GREEN BANS ART WALK

40 YEARS OF COMMUNITY & UNION ACTION, 1971–2011
“The Mundeys and the Pringles and the Owens and the rank-and-file have effected one of those rare shifts in public thinking that occurs only a few times in a lifetime. Maybe they were mad hatters and larrikins – a true Australian tradition — but, by God, there’s many a Sydney resident who will remember them with love.”


For four years Green Bans inspired a nation and the world. The NSW Builders Labourers Federation responded to a last resort plea for help from the Battlers for Kelly’s Bush to save remnant harbour bush. “We are builders labourers”, said secretary Jack Mundey; “not mere builders labourers” as Premier Robert Askin, the establishment, media and hot money jeered.

From 1971, thousands of builders labourers voted on over 40 requests for bans from resident groups, the National Trust and/or the Institute of Architects. They voted for a big picture: to keep urban low cost housing and to protect the environment and heritage. Environmental green bans were not negotiable; built green Bans were negotiable. They crusaded for safety reforms on building sites and wider social issues, such as feminism, gay and black rights, and the impact of international politics.

The BLF leaders were disciplined and educated by the workers’ education system and the New Left of the Communist Party. They led a coalition of working class residents, seamen, conservationists, lecturers, artists and musicians, public servants and libertarians to fight government plans to redevelop urban low-cost housing into commercial developments or freeways. In Victoria Street after a brutal struggle, low-cost housing was lost with some heritage gain. Juanita Nielsen was murdered in mid-1975 and Mick Fowler, the other key leader, died an untimely death.
In Woolloomooloo the Labor Party promised to ‘Save the ‘Loo’ and won Federal government in December 1972. This led to a visionary medium density workers’ housing project embracing renewal and new designs.

Having a say in the city of the future created a planning system revolution, then changed institutions and laws. They set standards around the world. The state BLF leadership paid dearly. The Federal BLF who saw a greater future working in cooperation with developers ousted them. The union was de-registered and the leadership denied the right to work in their industry.

The Green Bans Art Walk re-activates the fine detail of the historic pathways and disconnected walks through the heart of the ‘Loo. On the city side of Victoria Street a network of heritage-listed stairs down the sandstone cliff links to laneways crossing the Woolloomooloo basin east to west. The Walk symbolically re-unifies a beautiful area disconnected by rail and freeway structures, ugly site consolidations and looming high-rise.

We propose on-going walking routes, new signage and lighting, restoring existing and adding new Green Plaques, restoring and adding new artworks (and a statue to Jack Mundey) and a ‘linear park’ to create a peoples museum emphasising the area’s residential character. Designation as a special area ensures that the planning system protects significance and character and this is passed on to future generations. We hope to help put low-cost urban housing back on top of the action list. Each walk seeks your ideas and responses.

Jo Holder
For Green Bans Art Walk
July 2011
‘1938–1950 Civic Survey of Woolloomooloo’, Historic Atlas of Sydney; 1971 ‘Map of Fitzroy Ward’ showing development sites, Are you living in the shadows? by Alan Davies; heavy dotted line shows the area of the Woolloomooloo Renewal Project (1975–81) by John Devenish for the Housing Commission of NSW. This project received eight design awards and international acclaim for community consultation.
ALSO OF NOTE

11 Kindergarten Union, Dowling Street, former container garden and murals

DENIS WINSTON PLACE (OFF JUDGE STREET)

12 Denis Winston Place

13 Margel Hinder, ‘Aphrodite’, bronze sculpture with fountain

14 11-31 Judge Street

WOOLLOOOMOOLOO GREEN BAN: FORBES AND CATHEDRAL STREET/TOM UREN SQUARE

15 Giant Kurrajong, the ‘Tree of Knowledge’

16 Tom Uren Place Plaque

17 Green Bans Murals

18 Linear Park Proposal

FORBES STREET

19 70 Forbes Street, Architecture Plaque

20 41-47 Forbes Street

21 36 Forbes Street, Architecture Plaque

22 Forbes Street Architecture Plaque

23 Red Post Office Boxes, Forbes Street

24 Wharfies Square

25 38-40 Charles Street, Inhibodress Gallery

26 Nellie Stewart Square

27 WOOL / LOO / MOO / LOO Guerrilla Garden

28 6 & 8 Riley Street, terrace houses

29 PCYC and Australian Youth Mural

30 Sylvia Chase Square outside PCYC

31 Boomerang Street

32 Anita Aarons, reclining figure, playground sculpture

A Memorial Sculpture on Cowper Wharf Road

B Contaminated former service station site

C Juanita Neilson Community Centre

D Gunnery, Cowper Wharf Road

E The Finger Wharf

F Pubs

G People’s Parks and Matthew Talbot Hostel for Men

H Sir John Young Crescent: Sydney Coffee Palace / former Eye Hospital (now backpackers)

I John Passmore Gallery – the former Merryfield Hotel

J Women and The Arts Festival Mural, on the Domain Carpark, St Mary’s Road

K Not Forgotten – St Kilda mansion whose demolition inspired the first resident uprising in the late 1950s and St Kilda Lane

L Most Mysterious – missing plaques in Sir John Young Cresc to Robert Louis Stevenson and Tilly Devine who lived here; missing statue of Diana the Huntress with Dog, from Springfield Avenue

M Art & Memorials in the Royal Botanic Garden and the Domain, adjoins Green Bans Map
GREEN BANS ART WALK AND EXHIBITION 6–27 AUGUST 2011

40th anniversary of the Green Bans, 1971–2011

JO HOLDER
The Cross Art Projects
crossartprojects.com.au
Research and writing

PAT ARMSTRONG
somnambulist.org
Design and typesetting

BIG FAG PRESS
bigfagpress.org
Map printing

BLOOD & THUNDER
bloodandthunder.com.au
Booklet printing

JACK MUNDEY IS CARRIED AWAY BY POLICE.