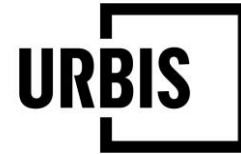




COMMITTEE
FOR BRISBANE



Brisbane and Beyond

DATE & TIME: Thursday 21 March 2019, 5:30pm – 7:00pm

VENUE: Dome Room, Brisbane Museum

MODERATOR: **Anna Reynolds, Director, Brisbane Portrait Prize and Artist**

Anna Reynolds is director of the Brisbane Portrait Prize and an artist. Anna has worked in the media in radio, TV and print for twenty-five years. She's on several boards, and now works mainly in the not-for-profit sector in the arts.

**PANEL
SPEAKERS:** **Carolyn Karnovsky, UAP Company**

Carolyn is a Principal at Urban Art Projects and develops strategy for getting public art projects off the ground. Carolyn has worked for UAP for the past 3 years, but first started collaborating with UAP 10 years ago while working for the non-profit organisation FORM. While at FORM, Carolyn was responsible for delivering public art for major developments including Perth Stadium and Elizabeth Quay. More recently, she's guided the creative strategy for the Queensland Police Memorial and Australia's Pavilion for Expo 2020 in Dubai.

Liam Proberts, Bureau Proberts

Liam Proberts is a director of Bureau Proberts. Since commencing architectural practice twenty-five years ago, he's worked on residential, housing, educational and significant public projects. In recent years, his practice has expanded into the global sphere, with larger scale public realm works across a number of countries, including Malaysia, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, and involving artists like Idris Kahn, Daniel Tobin and Sandra Sealig.

Lindy Lee, Artist

Lindy Lee is a widely recognised artist who has exhibited extensively nationally and internationally. Her art practice over decades has drawn on her Chinese-Australian experience, particularly through explorations of the philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism. She's well-represented in most of the national art institutions in this country and has recently been working on big public art collaborations, many with UAP, including one just finished at 480 Queen Street called *Moonlight Deities*.

Susan Holden, The University of Queensland

Dr Susan Holden is a senior lecturer in the School of Architecture at The University of Queensland. She is a practitioner, educator and researcher, with broad experience in Brisbane and the UK on a range of projects. Her practice has spanned urban design and installation and she's particularly interested in the intersection between art and architecture, from a theoretical framework and also as it manifests in emerging practice today.

As part of the Asia Pacific Architecture Forum held in Brisbane from the 13th to 26th of March 2019, the Committee for Brisbane hosted a panel discussion – *Brisbane and Beyond: Taking Australian architecture, art and design into the world* – at the Brisbane Museum. Moderated by artist and Director of the Brisbane Portrait Prize, Anna Reynolds, the panel discussed how the rise of art for public spaces and the value attached to it in the built environment has been the catalyst for many successful projects by Brisbane-based studios and artists, and how the creative industries can make architecture, art and design collaborations work with multiple stakeholders in a global market.



Why is there now such an appreciation of art in the public realm?

The evening's discussion began with Dr Susan Holden discussing how the value and appreciation of public art has developed and grown throughout recent history, noting the origins hark back to a broader change in art practice during the 1960s and 1970s when artists *"really started to want to make large scale works and in situ works ... [as] a mode of practice more than a category of arts"*. From these origins, public art has since developed as its own genre of art, with its value supported by government policy, including Brisbane's '1% policy', which has further shaped how art contributes to the public realm.

Later within the evening, an audience member noted the significance of Expo '88 in developing a public space and public art legacy within Brisbane and how this legacy was being celebrated by the World Expo '88 Public Art Trail, celebrating the 30th anniversary of Expo '88, by taking *"dispersed pieces of art and giving them a historical narrative that can then be built upon for tourism, for jobs, and for engaging the general community"*.

How does the design process work for big public art projects?

Carolyn Karnovsky provided an overview of the process for public art projects that UAP is involved in, describing it as a model that *"echoes a design and collaborative process for creating a building"*, starting with the need or want to commission a public artwork. The project inception involves establishing what is trying to be achieved through the artwork and teasing out the vision and objectives to guide commissioning of the work – considerations that clients or stakeholders are not always sure of themselves when they first approach UAP. From there, UAP are tasked with preparing a brief for the artist and stepping the client through a selection process to find the right artist for that project before *"the really exciting bit"* takes place – the design and fabrication processes.

Carolyn remarked that the whole process can be *"a lengthy process but it's a very valuable one as well – what we're seeing now is that when it's commissioned well (and not just plonking art in public spaces), it's really site specific and can really have a powerful impact on that space and the community's interaction with that space"*.

How did the relationship between Lindy Lee and UAP – a unique collaboration that has lasted a long time – come about?

Lindy Lee described the 'seminal moment' seven or eight years ago that established her relationship and ongoing collaboration with UAP. About to head to Shanghai for the installation of her first public artwork, she met Dan Tobin at a party, who mentioned his brother (Matt Tobin) would be in Shanghai and *"maybe he could help you"*. Meeting with Matt in Shanghai, Lindy shared some of her 'fire drawings' – artworks she'd been working on involving the piercing of paper with fire.

From this initial meeting came an offer from Matt, *"Lindy, why don't you visit our shed in Brisbane ... I think that you would have fun piercing metal with the plasma cutter"* (a super-heated oxy torch). Having thought, shed = double car garage, Lindy showed up to 'the shed' to find it was the size of an aircraft hangar with huge works being fabricated.

This invitation was the seminal moment and the beginning of an ongoing collaboration between Lindy and UAP, with her fire drawings evolving into significant public art works now established across China, North America and Saudi Arabia.

Are there specific character traits that make collaborations successful?

