

**Wendy Murray** yeah, hi, I'm Wendy Murray, I'm a visual artist and, I'm from New Zealand, Aotearoa.

**Kurt Iveson** So I'm Kurt Iveson. Uh, I teach Urban Geography at the University of Sydney, and I'm Sydney born and raised.

**Wendy Murray** what is street art? It's a pretty complex question. I mean, for me, when I believe street art is is, um, a symbol. It's politically charged, it's. Um, unsanctioned. Street art is also. It's not mural art. It's not it's not by the fine art.

**Kurt Iveson** It is part of the reason it's a tough question because it's it's debated in the groups of people who do it, you know. Um, so, yeah, we if just think about the street is a venue for kind of provocations and at, um. Yeah, I think, you know, the line between where graffiti stops and street art begins is kind of really fluid space, the line between where street art stops and advertising maybe or other kinds of communications. That is also a really fluid. So, yeah, the street, one of the things that keeps it so interesting is that it does have all these competing agendas and competing actors trying to use it to communicate all sorts of different things from, you know, commercial messages, trying to get us to buy stuff to, you know, street art, trying to provoke us and shock us out of our routine and think about something differently, um, to, you know, people in graffiti writing scenes who are just like as much communicating with one another as they are communicating with the rest of the city.

**Kurt Iveson** Oh, so again, um, it's a really interesting question. Right. So. You can sort of, you know, look around the world even and see how actually, uh, there's like a global street art thing that has happened over the last 20, 30 years where we can see all over the world people picking up, you know, whether it's aerosol or stencils or posters or stickers or whatever, picking up different forms of street art and using it. But then you can also see how the artists that are working in those places just incorporate like local cultural stuff, local elements into what they're doing. So that difference, you know, you can if you sort of, I guess, follow it, you could be in Melbourne or you could be in Berlin or you could be in London and see that actually there are quite distinctive street art scenes in those places that sort of, you know, a part of that global thing, but also have that sort of real local content that really speaks to the place that they're at and these sort of scenes develop around it. But, you know, I guess the key thing for me is that what that street art does is just insist that public space is there for us all to use to be it's like a common resource for us if we don't have the money to put an ad on the Internet or on TV or whatever to get our message across, or we're not writing books or academic articles that we've still got the street. Um, and it's there for everybody to use to express themselves, to communicate with other people. It's public space.

**Wendy Murray** And I firmly believe that that's where we agree. And yeah, I believe that, the uh wall doesn't belong necessarily to a certain organisation because they own the wall. So the exterior walls of this building, I believe are public space so I feel as a street artist. That that space is there for me to use and utilise and I feel, you know. That it's a real shame when the things like the zero tolerance of street art or graffiti, the twenty four hour graffiti removal hot spots in areas like Darlinghurst are implemented. And it

doesn't allow the community a chance to respond to what's actually happening, then say for example, there was a chalk writer who used to write in Darlinghurst know on the side of the Darlo bar walls and allow this public space allows people to question on their way to work. You know what? What's going on in the community or in the world today, um, so, yeah, I feel like that Darlo Bar wall belongs to the whole community of Darlinghurst and the greater community of Sydney, not just Solitel you know, or the people that leased that space. Yeah.

**Wendy Murray** street art allows me to do is reach an audience that other platforms don't allow so say, for example, I make a poster about, um, working poor and if I could publish that post on Instagram. Only those folks who watched me on Instagram, follow me on Instagram and their friends get to see that poster. If I put that poster on a street corner in Kings Cross. It opens me up to a much broader audience. So it's not only for the folks that walk past all the folks that will take photos and then post it on their social media. And the beautiful thing about putting work up in public space instead of on social media is that one of the reasons why I do street art is that you turn the corner and there it is and it's unexpected and it provokes you to think about what we Banksy can hear in 2004 and put his stencils all around the city is like that magical time in Sydney, you can interact, thank you. Turn a corner and there'd be a brand new work up and you check that out. That's so fantastic. So that sense of excitement and finding something new, feeling like you've discovered something really special. Is like a really important aspect of street art.

