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AUTUMN 2004

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The inclusion of urban art into urban design planning and urban design infrastructure is an important element to be considered when evaluating the Victorian Government's *Melbourne 2030* plan. This plan heralds significant population growth and new developments in Melbourne's metropolitan area. This article discusses the benefits of urban art schemes and the importance of partnerships and collaboration in developing site-responsive urban art projects. It presents urban art projects in the City of Port Phillip, the Docklands and the City of Melbourne, as well as discussing the opportunities which can be created within urban design processes for urban art.

Urban art is artwork created specifically for a site which is contextualised by its surrounding environment and culture. It binds the analytic built environment to the synthetic physical environment and creates a relationship with the people inhabiting that environment. Urban art's role among many can be to integrate space with people to provide them with an empirical experience of being in that space.

Historically, urban artworks were commemorative or representative public artworks that were part of the city's infrastructure. These public artworks often were formal gestures and often had no significant link to people's daily life or culture. The public did not respond with much enthusiasm nor could they imagine public art's potential.

Now, urban art can create more personal interrelationships between the community, public space and buildings. Urban art can work to substantiate and illustrate a sense of history, memory, cultural placement and unity within an

urban context. It provides a sensory experience for the observer or participant, allowing the general public to be more reactive to what is around them and to 'lift the bar' of how they view urban art. The public's response to urban art can be historical, impressionistic, reactive or innovative. It can become a memory that inspires discussion or fuels the imagination for storytelling.

Urban art requires partnerships between municipal council, developer, engineers, urban designers and artists to achieve a built form that provides this experience for the public. It can be an iconic representation of a specific area, place, time, era or idea.

The *Melbourne 2030* plan is based on the following principles: Sustainability, Innovation, Partnership, Leadership, Equity, Adaptability and Inclusiveness.¹

These principles support a more compact city which builds on existing resources and for new developments to be concentrated in activity centres which already exist within metropolitan Melbourne.

Melbourne 2030's goals and principles raise a serious concern: how to accommodate and applaud change while retaining the dignity, history and 'sense of place' of areas of historical significance?

The amount of change which can take place with redevelopment can create a multitude of stimuli for an environment's participants. These stimuli can easily create an 'anaesthetised' effect in the individual. That is, when the immediate environment is in a constant state of redevelopment and there is no time to assimilate, the individual can find him or herself without a particular sense of place. In such circumstances, it is important to allow change without wiping out the timeline of

The Melbourne 2030 plan is based on the following principles:

Sustainability - sustainable economic, social and environmental development.
Innovation - commitment to finding new solutions.
Partnership - collaboration with others.
Leadership - leadership and encouragement of it in others.
Equity - fairer access to the benefits of growth and change.
Adaptability - planning for change and being adaptable when faced with it.
Inclusiveness - consideration of all needs, aspirations and points of view.

1. Department of Infrastructure, *Melbourne 2030*, State of Victoria 2002, p.5

Art Wall.

Photograph: Scene Photography

"The crowd is not only the newest asylum of outlaws; it is also the latest narcotic for those abandoned. The flaneur is someone abandoned in a crowd. In this he shares the situation of the commodity. He is not aware of this special situation, but this does not diminish its effect on him and it permeates him blissfully like a narcotic that can compensate him for many humiliations. The intoxication to which the flaneur surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers."



memory from those that once lived there, to those that are presently living there, to those which will live there in the future. There should always be a sense of connection, a visual clue that stimulates a period of existence that is culturally significant. Developers have a unique opportunity to create redevelopments that can help establish this.

The way in which bodies of people cooperate to create an urban fabric and cultural identity within the community contributes to this type of connection, whether in relation to heritage overlays or to a completely new vision. As Stewart Edward states in *Culture in the Communication Age*, "People acquire subjective culture through interaction with other human beings and with their environments. In the process of development, what makes [common] sense and becomes reality for each individual is selected and internalised from physical and social experience."²

Edward indicates that this layering of interactions over time creates a personal language within a person which is internalised via the process of absorption from physical and social experiences. They become conscious of themselves through repeated interactions with people who also have already acquired patterned cognition and behaviour from those experiences.

