Street artist secures W’bool mural project

One of the highly detailed and realist works by Melbourne artist Matt “Adnate” Last, whose work will soon feature in Warrnambool’s CBD as a large-scale mural. Image: Adnate.

OPINION – Carol Altmann

[dropcap style=”font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;”] L [/dropcap]eading Melbourne graffiti artist **Matt “Adnate” Last** has been chosen to create a $13,000 interactive mural in the heart of Warrnambool.

The Ngatanwarr (“Welcome”) Mural will transform a prominent – but as yet unnamed – site with a 20sq/m mural with an indigenous theme that will be developed in consultation between the artist, who is not indigenous, and the local Aboriginal community.

The interactive mural is central to a wider project being

developed by a steering committee that includes representatives from the Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative, the Warrnambool City Council/Warrnambool Art Gallery, Leadership Great South Coast and the F Project, for which a total of $22,000 has been raised from various government and philanthropic sources.

Adnate is the second, high-profile spray paint artist to secure a large-scale mural commission in Warrnambool, following that of **Scottie “Bonsai” Neoh**, who was awarded the $15,000 commission for the Mortlake Rd pedestrian underpass.

Unlike the Bonsai commission, however, the Ngatanwarr Mural went to expressions of interest, albeit in a tight turnaround time.

The call went out in mid September, with artists given around three weeks to submit an EOI.

Chairman of the selection committee, **Paul Lougheed**, from Leadership Great South Coast, told us that four local artists were among those to submit an EOI, with Adnate selected “by a panel including representatives from the aboriginal community, arts community and other interested community members”.

Matt “Adnate” Last at work with his tools of trade: a smartphone and a spray can. Image: www.invurt.com

[dropcap style=”font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;”] T [/dropcap]here is no doubt that securing the services of Adnate is a coup for Warrnambool: his striking work can be found in major cities around the world and, earlier this year, he was chosen to paint a rare, blank 23m-high wall in Melbourne’s famous Hosier Lane.

And there is no doubt that his work will be a drawcard, particularly as it will include interactive QR codes to tell the stories behind the images.

But the perennial question again comes to mind: how can local artists get ahead if they keep being overlooked for significant local commissions?

We raised this same question earlier this year with the Bonsai commission, which followed the awarding of a $20,000 commission to Melbourne artist **Ewan Coates** in 2010 for his bronze sculpture *The Three Pillars of Gratification,* and another $20,000 commission in 2011 that was won by Ballan

artist **Velislav Georgiev** for his work *Chance Encounter,* that sits on the corner of Lava and Liebig streets.

It is a vexed issue.

On one hand, Warrnambool can't simply close itself off to artists from elsewhere, but on the other, a $13,000 commission (which includes materials and equipment) is the sort of work that can start to make an art career viable to a local artist.

Unlike in metropolitan areas, major commissions are rare in the south-west and many of the murals you now see around Warrnambool were done for very little money, but significant goodwill.

We look forward to seeing what Adnate produces, but at the same time will continue to argue that at least *some* of these large commissions should stay "at home".

[box]The Ngatanwarr Mural will be launched on Friday March 20, 2015, to coincide with 'Close the Gap' day. You can find more of Adnate's work on his website here.[/box]

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