**Wendy Murray** Yes, (different to going to see art in a gallery) because that's a mediated space. Like folks who go to a gallery, are going to you know, they're the types of folks who go to a gallery, the folks that walk around The Rocks, are the residents that live there, the tourists. You know, construction workers that are here is it's just that you get this really broad audience and so what you get you get you get the conservatives and the liberals like looking at the work, you know, you get a broader demographic or cross-section of society, something which you just don't have in these mediated spaces. Yeah.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah, because I guess, yeah, there's a sense in which, um, what can happen is that, you know, the way that Wendy's just talked about that part of the exciting thing about street art is how it is kind of in unexpected places. But, um, you know, it can happen it certain even street places and public spaces become the kind of well, that's where you'd go to see the street art and it becomes like an expected thing again. Um, and so, yeah, I think probably what excites you and I more is when things are a bit like, people are not just conforming to those expectations, but challenging them and escaping them and hijacking them and doing all those other exciting things.

**Wendy Murray** And that's why May's Lane was really exciting when we first met, um, at the May's Lane Street art project in St. Peter's, it had that energy back then, and 2005 was the first 2004, 2005 where it was there is a lot of graffiti around there. And it just had this great sense of, um, ownership by the graffiti writers and the street artists, not by an exterior party; the council, you know, the actual project itself is just was.

**Kurt Iveson** So(Wendy and Kurt) we've known each other. Yeah, for, uh, for a while, um, and partly out of the kind of mutual interest that we had in public space and art coming from our two different directions like, you know, as a practitioner and as a like academic. Um, here we ended up doing some research about the history of graffiti and graffiti policy in Sydney, um, sort of 2014, 2015 around that time. And yeah, if you're going to write the history of graffiti in Sydney, then obviously Arthur Stace and Eternity is a really important part of that. Um, just like the bugger up people that were hacking the, you know, cigarette and alcohol advertisements in the 1980s to be part of the history. So, yeah, I think, um, that was where I guess, you know, the we both were thinking about that history. Um and yeah. There's something really nice about the way that if you think about that Eternity thing, it's this lovely kind of when it's being done in some ways quite anonymous example of the kind of thing that we're talking about, street art being brilliant for. Right. Like this person who's trying to remind everybody as they go about their everyday lives and, you know, that kind of routine doing the same thing every day. And then here's Arthur Stace trying to sort of drag you out of the present and take you into something bigger. Just reminding you about Eternity as you walk around the city. And, um, yeah. You know, it's a very cool example. Way before Banksy or way before hip hop away, before any of the things that like a big influences on the current moment, um, of just somebody using the street to to do exactly what we're talking about, just to snap somebody out of their every day for a second and get them thinking about something else.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah, so look, what's really interesting about it to me is somebody that's doing research about public space and street art and graffiti now is that there's a lot of kind of contention and a lot of, uh, you know, effort by authorities to clamp down on unauthorised uses of public space in the present. And yet we kind of see that, you know, in some ways what's going on now is not that dissimilar to what Arthur Stace was doing. But, of course, with the fullness of time, you know, we get to a point in the early 2000s where Stace's Eternity is like celebrated. And, you know, we have the 2000 celebrations. It's up on the Harbour Bridge. And, you know, people are using it in advertising campaigns. So something that would have been looked at at the time as like, you know, disorder and something that had to be policed suddenly, you know, with the, you know, retrospect becomes this thing that everybody wants to celebrate. And so I guess for us, you know, you're doing this research that we were doing, we're sort of trying to make the point that before we try to like wipe all the walls today clean, like which contemporary Arthur Stace is that we're erasing from the city, which are the things that we can look back on maybe in 30 years and say, oh, it wasn't that great or that cool street art. But at the time we were trying to get rid of it and buff it, you know. So I think that's the kind of nice thing about that story of Arthur Stace in some ways for us is that it just it does tell a story about how these things get accepted later. And it's like, well, if we're going to accept them later, maybe we should think about them differently as they happening as well.