"Language, traditions, customs, ethnicity, religion, and race all contribute to the construction of cultural identity through social bonding in the process of enculturation," that is, the process by which an individual learns the traditional content of culture and assimilates its practices and values.³

The language which people derive from the urban experience is often limited as they are not fully able to interpret space, architectural fabrics, roadways, vistas, buildings etc, within its immediate context. Art is a distinctive feat and when incorporated into urban design it provides not only a link to a space that is visually rich, but also helps to develop the relationship to the surrounding environment. The visual language of art allows the public to connect with an environment that then can take on a language and contribute to an overall cultural identity.

New areas of redevelopment in the CBD are often supported by tourist visitation but also have a micro identity of permanent residents. To these people, the surrounds are their home and a 'sense of place' is a vital ingredient for relationships within the community and their cultural identity. With further developments around bayside areas, such as Port Phillip and the Docklands, compounded by the influx of population forecast by *Melbourne 2030*, these areas could easily become a flaneur's outpost, where spaces are set up for visitors to the area only.

The notion of the *flaneur* has been discussed by Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire and Chris Jenks. Simply put, the *flaneur* saunters aimlessly, is self-centred, superficial and an intellectual trifle of various degrees.

Benjamin's *flaneur* was a disinterested observer, more content with observing a crowd

2. Stewart Edward, *Culture in the Communication Age*, Routledge 2001, p. 24.

3. *Ibid*, p. 24.



from the window of some café, “but equally the *flanuer* may become intoxicated by the crowd and swept up blissfully by it, like a commodity enveloped in a stream of customers. In other words his connection to his immediate environment is only that of a viewer and not a participant.”⁴

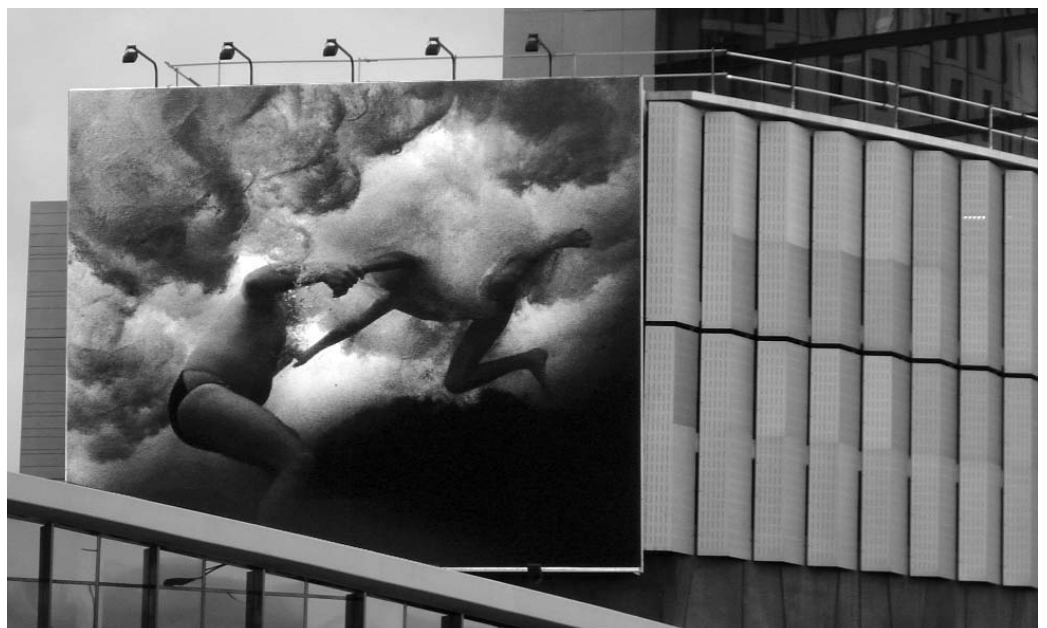
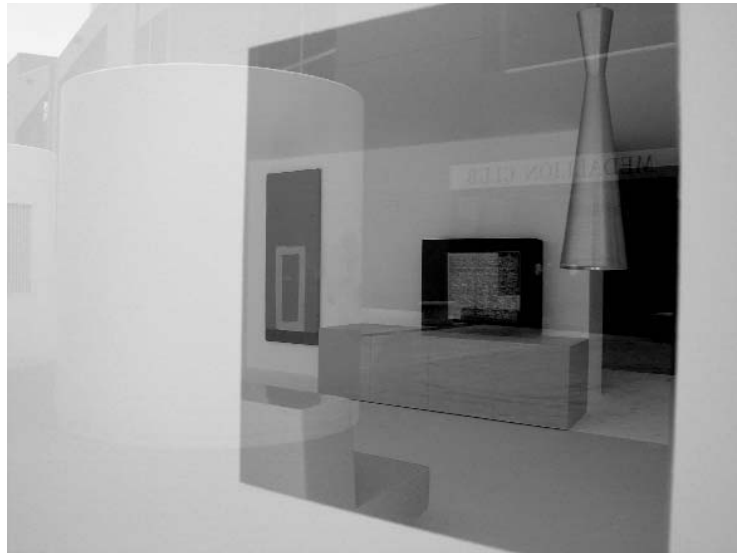
With this form of false consciousness, it becomes increasingly important to demystify space setting. As Steen Eiler Rasmussen believes, it is important to tell people outside the design disciplines what it is that we are engaged in.⁵ When new developments are initiated in a community, it is the designer’s responsibility to ensure that the general public can read what it is that the designers are doing. Urban art can provide the opportunity for various disciplines to collaborate to create an environment in which all visitors participate. This

