

Commemorating a rape: Mary's Place 1997 and 2010

Alison Atkinson-Phillips

In January 1996, a young, lesbian woman named Mary was verbally abused and physically and sexually assaulted in a laneway in Surry Hills, an inner suburb of Sydney. The homophobic hate crime became the catalyst for a place-based art project that reclaimed the laneway for Sydney's LGBTIQ community. Just over a decade later, the original commemoration was replaced by a high profile public artwork. This paper offers a comparison of these two place-based commemorations. Although only a relatively short period separates them, the social context is radically different, as is the response to the hate crime. Whereas the first Mary's Place artwork focused on the LGBTIQ experience of violence, the 2010 commemoration emphasized Mary's femaleness. By exploring the similarities and differences of the two responses, this paper explores changes over time in social responses to LGBTIQ people, and the power of language in responses to violence.

In January 1996, a young woman named Mary was verbally abused and physically and sexually assaulted in a laneway in Surry Hills, an inner suburb of Sydney. She was attacked after attending a female-only lesbian night at Kinsella's nightclub in Taylor Square.¹ Two men who had been denied entry earlier in the night followed her down the street when she left the club, walking a few steps behind her and calling out homophobic abuse. She passed by the Beresford Hotel, a venue with a strong identity as a gay male pub; but rather than entering the male-only space, Mary turned into Flood Lane to reach her car. It was here her abusers caught up with her. They bashed her and raped her. The verbal, homophobic abuse continued throughout the physical attack (Lee 1998). This paper discusses two different commemorations of that experience of homophobic violence. The Mary's Place Project was developed in the immediate aftermath of the attack and was led by volunteers under the auspices of a community organization, the Anti-Violence Project (AVP). One of the outcomes of this first project was a mural consisting of four paintings which covered the laneway pavement. Its destruction in 2008 and re-imagining in 2010 as a high profile public artwork offers an opportunity to consider changes over

¹ Taylor Square is an area of Sydney associated with LGBTIQ people.

Corresponding author:

Alison Atkinson-Phillips, Newcastle University
Email: Alison.Atkinson-Phillips@newcastle.ac.uk

time in commemorative practices, as well as changes in the social acceptance of homosexuality in Australia. While the original Mary's Place mural can be described as a 'grass roots' project, it is not 'spontaneous' in the sense that it did not happen "without official sanction or coordinated planning" (Franck and Paxson 2007, 133). In each instance, these commemorative projects involved negotiation with public institutions and with contemporary understandings of 'placemaking'. My aim is to offer a historical interpretation of these two commemorations, considering how they mobilise concepts of publicity, public space and the public sphere to re-claim a site of violence.

Rape is an everyday occurrence in Australia and worldwide. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012 Personal Safety Survey found that 17% of women and 4% of men have experienced sexual assault since the age of 15, and these statistics have been relatively consistent since the survey was first introduced in the 1990s. Yet there are no other memorials in Australia that commemorate the experience of rape.² This raises important questions about why this particular experience of sexual violence came to be publicly commemorated. The Mary's Place project was first identified in the Places of the Heart research project, which was funded by the Australian Research Council and led by Paula Hamilton and Paul Ashton. That research produced an online catalogue of Australia's civic memorials from the 1960s up to 2008 (Ashton and Hamilton 2011). The study categorised memorials by the topic according to the type of event they commemorated and identified a small group of memorials that were commemorations of "violation" (Ashton, Hamilton & Searby 2012, 6). In other words, it is one of the first memorials in Australia to specifically commemorate an experience of violence, rather than death. The Mary's Place memorials is also an example of a general shift noted by Ashton, Hamilton and Searby towards a need to commemorate at the exact place of trauma.

Mary's Place is unusual in the memorials around Australia that commemorate lived experiences (Atkinson-Phillips 2018), in that it focusses on a single event; a violent hate crime with a single victim. However, as cultural theorist Ann Cvetkovich (2003) has argued, specific events can be used to draw attention to broader experiences of structural oppression. For example, 'violent crime sparked by racism and homophobia ... points to the existence of other, more systematic forms of violence that may not be traumatic yet deserve attention' (Cvetkovich 2003, 273). So,

² This is changing, as memorials are created in response to the findings of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

while the Mary's Place memorials may seem to focus on the single event of Mary's rape, they stand in for a broader context in which queer bodies have been punished for their disruptions of heterosexual norms and their visibility in public space. As queer theorist Michael Warner has claimed:

Just as feminists since Fanny Wright have found that to challenge male domination in public is to change both femininity and the norms of public behaviours, lesbians and gay men have found that to challenge the norms of straight culture in public is to disturb deep and unwritten rules about the kinds of behaviour and eroticism that are appropriate to the public (2002, 25).