**Wendy Murray** I did research it (researched Eternity after seeing it on the Harbour Bridge during the millennium celebrations), but at the time I was. I had I had an interest in street art, but I wasn't getting out as much then, so it didn't resonate with me until later

on after I was in the city of Sydney and had learnt a little more about the street and started putting things up on the street from 2002.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah, and look, you know, for me, it was kind of. So I'm kind of ambivalent on the one hand, isn't it fantastic that if we're going to celebrate something in Sydney's history, that we're going to celebrate somebody like Arthur Stace and something like, you know, this obsessive chalking of the streets? Like on the one hand, that's great that somebody like that is actually getting lifted up and getting recognised. But on the other hand, yeah, like I was already at that point, um, you know, doing the kind of research that I'm doing into public space and had done some stuff about the regulation of graffiti in Sydney. And, you know, 2000 was a terrible year for graffiti writers and street artists actually in this town. The Olympics rolled through and we had the authorities literally themselves breaking the law and like erasing graffiti from private property when they had no authority to do so, to clean the city up entirely for the Olympics. Like Spicoo was a great graffiti writer in Sydney. She talked about it being a brownout, literally. So on the one hand, it's like, isn't it awesome that we're celebrating this? You know, what I would say is a great, amazing, influential kind of graffiti writer. And on the other hand, every single graffiti writer that's operating in the city is being kind of buffed out of existence at the same time. So, yeah, a little bit like a damn. That's annoying. Um, is part of the reaction I had at the time.

**Wendy Murray** Yeah, it seems to be a regular

] theme of paradox in the way that. Local council to deal with street adequately and then what's accepted by society and how

we go about it? You know, there are a lot of examples of. Acceptance of eradicating street art and graffiti from laneways in Sydney and then within a year, starting a commissioning process of reinstating

murals, sanctioned murals in those spaces and Darlinghurst in this whole area has gone through that transition since I left here in 2000 and then removing it to WK interact and Banksy. And that energy is still the energy of the street artists and graffiti writers was stronger than the graffiti removal teams from when I entered in 2000, so Casino, I see all these great works around Darlinghurst around this inner city area. And then it hit a point where the eradication and the removal of the street art overtook the practitioners being able to install it, and so then became a lull and that's when they were like,

oh, it seemed like the council turned around and said, there's nothing here. Now the character of these streets has been removed. And then they started commissioning processes within those same streets that used to be filled with unsanctioned graffiti and street art.

**Wendy Murray** Yeah, I think (Eternity has cut through), I'm from the outside, you know, look, I'm a New Zealander, I stepped into this town in 2000. You know, it's taken me a long time to kind of get comfortable here, but I think it's because it has a message that is more socially acceptable, less political and the story behind it. Is is, again, kind of socially acceptable, it's not a really strong political message.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah, I like. But the thing that you just said there in passing that I think is also really important is that we do now know the story. Right. And it is a bloody great story. And I guess that is one of the things about street art is that you often don't know the story of who's putting these things up on the streets, because the whole thing is you've got to try and stay kind of anonymous to avoid, you know, getting busted, basically. And so, you know, there's like one of the great things now is that we do know the story of Arthur Stace, and it is a great story. And so you can see how. Yeah, it's just that practise of like years and years of him just walking around and just, you know, like kind of replicating the same thing over and over and over again. Um, giving his life story. You can yeah. It is a kind of it's a it's a great story. And you can see how it sort of resonated. Um,.

