



Australia Day 2005 - celebration following the re-paint.



Rodney Monk with Sherran Evans and Wayne Hutchins – from *'The Glebe'* 15 10 1980



***'The Mural, The Crescent Annandale' – a key place in a history of community activism and suburb transformation'***

Leichhardt History Grants Project: 2010  
Bruce Lay - December 2010

*'Images have power. They give shape to our understanding of who we are and what is possible. Art makes tangible our visions of the future and our interpretations of history. It can give concrete form to our experience of life' – David Humphries from 'The Mural Manual' – 1982.*



Portion of The Mural in 1980

## **STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT**

Introduction  
The Site.  
Political and Social Context  
The Making of the Mural  
Change – including the repainting of the mural in 2004.  
Assessment of Heritage Significance (including comparative analysis)  
Statement of Heritage Significance  
Conservation Principles arising from Significance  
Interpretation  
Conclusions  
Recommendations

## **APPENDICES**

A Photo File  
B Oral Histories  
C Key Documents  
D Sources/Acknowledgments

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

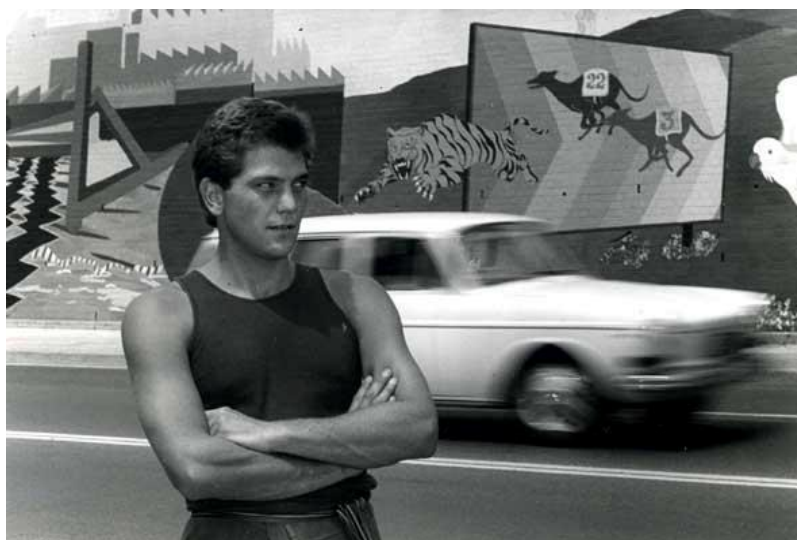
Appendix A is a Photo File of both the Crescent Mural and other public art done at that time, for comparative purposes. The Oral Histories/Interviews are in Appendix B, the Key Historical Documents are in Appendix C. There is a separate file containing some of the main interviews on audio.

The findings of the research were presented back to the community at a meeting of the Annandale Precinct on 2 August 2010.

The Mural was painted at a turning point in Leichhardt's history, a so called '*Old Guard*' Labour Council was about to be swept out, and the inner city was being transformed with changing demographics associated with de-industrialisation and realising the opportunities for an upgraded environment and public access to the foreshores. The Mural can be considered a summary statement or story board for this era, reflective of its community, but inclusive, not a propaganda piece. This report examines that history and the process that lead to the re-paint in 2004, in seeking to establish its importance in terms of the history, heritage, and cultural status, as a basis for ongoing conservation and interpretation.

The investigation also evaluates other surviving public art from the 1980's period both in Leichhardt and the inner city both for comparative purposes and for recommending a conservation strategy. None of the notable works from this period currently have any statutory protection, but Leichhardt has resolved to make The Crescent Mural a Heritage Item of State significance. Some of the important work in the City is on the City of Sydney's Register of Public Art. While many pieces present to public and street space, they are located on private walls.

As many of the surviving works are in poor condition, the public memory is fading, and statutory protection is lacking, the recording of this history as well as the works and a conservation response is now urgent.

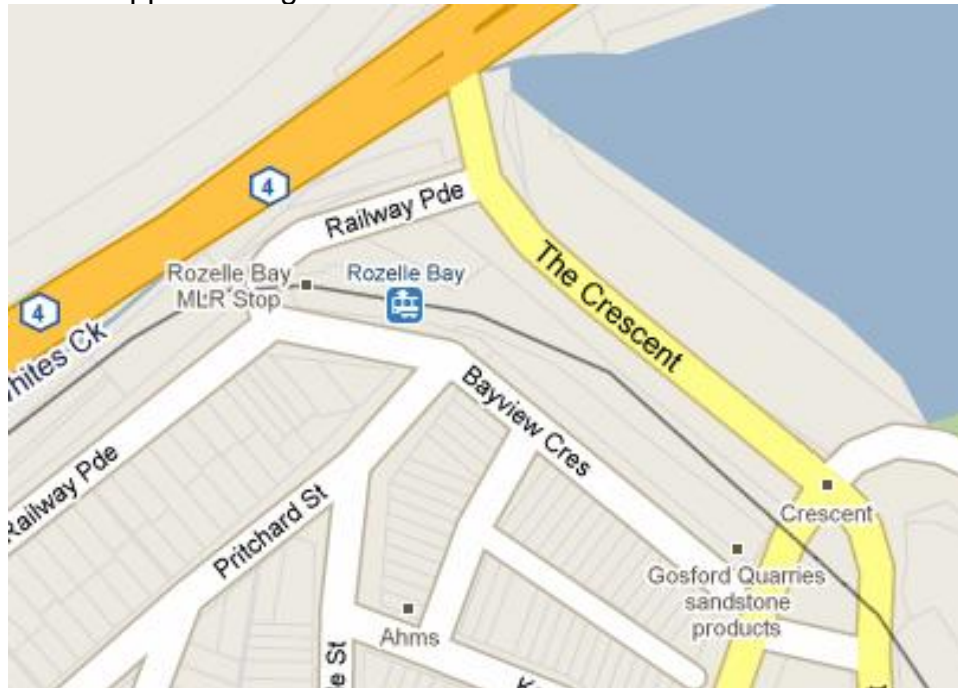


Monk in 1980

## 2.0

### THE SITE

The Photo File in Appendix A gives a 3D view of the Mural and context.

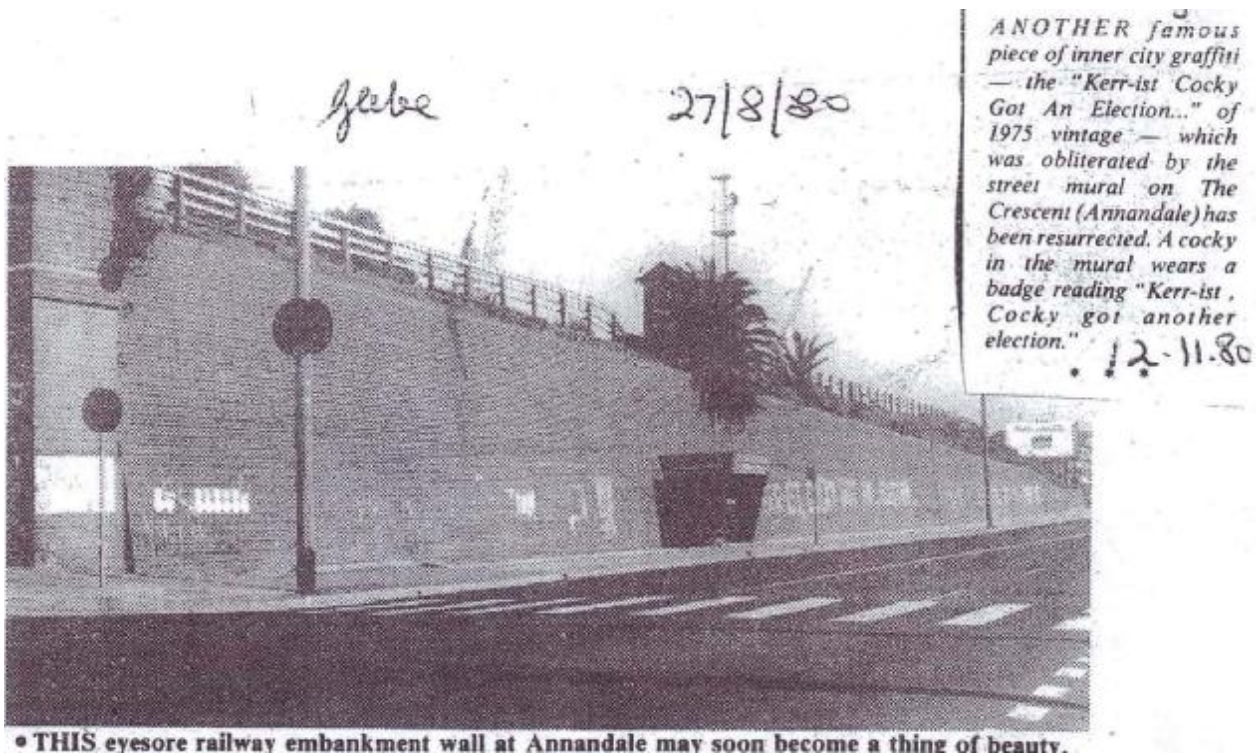


The Mural is located on a brick retaining wall to the railway embankment now used for Light Rail services. The Mural abuts the south western pavement to The Crescent facing north east towards Rozelle Bay. Maritime industrial activities and trees obscure the view to the Bay and conversely the view of the Mural.



The triangular area adjoining a closed section of Railway Parade is now a pocket park at the north western end of the Mural site and embankment. The south eastern end of the Mural to the corner of Johnston Street, Annandale, is the western abutment supporting the steel truss bridge over Johnston Street While the line is known as the Rozelle Goods Line in this location, the line runs under Glebe and Pyrmont was to originally serve the Darling Harbour Port functions.

### 3.0 POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT



The blank brick wall in August 1980 except for the printed slogan about Kerr's sacking of the Whitlam Government. Tim Kelly who was the Leichhardt Alderman facilitating the Mural and other projects was also one of the 'lefties' who painted the original message before his term on Council.

The background to *'The Mural'* in The Crescent was the community activism spurred by key events such as opposition to the Vietnam War and the sacking of the Whitlam government, but also social movements around personal liberation including sexuality, gender, racism and ethnicity, and the self-expression of alternative lifestyles and cultural activities. Following the strictures of the Depression, then the Second War, followed by a period of prosperity but social conformity in the 1950's, a major shift in both in political views and personal values occurred, spurred by the post war generation's access to mass tertiary education. They reacted against the conformities of suburbia and the 1950's nuclear family, forming new and more inclusive social structures. Public art, usually temporary, and often posters proliferated from the 1960's.

Using public walls as blackboards particularly for political messages has a much longer history. Railway embankments and retaining walls have been the target of putting messages with good exposure, mostly political throughout the twentieth century. This wall's high exposure on a major traffic route probably deterred such tagging, although some messages pre-date the Mural. A 1975 tagging of the wall carried the message *'Kerr-ist Cocky's got an election'*. While Hall Greenland initially opposed the painting of The Mural in order to protect a piece of authentic working class graffiti, it transpired that the tertiary art school educated Tim Kelly was the principal culprit. He was assisted by Norma Hagstrom an Annandale widow with six children to support who joined the anger about Whitlam's sacking.



