

Laneways Commission 2008

City of Melbourne

July 2008 - February 2009

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The City of Melbourne Laneways Commission program for 2008 is well underway. This is an exciting opportunity for everyone to experience new public art in public spaces, for a limited time only: six unique artworks in six very specific sites around Melbourne.

2008 Projects

In 2008, a new group of artists has responded to specific lanes or alley spaces by creating works, not all of them three-dimensional, which are now available for you to experience. Take the tour.

1 Place: Niagara Lane (between Lonsdale and Little Bourke Streets, and Elizabeth and Queen Streets)

Work: Organization for Future Good Steps by Raafat Ishak

When: 4 July 2008 - 15 March 2009

A non-functional staircase, made of steel, coloured white, connects two buildings. Elevated, high above the ground, the staircase has no beginning and no end; it does not lead anywhere. Parts of the staircase are missing. Anxiety, delirium, ascent, descent, distance - the aesthetics of proximity, are some of the elements which the artist, Raffat Ishak, would like the work to express.

2 Place: Small unnamed alley north of 22 McKillop Street (between Bourke and Little Collins Streets, and Elizabeth and Queen Streets)

Work: As It Appears ... by Beth Arnold and Sary Zananiri

When: 18 July 2008 - 23 November 2008 (waking with the city and resting at night)

One of the alley walls looks different. A large spherical shaped swelling pushes out into the alley. Is the building breathing? What is happening? Artists Beth Arnold and Sary Zananiri represent growth or change within a city in an organic, recognizably human form.

3 Place: Manton Lane (enter from Little Lonsdale Street between William and King Streets)

Work: Agony/Ecstasy by Phebe Parisia, Eddy Carroll, John Howland

When: 25 July 2008 - 22 February 2009

Look up high on the wall - another neon advertising sign? Look again. This sign points to nothing. An image of a classical figure - at the nexus of agony and ecstasy stares out of the frame. Neon - the advertising industry inciting desire and saturation, epitomised.

4 Place: Union Lane (between Bourke and Little Collins Streets, and Swanston and Elizabeth Streets)

Work: The Speed of Sound Nau Interactive Bells by Anton Hasell, Terence McDermott

When: 8 August 2008 - 26 January 2009 (morning to sunset)

The ancient Chinese bell design - Nau Bells - are rung by worshippers at the Golden Temple in Bangkok as they encounter each bell. The bell is a sound of single purity when rung, or entirely silent at rest. In Union Lane, as we walk, the bells alert us to the sonic qualities of our path, and our presence upon that path. The artists compare the lanes and alleys with fissures within which the sounds of the city fall and come to rest. Each bell marks our journey through an otherwise silent world. Listen to the silence.

5 Place: Cocker Alley (off Flinders Lane, between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets)

Work: Welcome to Cocker Alley by Bianca Faye, Tim Spicer

When: From 15 August until it dissolves completely over the following year

A golden pipe structure climbs up one of the alley walls. The artists have covered these man-made pipes in gold leaf, signifying the importance of the gold rush in Melbourne's history. The building on which the pipes climb, the Nicholas Building, was built on the back of the gold rush in Victoria which brought prosperity and accompanying development to Melbourne. Enjoy letting your eyes climb the lines of the golden pipes to the sky above.

6. Place: Various public places in CBD

Work: Time and Again by

John Alexander Borley

When: Repetitive walks to take place between early June and late July 2008

Eight people answered a newspaper advertisement to participate in this project. All eight met people they did not know in city laneways in early June, and for one hour pairs walked with no definite route around Melbourne. For the next weeks until late July they all tried to repeat their journeys until every walk was repeated a total of eight times. Each person discussed their experiences with one writer, and the resulting work was published as a catalogue available at retail outlets in Melbourne and around Australia, as well as free online at www.timeandagain.info.



Agony/Ecstasy
Phebe Parisia, Eddy Carroll, John Howland

Laneways Commission program

Every year, a fresh group of artists, individuals and groups of two or more submit proposals to the City of Melbourne for public art works to be erected in lanes or alley ways of their choice around the city. The Laneways Commission was launched in 2001. It has become an important part of the city's arts program, providing both experienced and up and coming artists with opportunities to write and submit proposals for the exhibition of works specifically designed for a public place, or public space.

