012 painted building facade, *Always Was Always Will Be*."

The political nature of Rennie's temporary artwork on the facade of the former Commonwealth Bank building in Taylor Square is typical of public art in Sydney, according to Dr Darryn Ansted, an artist and academic at Curtin University in Western Australia.

"Sydney artists often seem enthusiastic to explore matters relating to identity and politics - in keeping with contemporary art since the 1960s - and yet in Sydney this is interwoven with the city's historical modernist embrace of formalist abstraction," he says.

He says Melbourne's public art is figurative, abstract and influenced by street art.

Temporary artworks might be at the cutting edge of contemporary art, but they are also politically useful when it comes to covering up eyesores like the proposed construction of light rail on George Street.

Popular public artworks like *Forgotten Songs* in Angel Place can also be made permanent, while others can fade quietly from public view.

The former director of the Ian Potter

Museum of Art at Melbourne University, Dr Chris McAuliffe, says good public art gives meaning to civic spaces.

"For centuries, public sculpture was pedagogical: kings, generals, prophets and heroes on pedestals, striking poses that were supposed to demonstrate power, nobility and citizenship," he says. "In the 1880s, thousands of people turned up for the unveiling of the statue of Queen Victoria outside St James Church

'The success of good public art in this city is due to its diversity.'

Michael Goldberg, Sydney College of Arts

[in] Sydney. How many people turn up for such unveilings now?"

The best public art, says McAuliffe, "is something - an audio tour, a parade, a street float, a temporary object - that brings a site to life, triggers engagement, prompts discussion and reflection".

The City of Sydney's first Biennale legacy artwork - the *City of Forking Paths* "video walk" by Canadian artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, which will be available for use or download after May 1 - would appear

to fit McAuliffe's criteria. But he says Sydney has "a lot more remnants of ye olde, committee-purchased, off-the-shelf public sculpture".

The City of Sydney released a public art plan last year, pledging to spend more than \$9 million over the next decade on public artworks to decorate the city centre, with a focus on George Street. A meandering "yellow brick road" along George Street, wild meadows and a glass pyramid outside Town Hall were among artworks suggested in the plan.

The former Royal South Sydney Hospital site will be graced with a new \$350,000 permanent public artwork, while the southern end of Crown Street in Surry Hills will have an artwork costing up to \$120,000, under plans announced by the City of Sydney.

Sydney might lack an iconic outdoor sculpture like Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate* in Chicago's Millennium Park or Antony Gormley's *Angel of the North* in Gateshead in northern England, but arguably it does not need one, says Associate Professor Michael Goldberg from the Sydney College of the Arts.

"The success of good public art in this city is due to its diversity in scale, material, timing and opportunity," he says.

"The Opera House, Harbour Bridge and the city's natural beauty function perfectly as our enduring public icons."