The badge contains the Cockey message.

The re-painting in 2004 replaced this with '*Kerr-ist Cocky's got another election*'. Kerr was often caricatured as a cockatoo. The first version refers to Sir John Kerr's sacking of the Whitlam Government, the second to Leichhardt's electoral shift. The 1980 photo of an otherwise blank wall carries the printed message referencing the 1975 sacking of the Whitlam Government. Wall painting of blank industrial walls in the grey mostly industrial areas of the older cities became common in western cities, and was justified as a form of urban improvement. Murals first appeared in cities like London and the North American east or west coast polyglot cities from the late 1960's in parallel with the major protest movements around liberation struggles, the nuclear threat, racial and gender issues, and the start of environmental awareness. Originally these were expressions of protest. They became cultural expressions of community values and enjoyment and were legitimized by their use particularly for promotion of cultural activities and community building under the banner of multiculturalism. Aboriginal rights made a late appearance and did not appear in the original Mural. Many of the early works in Australia were associated with festivals including Orange, and the Sydney Festival with murals painted of the walls of the Old Market in The Haymarket.

The local issues in Leichhardt were mostly about development and freeway proposals. For example there were some 3000 submissions in response to the 1979 Leichhardt Planning Scheme that encouraged widespread flat development and included swathes of road reservations for freeways. There were 16000 petitioners, against the Plan, an astonishing number from a population of around 55 000. The majority of Councillors in the 1977 – 80 Labor Council favoured this vision. This was then tempered by the State Planning Authority imposing the first conservation and environmental controls via IDO 70 in 1979. How times change?

While the whole of the Municipality was solidly Labor in this period, Annandale had a particularly sleepy and acquiescent Branch, considered on the 'right'. The suburb consisted mainly of well built brick houses with fine wide streets and was probably more middle class and owner occupied than the other suburbs. The blocks being larger than the norm in Leichhardt, were considered 'ripe' for development and hence the focus of the first campaigns on the threat to the '*Witches Houses*', the grand Victorian mansions built by Sir John Young at the north end of Johnston Street. The dominoes

were falling. This triggered the formation of the Annandale Association. The Association met informally from 1961, but had their inaugural meeting in 1971. The Balmain Association started around 1966/67, the Glebe Society a bit later. Two of the houses 'Claremont' at 258 and 'Rozelle' at 268 Johnson Street had been had been lost to flat development, and a third was threatened, 270 'Oybin' was threatened. 'Oybin' was saved and restored from a ruin with a large flat building in its grounds.

While the Association was preoccupied with reform of the planning and heritage controls, other groups were engaged over waterfront de-industrialisation and developers seizing the opportunities for foreshore residential development. The umbrella group was the '4 Shores Committee'. They understood the power that went with re-zoning gave leverage for better community outcomes in terms of both density, and by the dedication of open space. However most of the foreshores were in public ownership either for port purposes or associated maritime industrial. The whole of the Rozelle Bay foreshores were taken up by timber yards serviced by lighters. However these industries were in decline as increasingly truck transport was used, and the land had greater value for other purposes. Hence the struggle was also in persuading the State Government of the benefit to the deprived inner suburbs of the handover of such foreshores for open space. They had the sympathetic Wran State Government, which was also acquiring inner city sites for parklands. However the battle for the foreshores was not concluded until completion of the Rozelle Bay Bicentennial Park in 1988. The 'Save Rozelle Bay Committee' was formed for this fight, in 1981. The Gretchen Gamble interview discusses the role of this Committee. However the aspiration for green foreshores and recreating around the Bay is a strong theme in The Mural.

In conformist and law abiding Australia, protest expressions were usually short lived but publically sanctioned murals became common in the late 1970's. This was also the decade during which Martin Sharp with others were defending and extolling the pop cultural aspects of Luna Park, in re-painting the face. While not sanctioned, there was strong community support for such campaigns linked to conservation and heritage issues and the Green Bans movement; as a linking of organised labour and the broader community. Murals were often associated with cultural events like the 1977 Sydney Festival mural in The Haymarket, at a time when the former market buildings were slated for demolition and provided opportunity walls for the promotion of the Festival. This was supervised by David Humphries. In the same year Humphries sponsored by the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council painted a mural on the Gasworks Wall in Orange associated with the Orange Festival of the Arts. It evolved in consultation with the community and was considered to be 'a *portrait of the town*'. Its bucolic images of rural life contrast with the ruined gasworks in the background. The Community Arts Board had a brief life as an expression of public art within the Australia Council, given its elite propensities. Community arts then retreated into more local and mostly a Council responsibility.

The left/right factional wars were particularly intense in Leichhardt, with the Annandale branch a key flash point. The Leichhardt suburbs had been a Labor heartland for most of the century reflecting the heavy industrialisation and substantial unionisation of the labour force. Even Annandale had large industries including Beale's Piano Factory and the Melocco Bros, embedded into its well built and respectable residential streets. The industrial unions were mostly considered 'right' meaning they were conservative on social issues. There were also issues of systemic corruption, given the political leverage,

carried by power. However the union dissenters mostly labelled *'Trotsky-ites'* particularly Nick Origlass and Izzy Wyner from Balmain led a reformist Council in 1972 – 74 before being displaced. Breaking caucus led to their expulsion from the ALP as it did with many others later. The reaction in the Party to the rise of new amenity groups such as the Glebe Society, The Balmain Association, and the Annandale Association, led to arguments to proscribe these organisations. Many activist residents at the time interviewed in this study such as the Archibalds, the Gambles, and the Townsings, were expelled during this time. Later this led to the expulsion of Larry Hand and the rise of Community Independents as the predominant group on Council.

The Annandale Branch was particularly fractious with notable *'lefties'* including Bill Hume and Hall Greenland, who became Alderman in 1980. Betty and Hugh Mason, key makers of the Annandale Association, were also members of the ALP. The rigidities of caucus resulted in many expulsions from the party including Origlass and Wyner, and Hume in Annandale. This ultimately led to the rise initially of Labor Independents such as Origlass and Wyner, and later Community Independents such as Larry Hand in the 1980's, and their subsequent dominance. Some stood initially such as Moira Sheehan under the anti-aircraft noise banner, when the second parallel runway over Annandale was proposed and fought. This baton for community based politics has now moved onto the Greens.

The '72 – 74' reforms including revising the widely hated planning controls that encouraged the comprehensive redevelopment of the suburbs with higher density flats, and introducing the first heritage controls, including conservation areas. They also opposed the proposed carve up of the suburbs with freeways, with the first battle against DMR clearances in Glebe including the demolition of the historic house, *'Lyndhurst'*. This battle was incrementally won with *'Lyndhurst'* being saved about the same time as the Mural was first proposed. While the *'right'* remained dominant until the end of the decade, the Council included some *'left'* figures including Aldermen Nick Origlass and Tim Kelly from Annandale, who would be the key political figure in the *'Mural'* story. The *'Mural'* in particular is key evidence of both the shift in values and that the Council was open to the shift; just. The Council endorsed the recommendation of Special Playgrounds Improvement Committee's (SPIC) August meeting as follows: *'that Council retain the right to make the final decision regarding acceptance of the design and content of any mural painted'*.

The irony is that while the Mural is redolent of a political and social change point, it was approved under the previous regime. It proceeded because of clear community support and ownership. The key facilitator, then at the Premiers Department, was David Humphries. The workshopping done in developing the Leichhardt Mural Program was proposed and facilitated by Rodney Monk following his experience with doing community murals in the Illawarra and then the Oil Tank at La Perouse and Orange. The workshopping within the community as well as with the Annandale Schools must have built this support, as well as the ideas. Pencil sketches were prepared by Monk and images added by collage to build up the design. The support of Tim Kelly was critical to this.

To quote Monk;

*'As a community artist, I work with people, I'm inspired by their spirit and their ideas and show them how to realise them on giant walls. I'm a paintersmith... I find out what excites people, the images and ideas that belong to them. Then I try to turn them into an original expression that sums up that dynamism, to transform them into paint'*.



## 4.0 THE MAKING OF THE MURAL IN 1980

There are huge gaps in Council's paper record of inception of The Mural, and no record of the consultations in terms of the themes that evolved. Given the limited public record, the Oral Histories of most of the key players located in Appendix B are mint information to understanding the values as well as the process. Rodney Monk's Job File for the project is a much more complete paper record than that of Council.



The completed Mural in 1980 from *'The Mural Manual'*

There were three key people involved in The Mural Project, the politician, Tim Kelly, the facilitator from 'Cultural Affairs' as well as mature practitioner David Humphries, and the young but talented Rodney Monk who coordinated the painting and conducted the consultations.

### Tim Kelly

Kelly was born in 1945 and grew up in Sydney. He studied Industrial Design at East Sydney and Randwick Technical Colleges and in 1977-9 did a Diploma in Fine Arts at the Alexander Mackie CAE. He met Humphries then at Cultural Affairs with the NSW Premiers Department in developing an interest in community arts. He took a three year contract as a Regional Arts Development Officer in South West Sydney, that extended to six years. These interests paralleled his move into Annandale and his involvement as an Alderman.

Tim Kelly was the key Council player for the Mural and the two concurrent projects, the murals in the Styles Playground in Leichhardt, and the mural and the hard works and mosaics by Morrie Shaw in the O'Connor Reserve in Rozelle. Monk with other young artists and art students also painted the murals. Kelly provides the political context for the project.

Kelly moved to Annandale in 1974 and was soon involved in local Labor politics. He decided to stand for Council for one term only because he thought he could make a difference. He was an Alderman for the 1977 – 1980 Council, and considered he was part of a moderate left group with Evan Jones and Charlie Rocks. His training was in industrial design and then fine arts, and he later became professionally engaged in community arts during this period. In 1980 he became a Regional Arts Development Officer with the South Western Sydney Regional Arts Council. He met David Humphries who was a Community Arts Officer with the Cultural Affairs unit of the Premier's Department. He talked to David to '*get something going*' in Leichhardt. He did a post graduate degree in arts management in 1986.

He was Chair of Council's Special Playground Improvement Committee (SPIC) which was deliberating in 1979 over possible projects funded under Commonwealth youth employment schemes steered through the NSW Premier's Department. They looked at existing run down parks in areas of need such as O'Connor Reserve and Easton Park in Rozelle, the McKenzie Street Park in Leichhardt and the Hereford Street Park and the Doherty Reserve in Glebe. This included the painting of murals on drab walls to '*enhance the appearance and appeal of a park*' David Humphries was the major facilitator of community and public art at this time introducing many of the prominent artists from this time including Peter Day and Rodney Monk, as well as the use of architects such as Morrice Shaw. Shaw was a tutor in architecture at Sydney University and he worked with his students on such projects and on adventure playgrounds influenced by the counter culture in North America and the U K; particularly London. Humphries had worked around 1977 on such projects in the Lower East Side part of Manhattan. Hence Humphreys attended meetings of SPIC both in an advisory capacity and in providing seeding funds. Shaw and Monk, were subsequently engaged for \$ 5000 to supervise a list of such projects starting at the Styles Street Playground in July 1980 and then The Crescent Mural starting in August 1980. Kelly says he was '*doing the politics to get things through*' and not involved on a day to day basis. Once the mural was underway he met Monk and painted the yellowcake slogan. The other murals completed at this time were at the Styles Street Playground in Leichhardt, and in the O'Connor Reserve in Rozelle; with the hard works and mosaics by Shaw.