**Wendy Murray** But it is how graffiti, that's how a graffiti writer gets around the city. Yeah. A graffiti writer puts their name up around the city over and over again for 20 or 30 years. It's exactly the same.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah. Yeah. And so, you know, in a sense the kind of criminalisation of it now, you know, if you want to look at it this way, it kind of denies us the stories of all the people that are out there doing it today because they're having to hold those stories pretty close. Um, and, you know, in a way that actually Stace did when he was alive, like it was years and years where nobody had a clue who was doing this Eternity thing that was popping up all over the pavements. Um, but yeah, I think that's one of the that's one of the great shames about the criminalisation, is that it means that actually there's a whole bunch of really interesting characters out there doing this work that we just don't get to know because they've got to keep their anonymity.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah. So look. I have been doing research for a while now just about how people in cities make change, you know, that things get better in cities because every day people get together, um, and kind of say, well, we're all supposed to be equals here. Um, but the way that our city is organised is not recognising that equality. So we're going to fight for it and make it happen. Um, and that's a pretty amazing thing. And it keeps happening across history. The meaning of equality keeps changing over time. And people keep doing interesting and amazing stuff collectively to kind of assert that equality and make things better. And so around that time that we were working on that project, um, about street art, um, it just suddenly looking at the word equality and having the kind of Eternity stuff in the back of our head, it's like in the same way that I guess, you know, Stace was, you know, religious, wanted to remind everybody about Eternity and, uh, you know, the spiritual world. And I guess we're not. But what, and I know Wendy was also interested in reminding everybody about is that right at a time in our city where things are sort of becoming more unequal, just in the same way that Stace are trying to remind everybody, well, Eternity don't forget, it's like, well, equality don't

forget. Right. And equality. This is how it happens. It happens where people don't accept things as they are and fight for things to be different. So I had one of those calligraphy pens and like must have done about three hundred attempts at trying to make one equality look as cool as the Eternity thing did and finally got one and handed it over to you. And um and then suddenly I mean I say suddenly but this amazing process of turning it into cool posters.

**Wendy Murray** Yeah. Yes. It started with stickers, um stickers and posters. Um and we actually started with just this script on its own, but then we were thinking about how if we juxtaposed the script with some of the issues that we were looking at and wanting to address, it might just need to get something else in peoples minds. So what I did is we drew after conversations about sort of how like where these inequalities were, so in housing and in my experience, it's research, um, we've looked at archived images and. And selected a few archived images from the National Library collection we looked clear and also, um, the fabulous Meredith Burgmann, uh, photographic archive collection there. And and specifically. Some of those. Some of those images, the.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah, yeah, yeah, so another great Sydney story of, you know, a group of builders, labourers and resident activists in the 1970s who, you know, the city was like today, like being redeveloped, freeways, high rise buildings everywhere. And these building workers and residents saying, well, how come we're not included in the discussion about what our city looks like and what it should be, and particularly the Builders Labourers Federation saying, well, we're not just going to be mute labourers who are told what to build and just do it unquestioningly. So I had this incredible set of bans on a whole bunch of developments where they just refused to knock down parks, or knock down heritage buildings just because somebody had the money to make it happen. And so it came right at a moment when all similar things are happening in the city, like, yeah, the selection of some of the images that you picked just to sort of put that on the street with that equality word and just say, well, people who have done it before, we can do it again. Like, let's just in that same way again, just have a little reminder on the street that, you know, this city has this incredible history of people fighting for equality.

**Wendy Murray** And yeah. And I think the combination of the location of Stace's Eternity, so we looked at it, where it had been recorded that he had chalked and also the location of some of these sites that were saved due to the green bans and some of the activism from the green bans in the 70s and 80s, and also some of the sites we're losing now and are changing and inequalities around the city, so with these particular posters the sites that we put them up in were specific to the content of the posters and Arthur Stace's journey.