can allow the objective viewer to form a connection with their surrounds initiating a subjective opinion about their environment that can consequently contribute towards a cultural identity.

In addition, urban art can enhance the cultural identity of a city; the development of the city’s streetscapes, precincts, parks, gardens and other open spaces; the ambience of cultural facilities, community centres, infrastructure, communal spaces and meeting places; and the participatory and celebratory experiences of festivals and special events.⁶ It is significant that state and local governments over the past five years have adopted a percentage-based contribution scheme to urban art projects. This important initiative is designed so that devel-opers contribute a percentage of the total project costs towards urban art.

Art Wall
Photograph: Scene Photography

4. Neil Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, MIT Press 1999, p. 39.
5. Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture*, MIT Press 1991, p. 5.
6. Torque Pty Ltd, *Urban Art Strategy*, prepared for the City of Port Phillip, 2002, p. 11.



*Top: Photo Art Billboard.
Photograph: Scene Photography*

*Bottom: Art Wall , Multi Media Insert.
Photograph: Scene Photography*

Examples around Port Phillip, Docklands and Melbourne City Council (discussed later) suggest that architecture can have a definite role as a vehicle for urban art. Amongst many examples is The Buchan Group and Channel 7 with artist Peter D. Cole, Telstra Dome north-west entry 'Art Wall'.

Mirvac and HPA architects in consultation with Torque Pty Ltd awarded artist Karen Casey 'Heartland,' located at Tower 1 at Yarra Edge, Port Melbourne. Mirvac also funded the Photo Art Billboard.

The Photo Art Billboard is a fully-billboard at freeway height installed as part of the architectural process. The images are put onto a 12 x 9 metre synthetic canvas screen stretched over the billboard. The photographs are managed through Torque Pty Ltd, consultants to Mirvac. They choose the images and the artist provides a license for the use of the photograph. Every six months a new image is shown. Postcards are generated with relevant information included as part of a documentary process.