Kelly was shown a long pencil drawing of the concept and thought it was just decorative and commented that the Mural needed to '*reflect political issues that affect this community*'. The design was reworked to reflect the current issues and became the strong but not didactic statement of the times that gives community ownership to the work, and its ongoing historical importance. These issues broadly remain relevant, and reflect the values and identity of this community.

## **David Humphries**

David Humphreys was born in Wollongong in 1948. Against the conventions he studied art at Illawarra Grammar School before going the National Art School. While there he got engaged with the Cellblock theatre. His interest in public art included participation in Christo's wrapping of Little Bay. He became a field officer for the Community Arts Committee of the Australia Council, on the ground floor of the community arts movement in Australia. In 1974 he got a grant to do a post graduate Diploma in Arts Management at City University in London; then getting involved in Festival management. He then worked in community arts in the Lower East site of Manhattan.



Lower East Side 'Cuts on Housing' Mural of 1973 about the greed of landlords. American murals were much more about the socio/economic and racial divides than in Australia. They were usually painted on the blank end walls of rundown or derelict buildings in the decaying older inner cities in North America in contrast to the vibrant rejuvenation occurring in Australian cities at the same time.

When he returned to Australia he did the first collaborative public mural in Australia on the wall of the Orange Gasworks in 1977. This has been demolished. Other projects followed related to the Orange Festival involving Rodney Monk. Humphries supervised murals in the same year for the Sydney Festival on the old market buildings in the Haymarket. They also painted the former timber Army Depot buildings in Addison Road Marrickville. There was an outbreak of publically sanctioned, usually with public seeding funds art, occurring around the country during this period. The Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council was a major sponsor.

Humphries and Monk's first project together was the Oil Tanks in La Perouse in 1978/9. Humphries mixed arts practice with the managing and promotion of public art, as well as later moving into bigger scaled commercial projects mainly using terrazzos, such as at Sky Gardens in Pitt Street. Humphries went into partnership with Monk as the '*Public Arts Squad*' Later Monk stuck to mural painting and Humphries diverged into mosaics and terrazzo, with Humphries retaining the name.

David Humphries while a collaborator with Monk, was also involved in public policy in the arts, and engaged by the community arts programs of 'Cultural Affairs within the NSW Premiers Department. This had co-ordinated training programs using youth employment schemes for funding. Humphries was approached by a Leichhardt engineer for advice on community murals He advised Leichhardt on the process and technicalities as well as introducing Monk to do coordinate the painting. While only 23 at this time, Monk had already had experience with working with people through the theatre and the Orange and La Perouse project etc. While a price was sought from Monk and another muralist, Monk's price was obviously low for the task.

They co-authored *'The Mural Manual'* in 1982, the seminal work on community murals through this period, and essential for putting into context, The Crescent work. David Humphries was also the key facilitator in terms of advice on expertise and process, and facilitating funding. He also had had extensive experience in mural painting including the first community mural in Australia, on the Gasworks at Orange in 1977. He also did murals on Oil Tanks at La Perouse with Rodney Monk assisting. This monumental but playful design with its ships and nautical themes showed a mature hand guiding the very young Monk. Monk was only 24 when The Crescent Mural was painted. Humphries who had majored in painting at East Sydney Tech. had clearly honed Monk's painting and design skills.

## Rodney Monk



Recent photo by Geoff Ambler.

Rodney Monk was the key person in this story in terms of co-ordinating the making of the first Mural at the tender age of 24, and coming back 24 years later to re-paint it. His career is in public art, mostly painting murals but more recently doing some work in mosaics, for greater longevity. He co-founded the Public Art Squad with David Humphries after The Mural was painted and they promoted the media with their book *'The Mural Manual'* published in 1982. This was an inclusive survey of that moment in time, covering murals throughout Australia. Both maintain studios with a focus on public art. To date he has done about 500 public works, mostly in Sydney but also elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

Monk was born in 1955 in Kogarah, but grew up in Miranda, The Shire. He trained as a teacher in art and drama at the Wollongong Teachers College (now part of Wollongong University). He taught for a year, and then joined a theatre troupe in Wollongong. His first love was theatre including clowning. He did a mural for the Illawarra Community School. He was recruited by a community group with advice from Humphreys to paint an oil tank at La Perouse in 1978/9.

The Oil Tank Mural also directed by Humphries, was sponsored by the Division of Cultural Affairs (Premiers) and the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council. While it involved a team of 60, Monk was accredited as the Project Artist.

It is described in *'The Mural Manual'* in the following terms; *'it is a highly visible mural in scale with its industrial landscape, depicting colourful historical features such as Botany*

*Bay landmarks (the Chinese market gardens, old trams and various marine symbols), and the sailing ship of the French explorer from whom La Perouse drew its name. The mural is sited in front of a local primary school and in full view of the surrounding suburbs. Never before in Australia had a work of such scale been attempted by a community group in association with industry, and professional artists. The group surveyed 400 houses in view of the mural for input and approval. The design was approved at a public meeting before it was executed. The actual painting of the mural took 10 days and involved more than 60 people and refinery personnel. It was done as a holiday activity for a local group, many of whom were unemployed'.*

Kelly sought advice from Humphries in order to pursue his playground improvement program which included visual improvements as well as the hardware. Humphries hence introduced Monk to this project and he surveyed the options with the then Deputy Engineer Mel Alagich, in coming up with the list reported to the SPIC committee in May 1980. The Crescent wall was second on this list, an indication that Monk saw the potential of this wall, notwithstanding it not being a park or playground.

However two other projects proceeded first Styles Street done by Monk, involving Wayne Hutchins, Bronwen Bassett, and Sharron Evans as well as the collaboration with Shaw on the O'Connor Reserve.

It is easy to see how The Crescent Mural evolved from the bigger scale of the Oil Tank and its lively cartoon character; the horizon holding disparate elements together. A design process involving collage of putting the ideas and images together in a community context is also evident. From this tracing paper copies were produced, colour coded for painting, described as *'painting by numbers'*, essential for the use of many hands; less so when involving fewer and trained artists at The Crescent.

Humphries and Monk formed a partnership as the *'Public Arts Squad'* (PAS) after this period and did a number of the most significant murals of the activist '80's period. Other major muralists during this period included Peter Day, Michiel Dolk, Merlilyn Fairskye and Carol Ruff. Dolk did the CYSS Mural in Rozelle. All remain art practitioners, a rare achievement in itself. Humphries (PAS) went on to do high end mosaics, terrazzo and decorative work on major commercial and cultural buildings. Monk remains primarily a muralist, and hence the obvious candidate for the re-painting in 2005. He has recently extended a large mural in Cumberland Street the Rocks, with Peter Day. Peter Day painted the original mural in 1980 in an illusionist style with false arches painted onto the wall.

But there was clearly keen community interest in public art expressions during the late 1970's. An architect Morrie Shaw who had built an organic bush house in the Dandenong's outside Melbourne initiated a number of adventure playgrounds in Inner Sydney schools including Glebe and Rozelle, involving children in their making following particularly UK examples. This included a proposal for the O'Connor Reserve in Rozelle, where Shaw directed the works on the playgrounds and mosaic walls (influenced by Antonio Gaudi) with Rodney Monk doing murals on the abutting private walls to the Reserve (with the permission of the landowners). Shaw was also likely to be aware of the use of ceramics in projects such as the ceramic covered benches installed in the rejuvenation of the Ulysses Grant Memorial in upper Manhattan, in 1972-4.

This and other proposals appear in the minutes Leichhardt Council's 'Special Playgrounds Improvements Committee' (SPIC) with their recommendations flowing to the Council for endorsement. Humphries, Shaw and Monk attended both the March and April 1980 meetings of SPIC to progress the program. The Council offered joint engagement of Shaw and Monk for a fee of \$ 5000 each for a possible of ten projects. A letter of 14 May 1980 under the moniker of *'The Public Art Squad'* accepts a commission with Shaw to supervise some projects, with an interim list of walls suitable for murals. This was to be funded under the NSW *'Special Council Employment Scheme for Young People'*. Hence, the O'Connor Reserve Project precedes The Crescent Mural. This letter is tendered to the 9 June meeting of SPIC chaired by Alderman A J Kelly (Tim Kelly – see Oral Histories in Appendix B), the Engineer Mel Alagich. Both Monk and Shaw were present. The Deputy Engineer Greg Walsh supervised these projects and according to Monk was the key facilitator of them.

Some of these projects were initiated by Shaw using his students for design as well as consultations with the communities including a user's survey. Designs were to be presented to both the Committee and to the community. This anticipates the more extensive consultation processes adopted by the following Council, elected in September 1980, but which followed the *'Open Council'* precepts of the 72/74 Origlass Council. The O'Connor Reserve was to be the first project; then they would move onto other parks. This did not happen. It is probable that the use of unskilled labour for construction was problematic, but less so for murals. It is also likely that Shaw was less collaborative than Monk. Monk's engaging personality, and his work in community theatre probably formed his social skills for community arts.

In July 1980 Council issued a Bulletin and Media Release outlining the program with an emphasis on mural painting. (Appendix C)

The minutes of a SPIC meeting of 14 July 1980 report a presentation of Wayne Hutchins on behalf of Monk of the investigation into suitable walls for murals. (Wayne Hutchins was to be Monk's main assistant with The Mural project. He provided the following list in order of their considered priority:

1. Styles Street Playground
2. Railway retaining wall in The Crescent
3. Wall – Glebe and Mitchell Streets Glebe
4. 48 Birchgrove Road Balmain – side flank wall of house onto closed section of Punch Street
5. 324 Catherine Street Lilyfield – side wall of house onto The War Memorial Park.
6. Booth Street Annandale (DMR wall)
7. 156 Evans Street - side flank wall to terrace house onto a pedestrian right of way.
8. 158 Evans Street - side flank wall to a terrace house onto a pedestrian right of way.

It is evident from their submission that informal agreement had been reached with the property owners about painting their walls. This asks Council to agree to maintenance of such walls for five years and then to re-paint a colour acceptable to the owners. There was clearly caution in some of the responses. Tooheys with respect to the Hotel wall at O'Connor Reserve gave support;

*'on the condition that the subject of the mural is landscape or abstract design, with no social, moral or political message, either direct or implied'.*

The Council's resolution also exhibited caution requiring the Council to sign off on the designs. It is unlikely that this ever happened, given the momentum of the project once Monk was involved, and the election in September of a Council more reflective of the new values and demographics. Shaw and his students completed the walls and mosaics in O'Connor Reserve, but no other projects proceeded. Monk painted the mural on the Hotel wall; now lost. Mural projects starting with Styles Street then followed from August 1980. Workshopping with the communities occurred from late July into early August.