**Kurt Iveson** So I reckon one of the coolest things about the idea of equality is precisely that it operates across all these different dimensions of our lives. Right. So equality can speak to gender equality. It can speak to marriage equality. It can speak to class inequality. It can like it. That's what's so great about it. Right. It can be the little thread that connects a whole set of different struggles that have taken place across space and across time. Um, and so, you know, at least for me, putting up a bunch of

stickers and posters with that word, but with images from those different struggles like is partly precisely to say that that, that actually all these different fights that we've got on at the moment, there's a connection. Right. Which is that the best of them are about actually advancing the cause of equality. And hopefully by putting that work up, you can actually make the connection between the green bans in the 1970s and a fight about marriage equality today, um, that what they have shared is this demand for society to recognise that we're equals, um, and that these hierarchies that put some of us up and put some of us down are just not cool, not acceptable.

**Wendy Murray** And it's the great thing about the anonymous street art is that it's open to interpretation. And that's always been something that I believe in as a street artist is that it remains anonymous. People just take it from their own experience. They won't associate it with a particular artist or a particular ideal.

**Wendy Murray** One of the fantastic things about the Poster series that we did or one of the things I believe in is as a street artist is that these works and these ideas go up on the street. They're anonymous and the you're the folks who see them aren't influenced by the artist who made it or the way it's made up. They just see the message at face value and take on and read it based on their own experience and understanding. So it's not blurred by a preconceived idea about what their particular socioeconomic place that artist comes from, the production values or the those things that we instinctively judge. Right. What we see see a message on a public space.

**Kurt Iveson** Even though we took a lot of care about the production value.

**Wendy Murray** I mean, the viewer wouldn't understand those folks that pass those posters wouldn't understand that they were hand-printed silkscreened posters that we've laboured over. The digital, the preparation, the research, the, um, the print quality, the extensive inks, the studio we printed them in, my special secret, we paste recipe which keeps the posters up perfectly, you know, the evasion of the authorities to install these posters, all those things that we have invested in the production of the posters. I actually don't care that folks don't know all that stuff, you know, I just want them to see the poster and enjoy them and respond to them is the most satisfying thing. It used to be used to be as a street artist I used to put posters up or do a series of posters, and then maybe a day or two later I'd follow my tracks and just see the reaction. So, graffiti writers might have responded to the work, folks might have written text over them. I've had people respond that way. Um, what happened? It was a distinct change. I noticed it when we did this post a series of round about that. 2015 to 2017 time, was the social media slowly took over that role of responding to the work on the street, so then instead of me walking around the city doing what I love, I started having to spend hours looking up hash tags to see how people responded to our posts that way. And so it changed the way that folks responded to that poster and the way that we could get that response. And look, I wouldn't do I would find it super satisfying if someone on an equality poster wrote, you know, there's no there's no equality. There's no point. You know, there's no point in trying or, you know,

people would respond on Instagram to certain images, street art images. And. I I just love standing back and just watching that happen without interfering, like, I just really enjoy watching those conversations play out on social media or public space around the work that I put up.

**Wendy Murray** I think there were five posters in that whole series. Um, so we had a plain one, just the text. And then we had Jemmy down at Parliament.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah. And we had Joe Owens with the megaphone and we had that, um, awesome female builder's labourer. Uh, yeah.

**Wendy Murray** Yes, the builder's labourer

**Kurt Iveson** you had one of the Women's Day marches.

**Wendy Murray** Oh yes. The International Women's Day march, from the Gay and Lesbian archives. That was fantastic.

**Kurt Iveson** And then that amazing image, I think it was like the first one of the first immigrant ships in the 20th century.

**Wendy Murray** Yeah. We did one of the first ships but we didn't print that one.

**Kurt Iveson** No, no. It's still digital digital. Digital only.

**Wendy Murray** Um, yeah. So we'd actually developed I think a series of six and produced like, four of them maybe. And then. Each of them were produced in editions of around about one hundred twenty so, and of the hundred and twenty, the majority of them would end up on the street.