Another example is the work, 'Art Wall' located at the Telstra Dome north-west entry. The work is a collaboration with Channel 7 who provided the funding, The Buchan Group and artist Peter D. Cole. The art is about "the relationship between television and image: the nature of television as a transmitter of electronic images and the perception of those images. The work reads as a series of elemental images and objects to create a piece of visual theatre which can be viewed and interacted with from both a distance and a close proximity."⁷

These major urban design developments demonstrate successful partnerships between municipal councils, developers, designers,

engineers, consultants and artists. The developer has provided a percentage of the project cost to an urban art project, indicating that the developer has realised the significance of their role and feels responsible towards the developments within the community. (However, such contributions can be infrequent and the community does not always have a positive perception of developers.) The designer has now the financial resources to add another layer of design intent and assimilate this into the building, in collaboration with artists, creating a very potent and powerful piece of urban art. As a result, the structure develops an immediate focal point that reads as a work of art, both architecturally and artistically, whether it is contemporary or historical.

When designing an urban project, either to replace an old development or to sit in a historical or heritage streetscape, what issues should be taken into consideration? When members of the public walk down a street and view a new development, how does the designer allow the public to 'read' this change to their environment? How is a 'sense of place' retained that is both an innate sensory perception as well as a visual form?

To investigate these issues, the City of Port Phillip commissioned a study to research their municipality. They photographed areas which depicted the ambiance, mood and spirit of the neighbourhood and enabled local people and visitors to build up layers of neighbourhood character by allowing everyone to contribute their thoughts. They found that people were very passionate and informed about their municipality and those personal and collective icons that maintained a sense of place and suggested

Design - Urban Art.

Art gains by strategic positioning within the site to achieve cultural relevance and design resonance.

Collaborative Design - Urban Art

Art gains by the strategic intervention of skills and site integration.

Architectural Design - Urban Art

Art gains by the architecture's structural design presence and by the formalised design alignments of the built form.

Socially Responsive Design Urban Art

Art gains by integration of social relationships, historical and local neighbourhood identity references.

Site Curated - Urban Art

Art gains by a more considered deliberation of how it integrates in and responds to the site.

7. Bronwen Colman & Christopher Waller, *Art Journey, Melbourne Docklands Public Art Walk, Melbourne Docklands*, 2003, p. 3.



*Old UDL Distillery.
Photograph: Scene Photography.*

security and connection, which enriched everyday lives.⁸

Several issues from the study emerged: village life, human scale building developments, mature trees and gardens, views, vistas, smells and sounds, vibrant retail centres with active street frontages, outdoor eating, diverse land-use and activities. Other factors which emerged included architectural styles and artistic contributions,

monuments and memorabilia, landscapes and significant sites, lifestyle activities, entertainment and community involvement.⁹

How does design sit in relation to the above issues? These are not just planning issues that lie with local council: they are issues that collaborative design teams could address during the initial design process. Tackling these issues at the beginning allows all decisions to be made prior to

8. Port Phillip Council 2004, *The Urban Icons of Port Phillip - The consultants' Study Process*, p. 8.

9. *Ibid*, p. 8.

building, ensuring that the future reference of the site retains its historical significance where appropriate. It also ensures that iconic representations of what is being replaced will be maintained within the new development, allowing the community to still identify with their 'sense of place' and accommodating good community perception of the new. Indeed, the 'new' within a precinct should be seen as an opportunity, not a threat.

An urban art strategy, in which urban art is a requirement of any development where total project costs exceeds a specified amount set by council is a proposal that effectively tackles such issues. It also allows for collaborative design and solutions to new urban art projects: "Urban art through the process of place making, will achieve full resonance and impact when the planning and design processes incorporate strong leadership, a sound financial base, community consultation, responsive design and integrated art intentions and the early involvement of artists/designers."¹⁰

The Urban Art Strategy report prepared by Torque Pty Ltd for the City of Port Phillip, defines five models for urban art approaches: urban design; collaborative design; architectural design; socially responsive design and site curated design.

All these models indicate the diverse ways that urban art can be developed and the possible approaches that emphasise design and urban art.