The presence of the past: laneway history

The history of the lanes and alleys began at the time of the early surveying of the site chosen for Melbourne. When Governor Richard Bourke arrived at Melbourne in 1837, he insisted that the surveyor, Robert Hoddle, include lanes and alley ways within the grid pattern of the town plans, as a means of servicing the many buildings on the subdivisions. Each of these smaller access pathways has a colourful history of its own. Over time many were renamed, and after 1945, many were built over. However, in Melbourne's early history, the lanes and alleys were home to a diverse and lively evolving culture which included homes, hotels, stables and coach houses, horse bazaars, hide and skin stores, drapers and importers, bakers and pastry cooks, gunsmiths, locksmiths, workshops and warehouses, and more. The lanes were also notoriously unsanitary, and many were home to well known brothels and other forms of illegitimate business. This rich history is social, economic, architectural and cultural, and the concepts created by artists for today's public art works are informed by the past in some way.

Reawakening curiosity

The Laneways program has been very important in reawakening the curiosity of both the art community and the people of Melbourne in

these narrow access pathways: the lanes and alley ways of Melbourne. Each one, and there are many, has a different ambience. Some are commercially busy; some have an overwhelming aroma of coffee, people talking around tables, pretending they are in Paris or Rome; many lanes appear rather uninviting, with water dripping, rubbish skips and bins overflowing, and with a lingering repellent odour; and then there are those lanes and alleys which continue to fascinate: they have a mysterious quality that beckons, and they are quiet. There are shadows and shapes, and often a haunting feeling of time standing still. Volcanic bluestone pitchers under one's feet date from the city's early history, reminding us that when all else in Melbourne is renovated or replaced, these pavements, lanes and alley ways continue to provide an intriguing time portal to the past.

Public Art projects

The successful design, production and installation process of any public art work is always a challenging undertaking. While the role of the artist in a studio involves working through creative ideas, designs, form and materials, the work is often produced alone, and often exhibited within some kind of gallery space. A public art project has many more demands and implications. Public art also challenges artists to work collaboratively, in a cross-disciplinary team effort, rather than a solo performance.

Public place, public space

Public space, unlike gallery space, brings with it other complicating factors such as pedestrians and vehicles, commercial requirements and local by-laws. An artist or artists may have responded to a particular site with passion to create a particular work, but each must also consider the added challenges of the site itself. How will the work impact upon surrounding inhabitants and the immediate environment? Community consultation is an

As It Appears

Beth Arnold and Sary Zananiri

essential part of the process. Public artists meet with stake holders to consider their needs and concerns, which may often influence and/or change the artist's original proposal. The ability to be flexible about ideas, and to be capable of making changes, while still maintaining a clear focus on the unique artistic elements of a proposal to a brief, are vital prerequisites for the public artist. Alongside philosophical and personal challenges, there is a practical list of necessary skills, such as, being able to cost projects, to satisfy all elements of a brief, to design and produce the artwork, to choose suitable materials, to arrange for the sub-contracting of some or all of the components, and to arrange for the hire of equipment for installation and dismantling (if necessary). Working in a public space demands a clear understanding of public risk issues and their legal implications, and the health and safety issues associated with a building site - while installation is taking place, during the exhibition, and after the exhibition is finished.

Sustainability

Public artists also need to have a good understanding of the concept of sustainability - which is now an established philosophy adopted by all local, state, and federal organizations, government and private. For public artists, it means having respect for the public spaces they are invited to use as exhibition spaces, and leaving them as they found them. While the historic lanes and alleys of Melbourne offer exhibition sites for the Laneways Commission public art works of 2008, and will keep on providing inspiration for artists for years to come, their history is part of our heritage, and their value is priceless. Artists have an important role in demonstrating respect and care for the sites they work on, which is the key to maintaining a sustainable environment for future generations.

Further information:

www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/arts