The gay and lesbian community who responded to Mary's attack understood it as a response just such a 'disturbance' of heterosexual norms, and purposefully engaged with practices of publicity in their response, including through the claiming of public space.

Public memorials can be understood as interventions into the public sphere that not only serve as an address to particular "counterpublics" (Fraser 1992; Warner 2002) but also to constitute them. Also, as Cvetkovich has outlined in relation to queer culture, "cultural production that emerges around trauma enables new practices and publics" (2003, 10). In the time between the 1997 and 2010 commemorations of Mary's rape, the subaltern gay and lesbian counterpublic has evolved into the more inclusive and, arguably, more socially accepted LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer) counterpublic. In this paper, I use the term 'gay and lesbian' to refer to that community as it existed in the 1990s, and LGBTIQ when discussing more recent events; I use the term 'counterpublic' alongside the more everyday term 'community', while recognizing that the boundaries of such groupings are always fluid.

In many ways, the Mary's Place Project is an example of a group of young women adopting established place-making practices and adapting them as they searched for an appropriate way to respond to an event that had ruptured their sense of place. Indeed, the term 'Mary's Place' was intended as an act of re-claiming this place for Mary, rather than marking it as a site of trauma. The later 'Lamp for Mary' public art project also draws on concepts and practices of place-making, although within a more bureaucratized framework. While it may be tempting to see projects such as Mary's Place as a grass-roots way of reclaiming the city, it is important to recognise that such places are, as Lefebvre (1996) also pointed out, a point of mediation between public and personal politics—what he called the

“near order” of relationships between people and the “far order” of institutions (101). Following Pierce, Martin and Murphy’s (2011) helpful conceptualisation of “networked place” as a key thread in the emerging place-making literature, my understanding of Mary’s Place is framed by Doreen Massey’s description of place as a collection of “stories so far” (2005, 130). In attempting to tell the stories of these two commemorations of the attack on Mary, I am aware that I am highlighting certain parts of these stories and silencing others.

To illustrate this, and before considering the individual commemorations in detail, I want to think about the place that became Mary’s Place, and its role in the story in particular through the lens of ‘publicness’. Mary’s attack took place in the street, and so in that sense it was already public; however, that publicness was limited in two important ways. Firstly, Mary was attacked behind a parked car in a dark laneway, not in the middle of a big open space. Flood Lane was a narrow, crooked, badly lit street. This allowed the attack to take place away from the view of ‘the public’. At the same time, the laneway’s borderline publicness was also one reason why, in their response, the gay and lesbian counterpublic was able to engage so directly with the site of the attack. The Beresford Hotel, which is on the corner of Flood Lane/Mary’s Place, is a well-known gay-friendly pub and at the time was a financial supporter of the AVP. So the gay and lesbian counterpublic already had a connection to the space, which was used as a meeting place, particularly around the time of the Sydney Mardi Gras. However, this connection was not ‘ownership’. Apart from local residents, the laneway was also regularly used by homeless people, due to the close proximity of both Wesley Mission’s Edgar Eager Lodge and the St Michael’s Anglican Church, and by drug dealers—again, because of its marginal publicness. It must be recognised, then, that the work of ‘claiming’ the laneway had an impact on those other marginalised counterpublics and, indeed, may have acted to displace them. In the re-imagining of Mary’s Place in the late 2000s, these other counterpublics were present as ‘stakeholders’ through representatives of the institutions, rather than directly through individual users of the space. This, too, is part of the specificity of this particular place (Massey 2005, 130).