While successful design collaboration can work for the community, it can also extend nationally and internationally in relation to cultural identity. Ross Ramus, local architect and lecturer at RMIT, poses two questions to think about when starting any urban project: "What is the future role of the site in

the city?" and "What is the role of the site in the future city?" Pondering these questions can allow everyone in the design process to think about their position as a designer.

Each administration has its own technique to encourage developers and architects to contribute to urban art, whether it is through statutory regulations, or a condition that is encouraged by council, or an allocated yearly budget to devise such programs.

Urban art strategies can be set up on the basis of three streams: civic, private and community. The budgetary sources of these streams arise from major capital works, voluntary contributions from developers and Federal and State Governments as well as philanthropic trusts. Each stream indicates a different set of approaches and relationships and should be considered independently from one another when initiating an urban art project.

Within some local councils there are people who encourage dialogue between developers, designers and artists to provide an urban art response as part of present and future development projects. Their aim is to lift the standard of development to include urban art, thus benefiting both the community and visitors, as well as ending a potentially exploitative relationship.

These instigators often develop the art strategies, initiate discussion between the disciplines and nurture the collaborative process to achieve an effective outcome. Actions central to an urban art strategy are: partnership including commercial developer partnerships; consultation across art, community and other stakeholders; Collaborative design arrangements across disciplines and integrated planning and design

10. Torque Pty Ltd, *Urban Art Strategy*, prepared for City of Port Phillip 2002, p.72

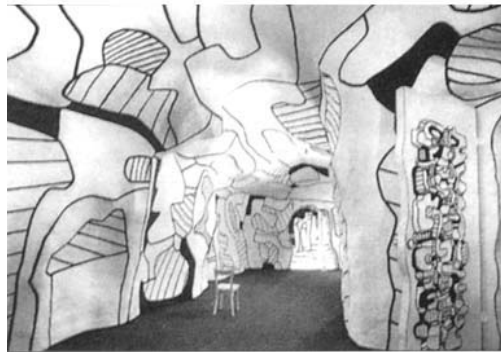
This page from top:

Jean Dubuffet, Villa Falbala interior view, 1969-73; Alvar Aalto; Finnish Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939; Frank Stella, Hooloomooloo, 1994 acrylic on canvas.

Photographs: Hypersurface Architecture, Architectural Design Profile 133.

Opposite: Fallen Time Tables

Photograph: Scene Photography.



across the council's organisational structure. These actions not only bring the community into decision-making roles but also facilitate partnerships between council, developers, architects and various disciplines of artists and designers. These interdisciplinary groups have produced and raised the standard in terms of how urban art is perceived. As stated in Port Phillip Council's *Urban Art Strategy*, "The resultant commission procedures and procurement systems will enable the positioning of artworks that enhance the social and urban fabric and empower the ownership and engagement of local people to ensure site specific and responsive designs that integrate with the city's natural and built environments."¹¹

Interestingly, such collaboration not only allows designers to explore new design processes, but creates the opportunity to enhance the built environment through multi-media events, creative surface treatments within a layer of technology. To incorporate information technology and communication into facades, and provide internal experiences and external stimuli, can add to the cityscape and the urban environment.

The use of IT is not a new notion. Alvar Aalto, Finnish Pavilion, New York's World's Fair, 1939 and Jean Dubuffet, Villa Falbala 1969 - 1973 were suggesting surface treatments that are now possible when combined with IT and communication. Jean Nouvel also discusses surface treatments where real photographs and video and animation simulation, computer graphics and paintings of images and text of surfaces create architecture of an entirely new type. He also states that "The future of architecture is not architectural. It is a suitably complex and contradictory comment,

11. Torque Pty Ltd, *Urban Art Strategy*, prepared for City of Port Phillip 2002, p.30.

with several layers of meaning. It does not mean that architecture has no future, rather, that architecture has no past, in the sense that architecture can no longer conceive of itself as an independent discipline, bound only by its own rules. This is because the modern social and urban context is too complex for a single set of rules to be valid.¹² Collaboration opens up the world to all those with design in mind to solve complex design issues.