Liam Proberts' thoughts were that you have to have the *"ability to leave your ego somewhere else in the process"* so all parties can *"work in an aligned way ... towards the project problem, the opportunity, or the solution"*. Lindy agreed noting, *"it's not about you anymore, it's about: how can we solve this"*



fabulous problem?'. When queried by Anna whether this curtailed her creative vision, Lindy elucidated on the idea that leaving your ego at the door did not mean letting go of your vision and the bigger challenge to creative vision was when someone involved in the process had a particular agenda and was already closed off and not open to options.

Is there something special about the way Brisbane collaborates?

Having worked for a number of years outside of Brisbane, Carolyn described Brisbane as having “a very palpable sense of generosity and openness”, with “generosity, trust and that respect for what each party is bringing to the table – because whether you’re the artist, the architect, the designer, the curator, the maker, you’re each bringing something very specialised and your own unique experience”.

In thinking about what influences the way Brisbane collaborates, Liam noted “we’ve had to be a little more frugal and hard and fast here in Brisbane and Queensland for quite a while ... we’re not as established ... as big centres, so you have to collaborate, you have to put the right team together to get a project up, so I think we’re just more used to it here”.

What about the dissolving between art and architecture?

Liam described how this dissolving had evolved, “if you think about the 50s through 70s, to have a Moore piece plonked in front of your building, you knew that’s when you’d made it in terms of art and architecture, but the technology and practice and ways of working have evolved so much ... you’ve got these opportunities to embed artwork or art practice or approach within architecture, and for us that’s pretty exciting and engaging and we find ourselves doing that whenever the opportunities arise”.

How does location and context matter for some of these very big projects, perhaps thinking about regional and remote projects?

Carolyn touched upon her experience working in Roebourne, a remote part of Western Australia with a population of 500 people, 15 per cent of whom are indigenous. At the time, a lot of money was being injected into the region and the opportunity arose to consider how local artists and communities could participate in the process of reshaping their towns, rather than development simply being something that happened around them. Carolyn described working with artists who had never done a public art commission before and many who hadn’t even worked in 3D before, taking them through a professional development model and working with them to help find ways to extend their practice into 3D reality.

The influence of location and context came up again in response to a question from the audience about how public art fits within the anti-monumentalism philosophy of architecture. Using two recent projects as examples, Liam described how the Kaust Beacon was responding to a brief or deliberate intent for a monumental symbol for the King Abdullah University, a university of science and technology, while in developing the National Police Memorial the architect and artists had been tasked with creating something quite reposed and respectful, “almost the antithesis of monumental”. Liam concluded by noting, “when you’re designing a building or developing a project or a piece of artwork that has connection to place, it’s not about whether it’s monumental, it’s about how it fits within place – there might be places where it is purposeful to be monumental so ... it’s about its context and its intent”.

How can we measure or consider the value of public art?

The panel members discussed the social, cultural and economic value of public art, and how this might be measured. Susan described a new appreciation and demand for high quality built environments, stating “everyone is conscious of what good quality means and looks like ... its value is recognised by a broad spectrum of the community”, which has led to developers being prepared to invest money in delivering good quality built environments, but also “more demand to be able to quantify or describe what the value or return on investment is”.



In describing the significant value public art has in contributing to place, Carolyn noted *“whether you’re a resident, or an international traveller, or a domestic traveller, for you to be able to connect with a work, and in doing so you’re connecting with that culture, you’re connecting with that place, I think that’s very, very powerful”*.

Lindy described her experiences working in Avoca, a small town in regional Victoria, developing a garden to commemorate the history of Chinese goldminers within the region, who had suffered poor treatment, including being made to walk 400 kilometres from Adelaide to the goldfields. During the design process, Lindy described how *“really important personal and community stories started to arise ... and that is one of the functions of art, it gives rise, it facilitates, it gives occasion for people to connect to place”*. She described the value of the artwork, and particularly its design and development, as *“a really fantastic occasion of community coming together and un-burying the history that there was shame attached to”*.

Carolyn also touched upon the importance of art from a cultural tourism perspective using Bruce Munro’s *Field of Light* installation at Uluru as an incredible example of how significant the value of public art can be, not just from a cultural perspective, but also from an economic perspective – *“you have this amazing backdrop of Uluru and people going there anyway, and where they might previously go and stay two nights, now because of this installation, they’re staying three nights or four nights”*. The measurable impact of the installation has been an increase in domestic tourism by 15% and international tourism by 8%, leading to an extension of the installation to December 2020, highlighting how we are increasingly thinking about new ways to evaluate the economic value or return on investment that art can generate.

What are the challenges around equity and how you spread the value of public art?

In describing the role art in the public realm plays from an equity point of view, Carolyn described how public art can be *“a very democratic experience, anyone can access it ... it really is for the general population”*, citing the painting of silos across regional Australia as a fantastic way of allowing regional populations to experience art, where they might not have had access or exposure otherwise. Lindy elaborated on the role civic spaces play in ensuring equitable access to art, and how it has the possibility to create spaces that truly engage.

What should governments be doing to encourage public art?

Susan described the important role governments play in enshrining the expectation of high-quality design in civic spaces, while Liam touched upon the importance of process noting *“when authorities or governments are involved in providing facilities in public places, the process you have to go through to provide that is really, really important”*.

This was touched upon further in response to a question from the audience regarding the two general processes for establishing public art – competitive tenders or a direct commissioning process. Each of the panel members expressed they would like to see a shift towards more direct commissioning with the level of trust and the ability to build strong relationships that offers, with Susan acknowledging that governments can be constrained and forced into a competitive process through accountability mechanisms.