It is clear that Monk from his survey of opportunities identified the potential of The Crescent wall prior to the May SPIC meeting. The Council evidently wrote to the State Rail Authority seeking their permission to paint the wall and their response on 9 July supports the proposal but they wished to approve the design. The assumption as with the private walls is that they would be painted for three years. The upkeep was to be taken over by Council

Ald Kelly chaired the SPIC meeting of 11 August with John McMahon representing Community Services, and Greg Walsh the Engineer. David Humphries attended on behalf of the Cultural Affairs unit of the Premier's Department. The recommendation to Council to endorse in principle the projects includes the proviso:

*' Council retain the right to make the final decision regarding acceptance of the design and content of any murals painted under the 'Leichhardt Municipal Council Park Development and Mural Projects'.*

A proposal for a mural in the 36<sup>th</sup> Battalion Park in McKenzie Street Leichhardt (Drill Hall) site is also mentioned.

There were left/right factional wars in the Leichhardt ALP branches through this decade, with a very heated build up to the Municipal Election in, September 1980.

*'The Glebe'* covered the story on 27 August with a photo of the blank wall except for a large graffiti-ed slogan – *'Kerr-ist, Cocky got an Election?'* In the article Monk calls for public input in terms of ideas and labour, saying *'we have the expertise, we expect the community to have the enthusiasm'*. The Council and Mural Team conducted consultations with the communities in Annandale on September 1, In Glebe Town Hall on September 3, and in Balmain Town Hall on Sept 4. It would appear the imminent election may have had something to do with this rapid progress. While Monk says the community and children sometimes did drawings, the themes and most of the images were drawn out of discussion. *'The Glebe'* covered the project again on 15 October mentioning Rodney Monk and his team of four artists. The cover photo shows Monk assisted by Sherran Evans and Wayne Hutchins. It is evident that the framework for The Mural was in place by then. The Bunyip column in the same paper reports: *'Spraycan half wits seeking a wall for anti-truck graffiti last week chose the community mural underway at The Crescent (Annandale) and destroyed a week's work. After learning that the mural's theme would be anti-truck anyway they removed their work and were not prosecuted by the police at the mural artists request'*. *'The Glebe'* of 12 November 1980, mentions that The Mural has been finished. An urgent letter of 22 October from Monk to McMahon the Community Social Worker who managed these projects makes a plea due to sickness and delays, for an additional budget to employ two more artists, Peter Day, and Kristine Amitzboll (Vartan). Monk gives some compelling arguments in support including wide community support and press coverage.



THE CRESCENT WALL ANNANDALE NSW 1990

The project was part of the Parks Improvement Committee of Leichhardt Council. The project involved the painting of a children's playground and the huge mural on the railway embankment at the Crescent in Annandale. This program has pioneered the way for unemployment schemes to be utilised for employing artists to do public art works. The project was a work training experience for five young artists employed by Leichhardt Council for 3 months, utilising a New South Wales Government special youth employment training scheme available to local government. The positions were publicly advertised and applicants were selected on the basis of their skills and desire to gain practical experience as Community Art workers. The team worked closely with the local community in devising the design and painting. The mural's theme was influenced by its site, a busy main road in an industrial area. It broadly tells the story of the effects of the road on the neighbourhood's quality of life and use of the harbour foreshores, whilst making pertinent comments on uranium and alternative means of transport.



The Crescent Mural was awarded a Merit Award for a work of outstanding environmental Design by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects 1991.

Jury's comment:

"To enliven with surface decoration a fragment of wall in an obdurate traffic corridor in order to enliven the traveller's journey is always worthwhile. To do so with something more than decoration, to produce a documentary enshrining the social patterns of a neighbourhood, is an exceptional achievement. And this is indeed what has been done by the painted mural along the brick wall of the embankment on the Crescent at Annandale!

Size: 110m x 15m. Painted in acrylic

Project Director: Rodney Monk

Assistant: Wayne Hutchings.

Team: Bronwin Basset, Louise Smith, Sharon Evans

The project was funded by Leichhardt Council and the Division of Cultural Activities

It is instructive to examine these photos and compare them with the current photos in the Appendix A.



When Council examined the re-painting options in 2003 they went back to Humphries for advice. He recommended Monk. The 2004/5 re-paint introduced new themes, particularly the Aboriginal presence, the painting was much richer and more professional and with a greater colour and tonal range than the original. The original paints were mainly primary colours. Hence there are significant differences between the 1980 Mural and now. The 1980 Mural was coordinated by artists but some of the painting was done by amateurs including passers by. This was the spirit of the times and the agreed process. There were also a number of artists and art students involved with a range of skills and preferences, although coordinated by Monk. Given Monk's lengthy experience between 1980 and 2004 it is reasonable to assume his skills have developed considerably. The original mural had a more naïve and handmade quality in terms of the painting, the painting was flatter, more so than the figuration, composition and the balance of tone/colour etc. The re-paint done by Monk with one assistant is very skilled and expressive paintwork, with a vibrant surface of brushwork etc. There is very little flat painting. The colour and paint options in 1980 were much more limited. Enamels were used for the original, acrylics for the renewal.

The earlier mural was an important community and collective expression of its time, the re-paint still represents that the issues of that time and is important historically. But, it is also a superior work of art, in aesthetic and cultural terms. It has been enriched by both the introduction of new material, themes, but principally by the superior painting.

## 5.0

### **CHANGE – INCLUDING THE REPAINTING OF THE MURAL IN 2004.**

It is evident that The Mural was at least benignly loved over about 24 years; benignly because its location against a very busy road is not conducive to giving it the time it deserves. More information on how it came about and the history it represents would also be desirable. The re-painting gives some more information about its inception. When it was painted everyone knew. If the history is important, then the memory needs periodic jogging.

It is evident that The Mural was a strong and consensual expression of the concerns and issues of the day, and that these concerns and values remain strongly held. The Mural therefore has been well respected and cared for with minimal tagging and alteration. The Mural won a Merit Award from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1981. Terrence Malloon the Sydney Morning Herald Art Critic at the time attacked this Award and the quality of the work. Humphries/Monk and others thought this a bit of a joke, showing a misunderstanding of the intent of such collaborative art. Naivette was part of its quality.

A 'No Dam's' sign was painted in below the aircraft at one point. The community has taken responsibility for weeding and planting its surrounds; as State Rail is unlikely to assume this responsibility. It is now contiguous with parkland in the closed termination of Railway Street, and from 1988 with the creation of the Rozelle Bay Bicentennial Park, it has a context of a grand foreshore park. The site opposite which was then a ship wrecking and junk yard remains only somewhat changed given the use of the northern shore of Rozelle Bay for boat repair and maintenance, including the restoration of heritage craft.

When first painted, Monk was only 24 and his crew had limited experience with the medium but produced a very durable product, given the harsh exposure of the site to sun and a marine environment and heavy traffic. This is attributed to careful preparation. The Crescent was a major truck route before the completion of the City West Link Road and the Anzac Bridge.

While the record is incomplete The Mural was evidently in poor condition in 2003 and Council's Engineering function responsible for the maintenance of public works evidently saw a need to respond. Hence a \$ 10 000 allocation was put into the 2003/4 Budget for this tentative project. It was clearly open to the options of a patch repair, a re-paint or replacement with a new work responding to current values.



A section of the Mural prior to the re-paint – given the voluntary input and the passage of time the mural was a naive product compared to the renewal. Some defacement had occurred and the aircraft, portrayed as a stealth bomber, was not quite right. The gap in the middle indicates the location of the bus shelter.

However by 2003 the mural was in poor condition the colours and tones very faded with much of the paintwork peeling. The Council began investigation of options for its replacement or renewal. Given the passage of time, many people did not know its derivation and considered that a more contemporary statement both in terms of art and the ideas it expressed might be appropriate. Some considered a better or more proficient outcome could come from the renewal. Its historical and heritage significance had not been examined at this time. Maintenance was considered the province of Council's Engineering function, and the social issues a matter for the Community Services function (by 2003 this was located in Strategic Planning). The Mural had no formal heritage status.

The 2003/4 Budget had allocated \$ 10 000 for refurbishment or repainting. This also proposed to seek public submissions, to consider adding new elements to the mural and while inviting Monk to tender, was to consider the involvement of other artists. Some review of The Mural was required as a section was blank where there had been a bus shelter. And there was some recognition of some gaps in the themes; the Aboriginal ownership of the place in particular.

In parallel with this allocation, perhaps triggered by it a report was put to Council by Donna Abela called *'Options for a new Mural at The Crescent'*. To quote the introduction:

*'Perhaps more than any other form of public art, murals are perceived as community storyboards. Traditionally, people expect murals to illustrate and celebrate local lives or history, often in a "realistic" manner – the existing mural at The Crescent is open such example. A well researched and executed mural may provide a striking and low maintenance addition to the visual landscape, may generate community pride and ownership, and is often respected and left untouched by graffiti artists or vandals'*

This report was done soon after Council had been dealing with channelling graffiti activities in Glebe, into more socially acceptable projects. This was seen as another possible opportunity to this end.

Five options for a future mural were presented, if the Mural was to be replaced.

Option 1 – a Graffiti Project. This proposed to utilise local Graffiti artists, following a successful of channelling the energies of such artists in Glebe to restricted sites and palettes. They would be required to consult with community groups including youth groups (The PCYC'S) – as well as the aged etc. Council would prepare a brief and program over a school holiday period.

Option 2 – commission a well known artist, Wendy Sharpe was mentioned given her murals in the Cook and Phillip Park Pool, in College Street. This would involve a consultation process.

Option 3 – commission a specialist public art and design team. A preliminary quote of \$ 30 000 was mentioned plus the cost of scaffolding. This explored process options in terms of minimal or maximum community inputs.

Option 4 – seek an Expression of interest from local artists, and conduct a public debate about the merits of the submissions.

Option 5 – a partnership with The Sydney College of the Arts – this was seen as lower cost in harnessing student power, but programming constraints were acknowledged.

The report then canvassed general issues in acknowledging that there may be community interest in ownership and conservation of the existing work as well as a need for community input into what course to follow. The questions of which community, and whose history arose?

The Council's resolution indicated a strong view about the history represented, in seeking a conservation approach only. Council's resolution to adopt a conservation approach indicated the strong ownership of the values, the memory, the history, the heritage value. In resolving to seek quotes for the job, they asked for the original artists to be canvassed as well as for a community consultation process. There is no doubt that Councillor Moira Sheehan who understood the history and values was the key player in making this decision.

In response Jeff Thompson Manager of Strategic Planning rang Humphries, who recommended Monk for the re-paint.

The Abela report was nevertheless seminal in drawing out the often competing issues, allowing Council to review and decide the key issues of importance.

Two quotes were obtained, one from Rodney Monk (Courtney & Monk) for \$ 28 435, and one by another Mural painting firm, DMK Designs, Murals and Interiors for \$ 62 810.

It is evident from review of the project including Monk's assessment of the condition of the work, and the technical requirements, that their price was fair and reasonable. Accordingly the next Budget was to meet the shortfall with a \$ 30 000 allocation with allowance for contingencies.

## Memorable mural faces makeover

BY PATRICK KENEALLY

FOR years the social movements of the 1970s have stood immortalised in a mural on the Crescent at Annandale, but a Leichhardt Council report suggested that it be painted over to make way for something more modern.

Councillor Hall Greenland was among those opposed to the move on the grounds that it is a piece of social and political history.

"It was that time where there was a lot of street art and street theatre. It is a mural that reflects its time," he said.