Acknowledgment of the past with the advancement of the new is another aspect to be taken into consideration with urban art schemes. This acknowledgement does not put huge emphasis on heritage, but recognises the past as a cultural identity in some form alongside the innovative and the new. It is important that community groups do not see urban art as a threat to heritage but as an opportunity of collaborating to bring heritage values when appropriate into a contemporary view.

The City of Port Phillip encourages this type of heritage-based collaboration. At present Port Phillip encourages developers to contribute 0.5% of the total project cost towards urban art. As a result, projects such as "Fallen Time Tables" on the old tram depot site in South Melbourne, are a collaboration between Central Equity, Span Architects and artist David Jack. The artwork on the old UDL distillery site in Port Melbourne produced by Sheridan Property and SJB Architects with graphic designers 360, have amalgamated historical significance with contemporary form. These designs have often brought two opposing forces together into good examples of effective partnerships between council, developer, architects and artists.



12. Conway Lloyd Morgan, *Jean Nouvel - The elements of Architecture*, Thames & Hudson 1998, p. 228.

*Photographic Essay, Old Sugar Factory.
Photograph: Scene Photography.*



Other urban projects by Port Phillip Council such as the Sugar Factory, Port Melbourne by Rothe Lowman architects and urban art artists are very elegant and sensitive to both history and the present. It tells a photographic story of the Sugar Factory on the way into the new car park. It can leave the individual to ponder on time, distance and people of past eras. It can allow individuals to immediately connect to and relate to an environment.

Port Phillip Council's approach weaves the cultural significance of a 'place' or 'site' into the design. With their innovative method of balancing heritage values with exploring contemporary innovations, it will be interesting to see their future projects. This balance also provides the optimum environment to cover a diversity of residents taste within the vibrant Port Phillip community.

At a recent talk in Port Phillip Council "Thursday Forum" series, Dr Darko Radovic, Head of Urban Design at the University of Melbourne, discussed the importance of statutory backing for urban art projects as well as considering the experience of urban dwellers. He spoke about waterside developments in Spain, which he had recently visited, where the local council had

projected a twenty-five-year planning strategy vision that was tightly bound in legislation. It allowed for development but emphasised community, encouraging urban art, landscape, public and private space for visitors and residents. The strategy limited residential development which would infringe on waterside public space thus retaining the interaction of urban dwellers to site on a creative aspect and ensuring the continuous protection of urban dialogue with the residents and people frequenting the community.

This type of legislation which forces the implementation of design (historically depicting a timeline) and development, forces a conscious awareness of all participants contributing to the built environment. The area stays with the community and the arts are encouraged as a way of culturally developing the site and providing a sense of place for the people spending time in it.

Vic Urban, a statutory authority, is not subject to the same processes as local councils. Their operations at the Docklands is a good example of successful regulation to ensure urban art. Under their regulation, it is mandatory for new developments to contribute a small percentage of the total project cost to the development of urban art. This



contribution has produced a vibrant and interesting examples of urban art (It is also interesting to note that all developers make this contribution). The Docklands, for the first time, is creating a new experience and environment in which people purchasing their homes agree to this contemporary environment. In this aspect the Docklands differs to already established communities around other bayside areas of historical significance.

As a consequence, the money invested into commercial development has created a new set of innovative urban art. 'Heartland,' by Karen Casey, located at Mirvac Yarra's Edge Tower, Lorimer Street by HPA architects, was an inherited space as a result of a commission process. The themes were positioned through a master plan determined by Torque Pty Ltd developed into a commissioned brief process which encouraged an integrated site specific artwork. " 'Heartland' is an evolving, animated installation developed from a series of ground prints taken in Docklands using natural ochres collected in the area. The final impression was rear lit and photographed to produce the image."¹³ It is an excellent piece of industrial and lighting design as well as an interesting piece of interior art.



