Street Art Makes a Positive Difference

11 February 2020

My name is Donna Bartlett. I am the Community Sports Coordinator in South Australia. In 2019 I made a proposal to The Port Adelaide/Enfield Council when the opportunity presented itself to establish a safe environment for the community to express themselves through Street Art. It was brought to my attention, through research and widespread research that Street Art is firmly ingrained in the streets. It is a symbol of belonging. It has a history and subculture that does not discriminate. The artists shouldn’t feel victimized or have repercussions for showcasing skills if done in a legal setting. It is an outlet of expression to channel talents into something more positive. Most importantly help in the reduction of substance abuse, depression and anti-social behaviour. A strategy to help support people with physical and mental health conditions.

There is a lack of public spaces for artists to develop their artistic skills. Hence a prevalent scourge on graffiti and vandalism. Some of these problems could be solved by different design and planning. It is a multi-layered issue requiring a range of responses for a solution. I wanted to look at a different approach and try to change a system where we change the environment where the offenders operate, rather than change the offenders character or motivation.

There are very limited opportunities for artists in South Australia. There is a strong Street Art movement that builds stronger communities. It has a history. It does not discriminate. It is a non-believers view point of the power of paint and it is unlikely to go anywhere soon! If anything the subculture has grown! As we stand there are an insufficient amount of legal walls operating in Adelaide, which outstretches the demand and cannot be accessed by all.

After collaborating with the Council, Local Businesses, Community Centres, Stakeholders, residents etc, I increased resources and networks to deliver high quality and easily accessible life enriching and in some cases live saving opportunities and pathways for the given target groups. Legal walls were needed in the region and the needs of these communities needed particular attention.

I worked with local South Australian business, Aerosoliks Anonymous with Mathew Kelly, for setting up workshops in the area and set up a pilot program at Junction Community Centre. He is a very experienced mural specialist and mentor. His background is extensive and promotes leadership/mentoring, whilst being culturally aware and has dedicated his life to art through his own experiences and hardships.

The workshops ran for 4 weeks with a maximum of 6 students at a time, so the clients could get the utmost attention. Clients learnt new skills, developed a talent, and learnt new skills. It is also a very social activity that brings like minded individuals together. We had an overwhelming response. The success stories that came about from these workshops were amazing and beyond.
The outcomes showed that the clients found a new appreciation of art, to channel their inner emotions into something profound and breakdown barriers. The focus they showed was astounding. One client and her mother had come along. They had been living in their car for 8 years and experiencing homelessness. The daughter would not have any interaction with men due to past experiences. She bonded up to Matt and came out of her shell. Never missed a workshop. She had the chance to make new friendships and make new connections and open new avenues. Another client had a disability and would only focus when she was painting. She found her ability to apply herself and have pride and contentment.

The heart-warming stories go on and extended to the wider community. Due to the popularity, we collaborated on an idea to use the materials from the workshops to create an active participation wall for future use. It has created a healthy positive atmosphere and a vibrant space. We had a launch with Junction Community Centre and PAE Council and a come and try wall. It was such a great diverse gathering. The energy at the venue and the reactions were incredible.

Reclink Australia has approval and we have found the appropriate location for a permanent legal free wall in the heart of Port Adelaide. Right next to the Sports and Recreation Centre! Our theme subject on the legal wall will be for Suicide Prevention Awareness, mental health and self-harm. A remembrance wall everyone in the community can go to and reflect or based ones they have lost due to suicide, substance abuse, domestic violence etc. It is a space for healing and recovery.

This will bring colour back into many people's lives. The outcomes and resolutions by such initiatives, help those with mental health conditions in a constructive manner. It has been a pleasure to work on such projects and have the capacity to improve the lives of those in need of more support and compassion. It would be辉煌 to have such initiatives in the future for positive promotion and come up with more solutions for the hardships of individuals and society. These initiatives give life-affirming opportunities, provide new pathways and exit points out of the welfare system and transitions into mainstream community.

Source URL: https://reclink.org/about/news/street-art-makes-positive-difference

Links
[1] https://reclink.org/about/news/street-art-makes-positive-difference