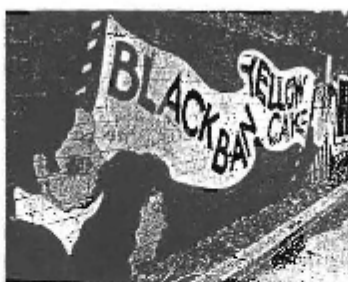
The black ban yellow cake flag on the mural was in protest over the issue of trucking of nuclear material through Leichhardt to Johnstons Bay, Cr Greenland said.

Leichhardt was declared a nuclear free zone in the 1970s and uranium shipments were a controversial issue.

"There was graffiti on it at the time of the Franklin dam case. Someone painted the triangular No Dams sign underneath the plane."

The No Dams sign was later removed from the mural, but the rest of it remained remarkably unscathed, Cr Greenland said.

Annandale precinct secretary David Lawrence said it was appropriate for council to put the future of the mural up for public



Makeover or paint over?

consultation.

"Some people view it as being outdated and not art," he said.

But, Mr Lawrence said the \$10,000 provided in council's works budget would cover little more than a cosmetic touch up job for the mural.

A new mural may cost more than \$100,000. Community volunteers painted the original from 1975 to 1978, reducing the cost significantly. No-one is sure who came up with the original design, but little touches were obviously aided by volunteers.

Trucks painted on the mural have politically inspired messages and the Cockatoo carries a reference to Sir John Kerr and his sacking of the elected Whitlam Government in 1975.

Council voted to defer the matter for a report into the restoration and extension of the mural.

LOCAL HISTORY

The 'Village Voice' coverage of the issue in January 2004

There followed correspondence between the Courtney + Monk Studios and Jeff Thompson, which incorporated community and cultural services. Monk writes to Thompson on 6 February commenting on his previous involvement:

*'I directed the work which was painted in 1980 as part of regional employment development program engaging the talents of six young artists who developed images reflecting the aspirations and nature of the area and its people.'*

*The foreshore of Rozelle Bay was almost entirely industrial and The Crescent (road) took much of the traffic now travelling the freeway western link. Sydney Airport's second runway was not built however and the themes of reducing heavy traffic, aircraft noise and creating harbour foreshore recreational access were major community aspirations.*

*The Mural assisted in raising the public's awareness of these local goals as well as providing a visual "breath of fresh air" into what was otherwise a fairly dingy and slow drive or walk for residents on the way to the bus stop (the waiting shed which was in the*

*area central to the large aircraft image). Some residents and school children visited the site and assisted with the painting.'*

He goes on to discuss practicalities of renewal, to remove flaking paint, to clean, and then overpaint using the remaining sound painting as a template. He advises against patching which would be the normal course with restoration of artwork. The heavy fading, deterioration of the materials, and the importance of legibility and aesthetics in this instance justify renewal. Similar issues arise with much Aboriginal art on exposed sites. The community view should prevail.

A motorised scissors lift is proposed to do the work over an estimated period of six weeks.

Thompson reported to Council on the project in May 2004 in recommending the appointment of Courtney and Monk, with a commencement date of July 2004 as well as *'interested members of the Community Committee together with a local artist oversee the progress, content and additions to the mural'* as well as *'the commissioning of works is to proceed with indigenous content to be considered for the missing open area'*

Public risk and efficiency suggested that community involvement was not desirable in this instance.

Thompson put a further report to Council in August 2004 about treatment of the blank area, recommending that *'Monk run workshops through local youth contacts with a view to establishing an indigenous theme and interested artist(s) to fill the missing section'* The decision on outcomes is to be decided by the elected members of the Committee. On completion a celebratory event was to be organised.

On 13 November Monk reported by email to Thompson that he had met with members of the Leichhardt High area Aboriginal Education team.

The celebration of the re-painting occurred on Australia Day 2005 the flyer for the event says:

*'If you had a role in the original mural or you are interested in the mural's story reflecting life in the 1980's come along at 1pm on Wednesday 26 January. A BBQ and refreshments will be available at the park that serves as a link between The Crescent and Bayview Crescent Annandale, adjacent to the Rozelle Bay Light Rail Station steps'.*

Two letters followed from Monk explaining resolution of the many issues and themes. These are enclosed in the Appendix C. The first letter concludes with *'I'll do the next repaint of The Crescent from an elevated wheelchair if I'm around'*.



The re-painted sign board acknowledges the re-paint



The re-paint was celebrated with an Australia Day BBQ in 2005. Moira Sheehan was the Mayor when the project was sanctioned and started but it was completed during the term of Alice Murphy. The group includes Rodney Monk (black hat) and Councillors, Vera-Ann Hannaford, Moira Sheehan, Mayor Alice Murphy, Rochelle Porteous, and Damian Copley-Finch. From the 'Leichardt News' Autumn 2005

## Heritage Assessment

The Council concern to conserve the history embodied in the Mural triggered a heritage assessment of the Mural and review of the record on its making. The assessment of 19 May 2005 was done by the author of this report when employed as a Strategic Planner with Leichhardt (from 1981 to 2006). A copy of this Assessment and the Potential Heritage Item Inventory Sheet is attached in Appendix C. This work was done in conjunction with a broader review of heritage itemisation by this author. This recommended that The Mural become a Heritage Item of State significance. This means its history is also important to the State as well as locally. This assessment has been reviewed under the State Heritage Register format and is attached as Appendix E. The Mural has been included in the Potential Items Schedule for consideration, but has not proceeded at this time. This project may encourage Council to proceed with this proposal.

## 6.0 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

### Historic

#### State natural or cultural themes

The 1960's and the decades following was a period of social activism that is reflected in the material culture. The new post War generation experienced tertiary education, questioned the values of their parents, and big issues were discussed from the civil rights movements in North America and a questioning of the Vietnam War, with local expressions. Social and sexual norms were under question, and a more diverse and plural society was emerging with an ethos of inclusiveness.

The Australian movement was clearly influenced by and in step with similar movements overseas, particularly in the UK and North America. The recent book *'On the Wall - four decades of community murals in New York City' – 1968 – 2007*, provides useful comparisons, and much parallel work and ideas, but it also reflects the much higher socio-economic divides both in that City and in that nation. As in Australia much of the work was publically sanctioned and funded, but most was on private walls, when empty lots and dereliction reflect the decay of American inner cities, and few works from the 1970/80's have survived. However the mural movement seen as intrinsic to community development, pride and identity continues both in Manhattan and more so in the Boroughs.

The public domain had long been a conformist expression of power and the values of the elite, with dissent a largely private realm. Decoration in the public realm was mostly confined to architectural ornament, and elite and formal works like sculpture were very much in retreat in the twentieth century. Political slogans appeared on the hidden walls of the City and were seen at best as ratbaggery. But they also appeared on the campuses, and poster art with both political and counter culture messages surfaced across the inner cities. It came mainly as an import from North America and Europe.

The key progenitor in this case, David Humphries studied in London and got involved with street murals in the Lower East Side of Manhattan around 1977.

Making the walls of the City, the public realm, even though the walls were usually to private property, a surface for cultural expression was new, a revolution of sorts. It ceased to be subversive, illegal, became tolerated and then was sanctioned and achieved public support and funding. The conjunction of Humphries as the facilitator in the Premier's Department under patronage of the Wran Government, seeing itself as progressive in all things but also testing the waters, with training and experience with community art, with Tim Kelly a young man wanting to make a mark as an Alderman with similar interests and training to Humphries, with an able organiser and people person in Rodney Monk, made this set of projects possible.

The Mural remains an important summation of issues current at the time of painting, and a period of social activism, with some updating in the repaint in 2004. It remains primarily a statement of 79/80. While these reflect local concerns, around the quality of life, the character of the suburbs, the heritage buildings, the environment, the foreshore location, the impact of shipping and industry was portrayed as at least benign as the character and identity of place, the impact of trucks, cars, aircraft was as negative. It is a public blackboard of this time, a record of the issues of the time, treated lightly in enhancing a bleak edge to a truck laden road, notwithstanding its location in the head of Rozelle Bay. The future of the foreshores was a battleground between competing port, industrial and residential activities with the community bid for parkland. The parkland dream came in time for the Bicentenary in 1988, with the handover of the former port lands in Rozelle Bay by Deputy Premier and Minister for Public Works Laurie Ferguson of the Wran Government

The Mural reflects both local themes and broader societal change. Hence it has arguably both Local and State significance. It was a change point in the society and the City; there was massive de-industrialisation in the inner city, and the transformation of the waterfront. Blue collar employment was shrinking; the inner suburbs and Harbour edge were becoming attractive as a place to live close to the amenities and jobs in the City.

Looking back it was a brief moment for such a cultural explosion. Most of these works started in the late '70's continuing into the mid-80's; a decade at best. After then community activism retreated and authorities became more risk averse. Public art retreated into being purely decorative, or individual not art statements, not expressions of shared ideas. This, as well as the fragility of most of these works adds to its exceptional status, and at least the potential rarity.

Monk thinks such murals work best as reflective of their communities, not propaganda. Quoting John McDonald on this: *'As artworks grow more didactic or obscure, they become progressively less interesting to most viewers. Before we can absorb a message we need to be lured and hooked'* As Monk explains the absent fisherman image in The Crescent Mural, it introduces intrigue allowing the viewer to engage their imagination – filling out the dots. The Crescent Mural has many such moments, but the unrelenting traffic is not conducive to contemplation.

**Comment:** there is scope to better shelter the pavement against the traffic onslaught and to provide better interpretation to convey the history, and the messages. It should be a more contemplative place.



## **Conclusion**

The Crescent Mural is the best and most comprehensive example of the mural art of this time in Leichhardt, and reflective of this change point in the City as a whole. Its importance was acknowledged at the time by the RAlA Merit Award for outstanding environmental design in 1981.

## **Associations with notable people.**

While most of the people associated with The Mural had a largely local profile, the three key players had broader engagements with the City and State, in their careers. Tim Kelly became a Regional Arts Coordinator in South Western Sydney, disseminating his training and experience into these areas. David Humphries had a major role in public policy and facilitation when in the Premiers Department, overseeing this movement, and then went on to become a major practitioner with Monk with the Public Art Squad in public art, both earlier murals, and later terrazzo and mosaics with major projects in Darling Harbour, Skygardens, and the Olympic site. Rodney Monk has had a very distinguished career mostly doing public murals in Australia and overseas; some 400 to date. Humphries and Monk are two of a small group of muralists from the 1980's and who are still practitioners. Most of the notable murals from this time came from a few key artists, Humphreys, Monk, Day, Fairskye, Dolk and Ruff. It is remarkable that all still remain engaged as artists and/or educators.

## **Aesthetic**

Hugh Mason, himself an artist commented that he considered the re-paint artistically a much finer piece of work than the original mural. This is not surprising; the original work was painted by a team of very young artists in collaboration with the community. Passers by were invited to pick up a brush, it was a participatory community project, that was its value and meaning. There were large areas of flat painting; it had the cartoon like quality of naïve art. Nevertheless the whole in terms of the underlying drawing, composition, colour and tone was carefully considered and imaginative, and the re-paint maintains and improves on its worth. The main shift as identified by Mason is the superior painting by one hand, Monk. The chief compositional change was a lowering of the horizon line; a decision by Monk.