"A typographical obituary to Howard Arkeley"

Photograph: Scene Photography

13. Carol Schwartz & Bronwen Colman, *Art Journey, Integrated Art Policy 2003*, Melbourne Docklands, p. 13.

*Top: Heartland
Photograph: Art Journey, Melbourne
Docklands.*

*Bottom: Ned and Dan.
Photograph: Scene Photography.*



The work 'Ned and Dan' results from the MAB Corporation collaborating with architects SJB & FK and artist Alexander Knocks. The surface treatment refers to Ned Kelly's mask along with the desert and various other elements. A project funded by Docklands Authority, Mirvac with architects DCM and artist Robert Owen, produced Webb Bridge, Yarra River. "The existing Webb Dock Bridge and its new connection to the bank becomes a unified sculptural form rather than an architectural structure on which sculpture has been superimposed. The bridge is an analogy of Koori fishing traps, drums, baskets and gestural flow of the river below."¹⁴

These are just a few examples of urban art integrated with architecture with others such as MAB corporation with FK architects and artist Mathew McCarthy 'Untitled' but "A typographical obituary to Howard Arkley." A consortium of investors with Darryl Jackson, Telstra Dome with artist Simon Perry, 'Threaded Fields' and the colourful entrance to Channel 7's Melbourne Studios by The Buchan Group, not to mention other collaborative projects yet to be completed.

Maintenance costs are another factor taken into Vic Urban's urban art strategies. Including these costs as part of the ongoing project is important to maintain the works.

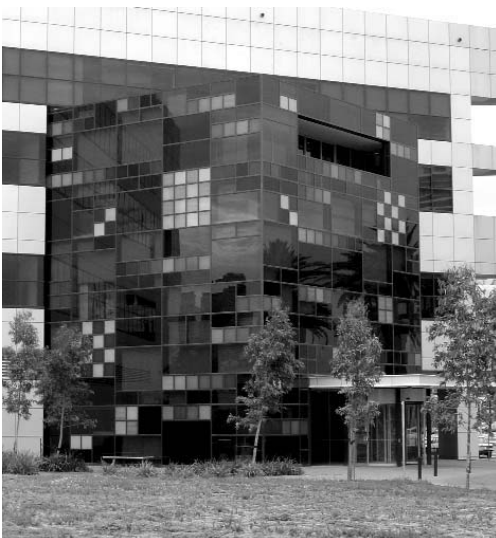
'Vox Lumiere' by Peter McNeill Stitt is a perfect example. This unique work is a "spectacular interactive lighting installation at Telstra Dome and consists of a band of light superimposed around the entire exterior of the structure. The lighting changes in response to crowd noise, electronically detected within the Dome. Effects range from dappled watery reflections during quiet times to a tidal flow of colour and pattern coursing around the exterior - like a

14. Carol Schwartz & Bronwen Colman, *Art Journey, Integrated Art Policy 2003*, Melbourne Docklands, p.6

Continued from page 14.

Mexican wave when the crowd roars. The light work is the first of its kind in Australia and transforms the exterior during night-time events, creating a memorable new icon for Melbourne."¹⁵

In contrast Melbourne City Council has had relative success with its urban art which is a result of goodwill contributions. Projects such as Katsalidis 'Melbourne Terrace' with artist Peter Collette, paved the way for architectural urban art. 'Republic Tower' by architects NFK has a massive billboard that holds temporary artworks by artists who are paid a fee to display. The billboard's purpose was to give artists a street gallery, as opposed to the alternative gallery scene. Melbourne City Council, architects DesignInc and artists (yet to be advised), are collaborating on the project 'CH2.' This work is focused on ecologically sustainable design which will be collaborating with artists to produce some significant site responsive urban art.



*Channel 7 entrance
Photograph: Scene Photography*

The art installation with its 36 metre long neon art advertising on the 10th floor of the Total House building in Russell Street, by John Wardle architects with artist Peter Kennedy sends out a message of words by Kurt Vonnegut. "We issue a kind of warning to watch out for life because it can be fairly dangerous" Kennedy says.¹⁶

Urban art is important because it provides architects with an opportunity to flex its integral role in the community and incorporate other design fields in its visual communication. Art shares and expresses experiences and combining art with architecture should not be attempted by architects in isolation.