**Wendy Murray** I like the woman, the builder's labourer that she's just it looks like a movie poster. A mad fitness movie poster because it's just so, so powerful. And the story behind, like, you know, women not being able to work on job sites and men stopping work to then allow her to work on the job sites. Or passing their hats around to pay her salary so she can work on the job site paid, it's just so inspiring and it just I mean, you still got a long way to go, but I just love that camaraderie and the. The support that women got in the workplace, she got on the job site.

**Kurt Iveson** Have we got to say everything we wanted to say? I think we have. Oh, yeah. I mean. I suppose like for me, maybe the only thing yeah, maybe the only thing to add is just that's it. That particularly as somebody who'd written a lot about graffiti and



street art and everything to be involved in the process, like right the way through from design to production to, you know, execution on the street. Um, yeah. I think it's definitely given me a whole other, um, appreciation of just the work that goes into getting up on the street and the obstacles that you've got to do it. Um, and like whether we're thinking about, you know, however many thousand times Stace must have done it to build the profile of that word. Yeah. You know, it's like do we even get one hundred posters up around the city is like if you're going to print them the way we printed them and et cetera, like is a lot of love that goes into it. And so every time one comes down a little bit of your heart, it's like, oh, and well, you know, it's like all these hours to get it up and 30 seconds to get rid of it. But, you know, that's the other hand, like that's the thing, right? That's the thing about street art. There's no, um, there's no thing that says it's going to be permanent. And in fact, it's not good that it ever would be permanent. Like, it's just really bad.

**Wendy Murray** It's fantastic (when people are inspired to make their own interpretations of art – as with Eternity – because of Wendy and Kurt's art). People, I've found that the poster series we created, there are a couple of artists that have used it in their work, and it's it's great and it's also fantastic that they don't know who the artist was that created that work. So, um. Oh, no, I forgot her name. Who's the artist in the VLF protest? Justine. Justine (Muller). OK, so Justine used one of our posters and a fantastic Jack Munday work, a Jack Munday painting, um, of Jack Munday and a protest. And she didn't know I was the artist that we happened to meet each other at a gallery opening of a mutual friend. And she asked what I did and I just said I do a few posters. And then something came up in the conversation about her uncle, of, she's in the Archibald painter, and she painted her uncle. And I said, Oh, I know about the green bans. I did a poster series. And then the conversation went on and she said, Oh, I've got a photo of all your posters. And it's just that's the beauty of the posters being anonymous and that those connections can happen.

**Wendy Murray** Eternity? It's a really hard question. I don't even think I can answer it. I mean, it's so linked with Arthur Stace and his work now that. For me, it's a sense of freedom and. Yes, it is actually back to his work. When I think of Eternity, I see his script on the concrete. I hear the story of my aunty who used to live around here and went to East Sydney Tech in the 50s. And she talked about how the rains would come and wash the chalk away and then she's come to school the next day and they'd be there again. And she never knew who did them. Aunty Marjory. She said they were just kind of a landscape, and so it's hard for me to take that to remove that word from Arthur Stace.

**Kurt Iveson** Yeah. So look, what it (Eternity) evokes in me is that story of Arthur Stace. And the thing that it really still evokes in me is just the single minded focus that this guy had on and the drive to make people want to think about that thing that was so important to him and his use of the street to do it. Because I think, you know, it's not somebody who had that nice idea. And they went out and wrote it a couple of times and then thought, well, that'll do like years and years and years of being out there, like every day with chalk. It's yeah. It's just kind of an incredible thing to me that the kind of, to boil down your kind of life desires of what you

want to communicate to the rest of the world to one word and then to just figure out how to write it in a way that looks pretty and do that thousands and thousands of times. It's awesome.

**Wendy Murray** I'm Wendy Murray, I'm a visual artist and street artist and I'm based in Sydney and Los Angeles.

**Kurt Iveson** So I'm Kurt Iveson. I'm an associate professor of urban geography at the University of Sydney.