## **Association with a particular community or cultural group.**

The Mural came out of extensive workshopping with the community groups from the surrounding suburbs as well as with the local schools. It started as a collage of ideas and images and hence is reflective of these communities at this time. However it is principally a product of the Public Art Squad team of Humphries and Monk with six assistants who were mainly art students then, but several of whom went on to become distinguished artists and art educators, including Wayne Hutchins, Kristine Ammitzboll (now Vartan) Bronwen Bassett, and Sharron Evans.

## THEMES

### The principal themes in 1980 were:

- Heritage/suburb/landmarks character and identity e.g Hunter Baillie and Witches Houses.
- Industry – both waterfront, including tugs and factories – the portrayal was benign as part of the character.
- Cars, trucks and planes in terms of noise, congestion, pollution.
- Yellow cake as a threat and pollution.
- Social action such as by groups such as BUGAUP
- Land and water based recreation
- Sport – Tigers.
- Popular culture – Sesame Street characters and kangaroo etc.

### The added themes in 2004:

- Aboriginal issues including the couple fishing in the Bay, and the Land Rights issue.
- Ominous war plane replaced by commercial jets representing general aircraft noise and impacts (particularly due to the second parallel runway over Annandale)
- Sport – the Australian Rules game in progress. (Monk coached the Glebe amateur AFL Team at the time)

While most of these themes are Local in significance four themes are relevant to the **National** narrative:

1. Heritage Conservation – the conservation of whole suburbs became an issue from the 1970's, including the whole suburb of Annandale (it became a Conservation Area)
2. Economic, social and technological change represented by the demise of both waterfront activities and manufacturing from inner Harbour and inner City.
3. Pollution issues arising from transport and substances such as yellow cake.
4. The social/political movements and community activism that was associated with the other three themes.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS & SIGNIFICANCE

### Other Murals in Leichhardt

Appendix A contains current photographs of the discussed works.

It is remarkable that all of the possible projects put forward by Wayne Hutchins to Council's SPIC Committee on 14 July 1980 proceeded except the Booth Street wall. The DMR did not give permission.



The first project listed are the walls abutting onto the Styles Street Playground in Leichhardt (Whites Creek). Only one section of the Styles Street Playground mural remains, albeit in very poor condition. This private wall to an adjoining house, is heavily overgrown, and is not a notable product in artistic terms. This wall has now been overpainted. Another hard play wall in the same park has been repainted in 2008 in a whimsical theme influenced by the graphic styling of graffiti art.

The second project was the subject Mural – perhaps indicating it being a high priority and an evident opportunity to decorate a wall described by Teresa Archibald as an ‘eyesore’.



Mitchell Street Glebe – replacement mural.

The third project was on a side wall to a house in Westmoreland Street corner of Mitchell Street Glebe, a house in the Glebe Estate hence, to become Department of Housing following the purchase of the Estate by the Federal Government. This is now in the City of Sydney. The current mural is modern depicting the rainbow serpent and may be a product of children from Glebe Public School, given its association with the Aboriginal community and the high Aboriginal population now in The Estate. Its demographic in 1980 would have been very different. There is a thematically similar mural on the side wall of a terrace fronting Glebe Point Road, facing the Glebe Public School grounds. This is also public housing. This work is relatively new.

The fourth mentioned was a wall to the adjoining terrace abutting the closed section of Punch Street, Birchgrove. It does not remain. The report says that murals on such private walls were only expected to remain for five years, after which the wall would be re-painted to suit the owner. The fifth project a private side wall to a Catherine Street property. The wall abutted Pioneer Memorial Park. It does not survive. The other project listed were the private side walls to terraces houses on Evans Street Rozelle that flank a right of way from Evans Street into the O’Connor Reserve. These do not survive.

## The O'Connor Reserve artworks.



Mosaics on sitting walls in O'Connor Reserve, 1980 by Morrice Shaw and his students. The mural on the adjoining Hotel wall by Monk has gone.

Around the same time other improvements were in train for O'Connor Reserve, as a collaboration between Rodney Monk doing a mural, and the architect Morrice Shaw doing the hard works. The murals were onto the side walls of the flanking commercial properties including a Hotel, fronting Victoria Road. These have disappeared. The hard works were a series of curvilinear brick walls defining the path descending from Victoria Road into the Park. Mosaics of broken china were to be added to these walls but this has only occurred in the one long wall, to the eastern side. The whole is Gaudi-esque and charming. This is an important work by a notable architect who did handmade type buildings in this period. There is a strong case for conservation. Given the works are in good condition, they would not appear to be threatened.

## The 1980 CYSS Mural @ 756 Darling Street Rozelle.



The Project artist was Michiel Dolk using unemployed from the CYSS. Dolk later collaborated with Marilyn Fairskye doing the panels on the pylons to the Woolloomooloo Viaduct.

The property is owned by a Federal Government agency promoting youth employment programs. It has changed its name, but not its function several times; currently called InnerSKILL – youth pathways. The project coordinated by a notable muralist at the time Michiel Dolk using both local unemployed youth and students at the Sydney College of the Arts (then located in Balmain – now at Rozelle Hospital). The work celebrates various ways of living, working and play. It was a very dramatic and prominent piece, given the corner location and the strong use of colour and geometry. As a statement of its time and in terms of artistry it is notable. Next to the subject Mural it may be the most important mural statement of this time in Leichhardt. This raises questions about its current poor condition and its conservation.

Over the past 30 years the trees adjoining have matured, and the paint has peeled and faded so the work is barely discernible within the street, but still quite legible close up. In this state it is likely to have limited meaning to the community. However it remains evidence that can be revived at some point in the future. Given its lower visibility there is unlikely to be the level of community support for re-painting at this time. It would be desirable to obtain advice on its stabilisation to extend its life, or seeking funding for a re-paint.

Dolk was also involved with the notable murals under the Eastern Suburbs Railway viaduct in Woolloomooloo, with Marilyn Fairskye.

## The 'Bushland Mural' at Balmain Town Hall.



This mural is painted on the side wall to the Balmain Police Station adjoining the back of Balmain Town Hall and the playground of a former Childcare Facility in this area. The facility has since relocated to Mort Bay Park. This centre is believed to have been built just prior to 1980.

The mural was painted in 1984 by a local painter Glenda Jones, evidently to decorate the large blank wall adjoining the playground. It evokes the Australian bush and bush animals. It is very expertly painted, and is a very fine piece of work. It differs from most public murals in being quite a lyrical and soft work, and appropriate as a backdrop to children's play. In these terms it is closer to the illusionist murals of Peter Day.

Jones was interviewed about this project. The transcript is in Appendix B. She did other work following in former the Shell Service Station in Darling Street Balmain, now painted over. It is a very fine piece of work and the only extant work in the public domain by a notable local artist.

The bushland mural is unsigned and not dated. There is an evident need to convey this history in situ. There is also an opportunity in association with the future of the adjoining site, including the former childcare facility and the Council Depot behind to improve the setting of the mural and include it in an upgraded public domain.

## McKenzie Street Reserve – 36<sup>th</sup> Battalion Park Leichhardt



The original murals on the drill hall that stood on this site have gone. However the walls of a brick outbuilding bounding the Park have been repainted in 2004 in a whimsical and perhaps surrealist fashion. It visually enhances the Park, but lacks the social and historical connections of the earlier works discussed.

## The Les Moore Centre in Cecily Street Lilyfield.



This mural is painted on the O'Neill Street side wall of the centre and is a lively portrait of the place, its people and its dogs. It was repainted around 1990. The image above is of the former Lilyfield Post Office in Lamb Street. This mural is about community building and local values. Conservation with additive change would seem appropriate.

## MURALS ELSEWHERE IN CENTRAL SYDNEY

The local value of murals from the 1980's has been examined in the previous section. It is desirable to place these in the broader context.

The 1982 *'The Mural Manual'* published by the NSW Arts Council (Premier's Dept) but co-authored by David Humphries and Rodney Monk provides a useful overview on murals painted at that time. Helen Davies Director of Paintworks Pty Ltd surveyed the murals of this period in a 1990 comparative assessment as *'Sydney's Murals of the 1980's: Loved or Unloved –Treasured or Transient'*. This was written in advising the City Council on their heritage of public art. As with Leichhardt many of the works have gone, or are now in poor condition. There have been proposals to resurrect the Woolloomooloo murals under the Eastern Suburbs Viaduct, but this has not happened, and they are in a sad state. The artists were Michiel Dolk (who did the CYSS mural in Rozelle) and Marilyn Fairskye in 1981. Both of these artists remain practitioners as well as academics. Marilyn Fairskye has been interviewed for this project. These panels are more overtly political statements than the subject Mural, railing against developers particularly the Victoria Street struggle with high rise development and the involvement of the Green Bans movement. They also deal with Aboriginal land rights issues. They are finely and professionally painted evidently influenced by the great Inter-War period muralists such as Diego Rivera. These murals are also exceptional historic records that require heritage assessment and a conservation strategy.

## The Public Art Squad's Murals.



The Public Art Squad (Humphries and Monk) also did the *'Peace Justice and Unity'* mural in 1983 in Pitt Street at Park, in the City. It was re-painted in 2003. Because of its prominent position and its major themes, but also as a powerful piece of mature graphic design by the PAS, it is one of the most significant public murals, extant from the 1980's



Humphries and Monk did a notable mural called *'Think Globally, Act Locally'* on a factory wall adjoining the 'Reconciliation Park, a pocket park in George, James and William Streets Redfern in 1985. It is now obscured by planting, and in poor condition. It received the RAIAs Sulman Medal at that time.



It provided elements of fantasy and intrigue including a dinosaur in a harsh and bland park. The inclusion of local people, many of them Aboriginal gives additional significance to this work. Mature trees have substantially obscured the reading of the whole. The paint has also faded. Nevertheless the work transforms an otherwise limited space in evoking its serious intent. The case to conserve and re-paint is compelling. Painted under South Sydney Council it is now in the City of Sydney.

Monk considers the most important works by the Public Art Squad during their 1970/80's partnership to be The Crescent Mural, The Reconciliation Park Mural in Redfern, the Peace Justice and Unity Mural in Pitt Street the City, and their mosaic/terrazzo in Skygardens at the end of the decade. Most of the Skygardens work has been destroyed. One of the key works has gone to the Powerhouse Museum, another to the Banjo Patterson Sculpture Park at Yeoval. This is a poor compromise to keeping them in public space. The Reconciliation Park work is in poor condition. Given the re-paints The Crescent work and The Peace Justice and Unity murals are in good condition

### **Peter Day**

Another of the prominent muralists from this period was Peter Day responsible for the King George V mural on the viaduct wall of the southern approaches to the Sydney Harbour Bridge in Cumberland Street, The Rocks. This was painted in 1983, but was recently extended by Day and Monk. According to Day it is now the largest public mural in the southern hemisphere. This differs from the other Sydney murals in being 'illusionist' in painting an imagined landscape through painted arcading to the wall. This follows the 'Tromp L'Oeil' tradition particularly from the Baroque period, and is rare in Australia and in modern murals.

During this period many Council's initiated murals, including South Sydney and Randwick. Most of these have not survived. These include a number of walls to pocket parks in Surry Hills. A surviving example is an illusionist bush landscape on the end wall of a terrace in Nickson Street Surry Hills. This was coordinated by Peter Day in 1981. It is in very poor condition. Re-painting is being considered.