Melbourne's expected population growth and development by 2030 is an opportunity to bring design disciplines together to create collaborative urban design strategies, instead of segregated approaches. These strategies encompass many perspectives and represent the community's past and present. Such collaboration allows architecture to encompass new technologies in various fields of expertise.

In addition, urban art is a chance for developers to create an enriched environment, to protect the community and provide urban spaces that can be enjoyed both by inhabitants and visitors. Such collaboration between developers, artists, architects and councils creates a new approach to urban design that takes us into Melbourne 2030 together.

Lee-Ann's interest in art stemmed from a collaborative workshop with William Alsop and Ross Ramus during her architectural studies at RMIT.

15. Carol Schwartz & Bronwen Colman, *Art Journey, Integrated Art Policy 2003*, Melbourne Docklands, p. 20.
16. Gabriella Coslovich, 'Bright Lights, Big Concept,' *The Age*, 31 July 2003.

Melbourne has a rich and varied track record of expressing triumphs, failures, sycophancy, landmark events or artistic endeavour through the placement of memorials, statues, fountains and artworks in public places. This predilection has antecedents that go back millennia and is a well-accepted device for civic memory-making.

But the emergence of books and magazines, then film and now the all - but ubiquitous closed-circuit video camera, provided society with other more portable and less bulky ways to record, remember and remind.

Does urban art have a broad definition?

Is the Burke and Wills statue urban art?

Is the graffiti on the laneway wall urban art? Or the lighting on the Arts Centre spire? We're happy to acknowledge Ron Robertson-Swann's peripatetic 'Vault' as urban art. But what does it say to us, whether in its original, next or current site?

The article proposes that a city and its community benefit from urban art where such art meets several criteria, not the least of which are its capacity to bring cultural heritage to today's observer and to promote civic identity. But it is the

DO OUR SPACES NEED URBAN ART? Jim Holdsworth

Jim Holdsworth is the manager of the Urban Design and Architecture at Port Phillip Council.

articles linking of urban art with the place-making role of architecture that opens the discussion about the part that private enterprise, through its buildings, plays in using urban art to enrich our connection to the history of 'place.'

The article cites the City of Port Phillip's Urban Art Strategy (commissioned under the management of this reviewer) as an example of urban art having several distinct entrees into a community. The consultant who prepared the Strategy identified five 'models' for urban art. All of them relate to place; whether by design, historical or social means.

In other words, urban art and place are inseparable. This is the way it is at Port Phillip. But that is by no means the only way to go. This article looks at the prodigious urban art program at Melbourne Docklands. In almost complete contrast to the Port Phillip approach, developers and VicUrban have dotted this hitherto largely mysterious precinct with artworks which, with a couple of notable exceptions, relate either not at all or only obliquely to 'place.' A cow up a tree was hardly part of a busy port! Why should a developer incorporate urban art into their building project? That local governments introduce policies to encourage or to require such contributions reveals that civic leaders believe this to be a good thing. Over the centuries, public spaces and the buildings that frame them have been the canvasses for private or corporate largesse, offered voluntarily as gratitude, self-aggrandisement or self-effacing profligacy. These drivers have waned to the extent that coercion or policy now has to shake the sense of civic pride into action.

The underpinning logic in Port Phillip's approach is that developers have both a potential

and an obligation to give something both to the community and to the place where their building is the latest intervention in the evolution of the civic and cultural fabric.

Furthermore, that urban art, if locationally referential, can enrich the understanding of the area's history, and that is something that a new building may obliterate or diminish. We cannot know where we are if we have no idea of whence we came.

Effectively managed and encouraged, urban art can be educational, stimulating, questioning and reassuring. The article provides us with cause to expect further personal and civic enrichment through the increasingly diverse contribution that urban art is making to our urban experience.

*Republic Tower Billboard
Scene Photography*

