

Resolution of Council

13 March 2023

Item 11.12

Diversifying City of Sydney Art Projects

Moved by Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Weldon –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) it is important that the City continues to affirm its support for equality of gender, First Nations and cultural diversity within the City of Sydney's City public art strategy and Public Art Policy;
- (ii) the City's 2011 'City Art public art strategy', draws on the Sustainable Sydney 2030 plan to commit to eight guiding principles for public art;
- (iii) the City Art program is responsible for commissioning major stand-alone permanent public artworks that are integrated with our capital works projects and temporary public art programs;
- (iv) since 2005 the City's public art program has focused on inclusion, working with artists and curators of different genders and cultural backgrounds, including four female curators;
- (v) the City's art program also includes managing and caring for a collection of over 250 permanent works and operating a conservation program. As well as, looking after plaques and memorials, issues associated with murals and graffiti, and the assessment of public art proposals in private developments during the development application process;
- (vi) among the collection is over sixty works created by women artists, over twenty works on women as the subject matter, and many other artworks that shine a light on the many diverse cultures in our city;

- (vii) artworks in the City of Sydney art collection by women celebrating and commemorating the efforts, practices and histories of women include:
 - (a) Earth Mother by Anita Aarons (1952) specifically created for the pleasure and education of children;
 - (b) Folly for Mrs Macquarie by Fiona Hall (1999) which acknowledges the historical Elizabeth Macquarie while simultaneously commenting on the follies of colonialism;
 - (c) Lamp for Mary by Mikala Dwyer (2011) which responds to an act of violence by creating a poignant tribute to all women who have experienced violence, increasing safety, and acting as a sign of resilience and hope;
 - (d) bara by Judy Watson (2022) brings to light the importance of First Nations women's relationship to Warrane – Sydney Harbour; and
 - (e) Patchwork of Light by Lara Schnitger (2019) celebrates feminist activism and the advancement of women in civic life in Australia;
- (viii) the collection also includes the Second World War Servicewomen Memorial by Dennis Adams (1990), a traditional figurative sculpture, dedicated to the wartime servicewomen of NSW Women;
- (ix) of the 43 permanent public artworks the City has commissioned or acquired, since the appointment of the Public Art Advisory Panel in 2007, 35 are by women, which is approximately 80 per cent. These commissions contribute to rebalancing a collection that dates back to 1818;
- (x) significantly, almost none of these artworks are traditional figurative sculptures, with the artists who created them being free to exercise their imaginations and talents without being restricted to specific artforms such as traditional figurative sculpture;
- (xi) the projects and programs of the City Art program are guided by the City's Public Art Advisory Panel;
- (xii) the City has established the 'Eora Journey: Recognition in the public domain' that commits to creating works of national significance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and designers to celebrate the First Peoples of Australia in our global city;
- (xiii) four public works have been commissioned under the Eora Journey, including 'Conversations along Sydney's Harbour' most recently. The project commemorates Patyegarang's gift of the Aboriginal language to William Dawes, requested by Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council;
- (xiv) the City public art strategy explicates that opportunities exist to work with other major art institutions to share expertise, resources and program ideas for funding City Art projects; and
- (xv) there are six statues of women in the City of Sydney. This includes two of Queen Victoria, while the statues of cricketer Belinda Clark and athletes Betty Cuthbert and Marlene Mathews are placed within the Sydney Cricket Ground precinct;

- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) collaborate with the research being undertaken by A Monument of One's Own by providing information about artworks in the City art collection created by women artists and/or celebrating and/or commemorating the efforts, practices and histories of women;
 - (ii) work with the Public Art Advisory Panel to identify new opportunities within City of Sydney projects, programs and capital works to support increased equality of gender, First Nations and cultural diversity within the public realm, including the installation of statues and art held in storage with reference to the Public Art Policy and City Art Public Art Strategy; and
 - (iii) work with the panel, stakeholders, and the community to enable the delivery of at least three new artworks celebrating, commemorating or depicting women which may include but not be restricted to figurative sculptures;
- (C) the Public Art Advisory Panel be requested to consider the following when providing advice to Council on the development, presentation, and promotion of public art activities and when assessing applications from individuals and groups wishing to formally recognise significant local people:
- (i) identifying new opportunities to commemorate significant women from Sydney's history;
 - (ii) allowing for artistic responses that may include the figurative depiction of women when considering the installation of artworks commemorating significant women from Sydney's history; and
 - (iii) the need for a continued rebalancing of artworks in the public domain including addressing the overwhelming majority of traditional figurative statues depicting male figures; and
- (D) Council endorse as a fundamental principle the over-riding importance of artists being free to exercise their imaginations and talents in creating new artworks in order to ensure the continued excellence of the City Art collection.

Carried unanimously.

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