A sample of the Nickson Street Mural by Peter Day in Surry Hills. This is a detail from the 1981 Nickson Street mural in Surry Hills, on the end wall of a terrace house. It closes a view of the Victorian streetscape by evoking an illusionist bush landscape, done in a very loose and painterly manner; now in poor condition. The patination and aesthetic value would be lost with re-painting. This would seem a work of local aesthetic value. It is now in the City of Sydney. It is useful to compare this work, with Glenda Jones' mural at Balmain Town Hall which is in much better condition.

## Carol Ruff.

Carol who is still an active muralist was interviewed by phone, while in Alice Springs doing a project.



Carol Ruff's International Women's Day Mural in the Domain, 1982 – now in very poor condition. She also did the 'Day of our Elders Mural' in Belmore Road Randwick in 1981.



Carol Ruff also did the mural on the northern wall to Lawson Street opposite Redfern Station in 1983, assisted by Tracey Moffat and Norma Bindle a Territorian Aboriginal woman. Re-painting has been deferred given the redevelopment proposals for this area, by the Aboriginal Housing Cooperative. While a very powerful graphic and historic document for the Aboriginal issues of the time it is now in very poor condition, and under threat.



The say 'NO' to drugs was painted on the brick walls to the railway bridge in Lawson Street at Redfern Station around 1990. This is historically very important in terms of the issues of that time, including Aids and drugs prevalent at that time. Conservation allowing for additive change would seem appropriate. Painted when in South Sydney, it is now in the City of Sydney. It clearly borrows from the earlier work by Ruff.

## Merilyn Fairskye



One of the 1981 panels on the Woolloomooloo Viaduct. These panels are now in poor condition.

Probably the most elaborate and ambitious mural commission during this period was for a series of murals to be placed on the pylons to the Woolloomooloo Railway Viaduct, a three year collaboration between Merilyn Fairskye and Michiel Dolk, who had done the CYSS mural in Rozelle. Merilyn was interviewed not only in relation to this project but also for her perspective as an educator on community art through this period. She has been a practitioner of digital and video art since that time, and is now based at The Sydney College of the Arts, in Rozelle.

The City commissioned a historical study of these murals to examine the conservation issues, given their importance and poor condition. This and other conservation studies concluded that the best approach is stabilisation. Very good photos of the work were also taken by the AGNSW. Fairskye thinks that probably the best means of recording and interpretation of these works is by use of the photos, in situ.



One of the most powerful political statements was the 'I have a dream' mural in King Street Newtown. Originally illegally painted on a Telecom site, it has achieved iconic recognition and de facto protection. A late statement about the American civil rights struggle and the role of Martin Luther King linked to the Aboriginal rights movement. It was painted by the 'Unmitigated Audacity Productions' group in 1991. These are now known as the 'old school group' of street artists, given the rise of guerrilla and graffiti art, particularly evident in the inner-west.

The Black Power Salute mural in Leamington Lane Newtown near Macdonald Town Station recently subject to a community campaign is of similar ilk.

State sponsored community art came to abrupt end soon after the Wran Government and the conservative shift in the nation generally. All governments have increasingly become controversy averse and public art has become either fine art or aesthetic, and decorative rather than a statement of ideas and beliefs. Monk sees this as primarily about the rise of corporate power, expressed through the media as well as public policy. This adds significance to this change moment.

### **Comparative Assessment**

The cultural value of murals of around 1980's is contested. While the Sydney Morning Herald art critic Terrence Malloon says 'it was a brief but fertile period in Australian history' in a 1982 review he derided the RAIA's merit award to the Mural. He is understood to have considered it a naïve and limited piece. Humphries, Monk, Hutchins and Fairskye would say that he missed the point. Art historically has often been a collective product and a sharing of ideas including execution, and this social activist period was reflecting the traditional 'blackboard' role of such art. It became a briefer moment than anticipated. The Whitlam and Wran Governments played a critical role in this, highlighting its representation of this period in State and National cultural development.

After this period most artists including many of the muralists returned to their studios and/or teaching; a few Monk, Day, and Ruff continued in this media. Others such as Humphreys and Fairskye continue to do public public art with a change of media. However most 'public art' now either falls into the fine art camp as individual commissions from notable artists from public authorities, such as the City of Sydney Program, or as individual art statements. The street wall art that is mostly termed '*graffiti*' is not sanctioned, but may be tolerated, and may be facilitated by youth programs in particular ways. While most are personal statements and tagging, some political content continues with the most famous exponent being the English artist, Banksy. Given that this was a brief moment in the history and given the fragility and loss of much of the work, it is important to assess what remains, and develop an appropriate conservation response.

The only effective way of ensuring that an open process of assessment and conservation response occurs is through the heritage provisions of State planning legislation, and this is the suggested method, and one of the envisaged outcomes from this report.

All of these mostly central city examples evaluated illustrate the fragility of this media, Public murals which are mostly community art or art produced as a collaboration with communities are most vulnerable and in time rare heritage. The longevity of the paint used at this time, in external and often exposed locations, the murals vulnerability to vandalism, as well as their continued relevance are factors in their demise. Hence, the need to review, assess, and decide, on their future.

The key two questions are '*what is important in terms of the history*' and '*what needs to be kept to conserve this history*'. With the subject Mural there was clear support for its conservation and renewal, unusual for this cultural product. But their frequent demise adds to their rarity and the need for representative conservation for heritage as well as for other reasons.

Collective products simply painted like the original Crescent Mural can be more easily conserved or re-painted keeping their essence. The argument in this case is that it has been enriched. This goes against the norms of heritage conservation and the Burra Charter with its '*Do as little as possible and as much as is necessary*' credo. Where the major significance in the messages it carries has been substantially lost it is reasonable to recover that by re-painting, as occurs with Aboriginal work in some cases. The community strongly supported the re-paint incorporating new themes in this case.

Most recent murals on public walls, or private walls onto public space are not sanctioned, or may at best be tolerated or channelled into particular areas, such as the May Lane St Peters and the lanes in Enmore. Most of the recent works are the expression of individuals or groups outside the mainstream, and hence have different meanings and purpose than art produced by on behalf of the broader community, and mostly managed by Councils, sometimes with funding under other government programs. These works may be valued or tolerated or hated, but are unlikely to be owned by the broader communities. They are tolerated mostly on blank side and back walls, principally to ancillary structures. They are not comparable and need assessment in their own terms.

The particular value of the circa 1980 examples is their focus on community issues representing the major issues of that time, during an exceptional period of public interest and activism. Most murals since that time are more individual statements of the artists or

celebrations of their locale or of events, or simply decorative. It has become less politically acceptable to deal with political/social issues in the public domain. Our public domain and public conversations are arguably poorer for this?

To quote from Helen Davies' overview in turn quoting Bernard Smith:

*'However, I would suggest that with the passing of time, those murals of the 1980s, selected on the basis of their social, historical, cultural and artistic significance, which can be properly restored and subsequently regularly maintained, will become a valuable interpretive reminder of a very particular and brief period of art history that has been described in Bernard Smith's summary of Australian art,*

*Australian Painting 1788 - 2000", "All over the world the mural movement sought a purely public art.....(that) drew on aspects of working life and community history...designed boldly, with bright colours and clear effects....the mural movement had sprung from social and political passions: detached from them, it has withered. Its brief season in Australian painting was, however, a lively one.'*

Ranking of the surviving murals is not necessary so much as to assess their significance in terms of heritage protection. Are they worthy in terms of their historical, social, or aesthetic significance to be protected as Heritage Items, and are they of Local or State significance? As a blackboard of a change moment in the history, social, environmental and cultural The Crescent Mural evidently has high Local significance. But it was also records a major change point in terms of the history of the City, and therefore of the State. The inner city and the waterfront was going through major industrial and economic change and transformation in terms of new parklands and residential development. State significance is demonstrated.

The Thematic evaluation suggests that there are four strands to its contribution to the State and National narrative.

In terms of comparison with the other extant murals from this time, interviews with the other muralists, some of whom are also educators leads to much agreement. Apart from The Crescent example the following are considered very important:

1. The Woolloomooloo Eastern Suburbs Viaduct panels with the Victoria Street Battle panel by Dolk and Fairskye and in particular cited by Carol Ruff.
2. Day's Cumberland Street illusionist KGV (Recreation Centre) Mural
3. PAS's 'Peace, Justice and Unity Mural' in Pitt Street City.
4. PAS's 'Reconciliation Mural' in George Street Redfern.
5. Ruff's 'International Womens' Day Mural' on the Domain Parking Station.
6. Ruff considers the work by her and others on the northern wall in Lawson Street Redfern opposite the Station is an important statement particularly about Aboriginal civil rights of its time, but its condition and its future, given the approval for redevelopment of this area, makes its survival (rather than recording) questionable. This increases the importance of The Domain and the Belmore Road Randwick examples.

This group is useful for comparative purposes but is by no means fully representative of this movement, for even Sydney. However they would also seem to meet the bar for heritage protection locally and probably all are also significant in State terms. Most were

initiated or assisted under State programs during the Wran Government period. This is a study to both inform and advise Leichhardt Council in these terms. However it would be desirable to disseminate this research to both inform to encourage conservation actions more broadly, as an important genre of recent social history and culture.

### **The International Context**

The community mural movement in Australia parallels similar movements overseas, principally in North America and the UK, but public murals as social and political commentary have a long genesis including the Mexican muralists in the 1930's and associated with the Allende Government in Chile in the early 1970's. It is beyond the scope of this research to review the international scene; however the recent publication of *'On the Wall – four decades of community murals in New York City'* is useful for comparative purposes. This covers 1968 to 2007.

There are clearly influences on the Australian movement in terms of consultative process, the means of production, themes and the techniques and media, and as cultural artifacts. One of the first key groups was the CITYarts Workshop working in the Lower East Side of New York, then a scene of urban decay and conflict particularly over housing issues, but also rising attempts at regeneration and greening.



Smokehouse Associate's abstract mural of 1968/9, Manhattan. This is seen as an art statement decorating a bleak urban setting. Most muralists were socially engaged.

Some of the earliest works are abstract done by signwriters perhaps reflecting the main art movement of that time in the City. The CITYarts repudiated this as decorative compared to their politically charged position, raising issues of racism, feminism, and the democratization of art making. They were a collective of amateur artists and community participants; grass roots art making.

The Chicago Mural Art Group influenced CITYarts in a shift from painted on ply panels for assembly to painting directly on walls using scaffolding and by the use of professional artists.

To quote one of their key players Eva and James Cockcroft:

*'Murals have returned to art its lost power to express meaningful truths directly and to be progressive and liberating force in society'.*

But a bit later she said:

*'Protest murals yielded to murals celebrating community action, pride of place and local history, ethnic and social solidarity, and political heroes and icons'.*

The movement moved from the late '70's more from the clenched fist (a common motif) to affirmation, pride celebration of place and neighborhood. Since then facilitation and funding has mainly come from the City and the Boroughs.

The group shifted to using professional artists first directing and then making the art, interpreting themes derived from the community and then to administrator directed in the early '80's. This reflected the national shift to the conservative Nixon administration and the loss of Federation support for community art programs. This puts a mirror to the Australian context. Community art became institutionalized, local concerned with community development and positive celebrations of neighborhood.



Lucy Mahler's 1973 Mural 'Let a People, Loving Freedom, Come to Growth'. The simplified geometric graphic style allowed community participation in its making and was an inclusive approach to community building like the Crescent Mural.



In 1977 the *'First Street Mural'* in Brooklyn was defaced as it included the portraits of prominent black power figures and it was attacked by the gentrifiers. CITYarts whitewashed out the mural. The Cockcrofts then left the group and formed Artmakers Inc, to continue a politically and socially engaged agenda. But after then the themes reflected the different ethnicity of and the cultural mosaic of American cities; and somewhat different from the Australian context.



Some themes surfaced earlier there than here including the 1970 *'Anti-Drug Abuse'* Mural and the above 1973 *'Destruction of Nature'* Mural in Manhattan both by CITYarts



Hank Prussing's 1981 *'Garden/City'* Manhattan. This illusionist landscape in a community garden in a tough urban setting can be compared with Peter Day's and Glenda Jones's work in Sydney.

Community murals remains a flourishing expression in the New York endowed by the Boroughs as an affirmation of community and identity in conjunction with the self and group expression of tagging and spray can art. However the ephemeral nature of the works appears to be accepted. Most of the historic work has been destroyed and is only commemorated in photos. Conservation has not surfaced as an issue. There is an opportunity in terms of conservation of the works here.

## 7.0

### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

- The Crescent Mural is the most important statement and record of community aspirations and concerns during the 1980 period of social, political, economic and land-use change, in the public domain, in Leichhardt, and the inner city. It is of Local significance to this community.
- It also represents a change point in the history of the City in terms of de-industrialisation of the waterfront and renewal for public foreshores and mainly residential renewal. It is of State significance for this history.
- It is the most important work of community collaborative art from that period in Leichhardt and one of the most important in Sydney.
- It transpires this was a very brief period of collaborative public art from about 1977 to 1985, adding to its rarity and significance
- The key associated politician was Tim Kelly (a Leichhardt Alderman from 1977- 80). His own professional engagement as an artist and coordinator of community art programs in South Western Sydney followed from his Leichhardt experience.
- David Humphreys who had a key role in the community art movement of that time, advised Kelly, facilitated and guided this work, as a mature practitioner in public art, and in terms of public policy. Humphreys went on to do mosaic and terrazzo work on major projects including for the Sydney Olympics and Skygardens in Pitt Street City (tragically now destroyed except for two works placed in museums).
- It was an early work painted and coordinated by Rodney Monk who has had a remarkable career in public murals, responsible for many of the most significant works in the city (around 250). Many of the assisting artists have become professional artists including Wayne Hutchings, Kristeen Amitzboll (Vartan), Sherran Evans, and Bronwen Bassett.
- The re-painting in 2004/5 updated the works in terms of themes, with the more developed painting skills of Monk. The re-paint has higher aesthetic merit and adds the Aboriginal connection to the Bay.
- The prominence of its location on a major artery and in the head of Rozelle Bay, add to significance and the identity of the place.

## 8.0

### CONSERVATION POLICY ARISING FROM SIGNIFICANCE

The repainting of The Mural in 2004/5 followed extensive debate on the options with technical advice particularly from Monk. Given its carriage of community messages is its prime significance, repainting was an imperative for conservation of the significance. The execution by the main painter of the original work represents the desirable continuity in terms of content, meaning and expression. Given the expertise involved and some regular maintenance, mainly keeping the wall free of plant growth should ensure an improved life over the longevity and performance of the original mural, repainted after 25 years. It appears that new technology such as the KEIN system may make the task of conservation easier in the future without the need to repaint. At some point the character and meaning is carried by it being a product of its time, and hence further change in conserving the work is likely to be undesirable in terms of Burra Charter practice.

At present none of the works discussed have heritage protection. It is clearly a case of falling through the cracks of the heritage protection system. It would be highly desirable for all of the significant works discussed in this report to be protected as Heritage items as well as by the by other management measures flowing from detailed assessment.

While evidently not under current threat, it would assist in the broader task of public recognition and conservation to proceed to make for The Crescent Mural a Heritage Item of State significance, as a priority.

#### **Other works in Leichhardt.**

Heritage recognition of the significant surviving works would be a desirable first step. The following have been identified in the evaluation of being worthy:

- O'Connor Reserve Rozelle – the curvilinear brick walls and seats leading down into the Park from Victoria Road.  
Comment: these works are in good condition and require no immediate conservation action.
- The CYSS Mural in Darling Street Rozelle corner of Denison.  
Comment: this work requires a careful technical assessment and consultation with the original artist, Michiel Dolk to determine the appropriate conservation response; but re-painting would seem desirable to give it the public presence it deserves. This is the responsibility of the owner of the Mural, the Federal Government
- Bushland Mural at Balmain Town Hall.  
Comment: A technical assessment involving the artist Glenda Jones is desirable on conservation measures. But it would appear that the work is in good condition and immediate action is not required. The wall should be kept clear of vegetation.
- The Cecily Street Mural to the Les Moore Centre  
Comment: this would seem important in terms of local identity, but its history needs investigated in terms of who painted it and when, and community ownership. It is in good condition and would not seem to need particular conservation measures at this time.

## Other works in the City

Most of the other works discussed for comparative purposes are in the City of Sydney. All of the surviving works discussed are now rare examples of public murals particularly from the 1980's and are very important social and cultural statements of this era. It appears that currently none have statutory protection, in heritage terms.

The City of Sydney are very proactive in the creation of new public art and have a Register of Public Art in the City. But many of the important works are not on the Register. As a genre they appear to fall between the cracks. Many of course while being located in the public domain are located on private walls. But the heritage controls are principally to protect heritage in the private sphere.

This report will become a public document on Leichhardt's Local History site. It is to be hoped that this will stimulate debate on the broader conservation and interpretation of this history, particularly in the City of Sydney.

## 9.0 INTERPRETATION

Conservation of the mural art of the 1980's also relies on maintaining its significance to the community. Recording and dissemination of the history is an essential first step. This can be enhanced by better on site interpretation, as well as statutory protection.

Currently the Mural has a painted signboard giving details of the original project in noting its repainting. However more detailed and legible signs, images and photos could enrich this telling. Conveying the messages is hindered by the massive traffic flow and unpleasantness of dallying on this pavement. This edge could be better protected by the kerb edge being reconstructed to better define the pedestrian space. Structure or structures and planting could be used to this end, removing the toe of planting against the Mural and replacement of this with a vegetated edge to the road, of tough natives such as *Lomandra*. The paving could be extended to the edge of the Mural enhancing its visibility. Keeping the bottom of the wall dry is important for conservation of the work.

The bus stop and area adjoining the bus stop provides a good opportunity to inform people waiting for the bus, with signage, panels, and art works allied to the story. This could be structure that conveys information at eye level to the pavement side and bold graphics on the road side – that reference the mural, but also for *'the quick grab'* to passing traffic.

The pier at the Johnson Street end near the crossing is another good location for interpretive information, catching the pedestrian flow down Johnston Street and into the Bicentennial Park. Depending on future land use on the industrial site in the head of the Bay, there is scope with new structures and landscaping to improve views through to the mural. Fewer scrubs but with high canopy trees on this site, would provide a better visual connection between The Crescent and the Bay.

The importance of this mural as a summation of social/environmental issues from the past of current relevance; would seem to justify a substantial interpretive effort along these lines. The other works in Leichhardt could be adequately interpreted with simple signs.

## 10.0 CONCLUSIONS

1

The public record of the genesis of The Crescent Mural has been largely wiped – some of the key resolutions only remain in the Council record. The memory is mostly with the people involved with the making of The Mural, or with residents of Annandale around during that period. Hence, the particular value for example of Rodney Monk's *'Job File'* sitting in a cardboard box in his studio, as well as people's photos and memories elicited in the interviews conducted in retrieving this history.

2.

It was a project of the so called *'Old Guard'* Labor Council of 1977 – 80, but it reflected the emerging values and concerns, and a more open process, and demonstrated that the so called *'Old Guard'* was to some degree moving with the times. .

3.

The history identifies the key political role of Tim Kelly; the key advisory role including the art making; the facilitating role of David Humphries; and the key doer, coordinator, and community communicator, in Rodney Monk, in the making of The Mural.

4.

The Mural is important as a record of a change point in our history, and a key document of the community art movement of that time, particularly as many of the works done then have gone, or are in poor condition. As it depicts issues, social/political/environmental, and economic/industrial change as well as being an important cultural movement of a period of social activism in Australia and internationally, it is also considered a work of State significance.

5.

At present none of the significant public murals from this time discussed in this report are protected as Heritage Items.

6.

Rodney Monk, the principal artist has gone on to do some 500 public murals and works, a remarkable and sustained body of work, given its mostly ephemeral place in our material culture. The Crescent Mural remains an important early work, enhanced by the 2004 re-paint.

7.

It would be highly desirable to proceed to make The Mural a Heritage Item, as was recommended to the Planning Committee in 2005. It is considered that this Mural embodies a major change point in the history of the City and it is therefore of both Local and State significance. While This Mural is the most important work in Leichhardt as a representation of this period of collaborative public art, it is considered that four other public art pieces are worthy:

- The walkway walls with mosaics along the path from Victoria Road, in the O'Connor Reserve Rozelle executed by Morrice Shaw and his students in 1980.

- The CYSS Mural at 756 Darling Street Rozelle (now occupied by Skill Share)
  - The Bushland Mural behind Balmain Town Hall (on the side wall to Balmain Police Station)
  - The O'Neill Street Mural to the Les Moore Centre in Lilyfield
- These latter works are considered to be primarily of Local significance to these communities, in terms of heritage status.

**8.**

It would be desirable for Council to allocate funds and program an interpretive program for these works; giving priority to the *'The Crescent Mural'* .

**11.0**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1.**

That this report be attached to Council's website under 'Local History' for dissemination to the community and in order to inform public policy including the interpretation of *'The Crescent Mural'*.

**2.**

That the Council consider establishing a Register of Public Art in Leichhardt, including a 3D interactive map of the works, in promoting its cultural achievements.

**3.**

That the Council re-affirm its consideration through the Planning Committee in 2005 to make *'The Crescent Mural'* a Heritage Item of State Significance.

**4.**

That the Council endorse that four other public art works of the 1980 period in Leichhardt should also become Heritage Items of Local significance:

- The walkway walls with mosaics along the path from Victoria Road, in the O'Connor Reserve Rozelle executed by Morrice Shaw and his students in 1980.
- The CYSS Mural at 756 Darling Street Rozelle (now occupied by Skill Share)
- The Bushland Mural behind Balmain Town Hall (on the side wall to Balmain Police Station by Glenda Jones.
- The O'Neill Street Mural to the Les Moore Centre in Lilyfield

**5.**

That the Council allocate funds and program an interpretive program for these works, giving priority to The Crescent Mural. .



APPENDICES  
A  
PHOTO FILE

1980/81 PHOTOS – RODNEY MONK



A red bus shelter was located in the middle of the mural – when demolished this put a hole in the middle of the composition



The middle point of the Mural



In the wet



Lifting the car theme. Note the landscape was painted in flat planes, with a lack of depth and variation of texture and tone – giving it a cartoon character.