This paper draws on oral history interviews with participants in the two public commemorations of Mary’s rape. The Mary’s Place project was set up in the months following Mary’s attack and ran from 1996–1998. It was initiated by Nicole Asquith and Liza-Mare Syron from the Anti-Violence Project (AVP), a local community organisation, and funded by the South Sydney Council. The main project team also included local art curator

Sinead Roarty and Mary. Outcomes of the projects were the renaming of the laneway where Mary's attack took place, from Flood Lane to Mary's Place; new bylaws to limit parking in the laneway; the installation of a new mirror and improved lighting in the laneway; and mural artworks painted on the road surface. My research has involved interviews with Nicole Asquith, Liza-Mare Syron and Sinead Roarty but not with Mary. Quotes from Mary are taken from the Melissa Lee documentary project, *Mary's Place* (1998). Mary's full name is on public record, but I have chosen not to use it here. The material in the documentary corroborates statements made by the other participants about Mary's involvement and motivation. In 2008, the Mary's Place laneway was resurfaced and the mural artworks were destroyed. The City of Sydney commissioned a new public artwork to take its place, the 'Lamp for Mary' (2010) by Australian artist Mikala Dwyer, with words by internationally renowned poet and academic Professor Michael Taussig (2011). I conducted interviews with Mikala Dwyer, with council workers from the LGBTQI community liaison and public art teams, and with former City of Sydney public art worker Danella Bennett. Mary was involved in the second project, but again I did not interview her about her involvement. Mary was made aware of the research project, via the City of Sydney, but did not choose to participate.

Mary's Place Project, 1996-1998

The mid 1990s were an important time for Sydney's gay and lesbian community. There was increasing social acceptance of homosexuality, in part driven by increased visibility. In 1994, two successful Australian movies, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and *The Sum of Us*, featured high profile actors in gay and transgender roles. The Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras had become an increasingly accepted event. A report in the Sydney Morning Herald in January 1996 identified the Mardi Gras as a 'fixture' in the Sydney calendar, and the previous year's official party CD as the biggest selling dance album in Australia (Hornery 1996). At the same time, the increased visibility of gay and lesbian people meant ingrained homophobic attitudes were confronted, sometimes with tragic results. As was the case in the US, AIDS had activated the gay and lesbian community. By the 1990s, the epidemic was no longer at its most extreme, but anti-retroviral drugs were not yet widely available and the disease was a visible presence. Violence against gay and lesbian people was a common occurrence, and often ignored by the police – indeed, in 2016 a cold-case review was initiated to examine 88 possible 'gay hate' deaths from the 1970s to the 1990s, which at the time were often dismissed by police as suicide or 'misadventure', or

simply as opportunist crimes (Benny-Morrison 2016). The term 'hate crime' was beginning to be used to give a political meaning to these disparate experiences of homophobic violence (Sinead Roarty, interview with author, 21 September, 2014).

In this context, the gay and lesbian AVP was set up in response to research by the Equal Opportunities Commission, which identified a high incidence of street violence. It was funded by the South Sydney Council. In January 1996, the time of Mary's attack, the AVP employed two workers, Bruce Grant, whose role focused on education and awareness raising, and Nicole Asquith, a client advocate. Nicole Asquith reported that the AVP received around 300 calls a year (interview with the author, 18 September 2014), with the vast majority of assaults taking place around the day of the Mardi Gras street parade. Most of the street violence was focused around the Taylor Square area of Darlinghurst, a well-known 'enclave' for gay and lesbian people.

As urban historian Dolores Hayden points out, festivals and parades have a long tradition as a means of publicly defining cultural identity, 'by staking out routes in the urban cultural landscape' (1997, 38). The Sydney Mardi Gras, which began in 1978 as a protest in solidarity with the anniversary of the New York Stonewall riots, is an example of these practices. The significant spike in street violence reported at the time of Mardi Gras suggests that it was still contested. Similarly, 'Reclaim the night' is a Western feminist tradition with roots going back to the March 1976 International Tribunal on Crimes against Women held in Belgium. Since then, night-time rallies have been held in many Western countries, in which women walk collectively through public spaces to draw attention to the everyday fear of violence that often prevents women from accessing those spaces at other times. The sense of celebration often brought to such events is itself a form of resistance designed to counter the social control that affects non-dominant bodies; that is, anyone who is not white, male and heterosexual. The initial community response to Mary's rape was in this tradition. Organized by a group called the Lesbian Avengers, it was a public 'convert the anger' rally, held just over a month after Mary's attack. Like other activist rallies, it engaged with the mainstream practice of festivals and parades as a means of claiming the right to occupy public space and engage in the public sphere.

Although people knew the attack had taken place, until the day of the rally, few people knew that it was Mary who had been attacked. At the time, Mary was well known in the gay and lesbian community; one of those people that

'everybody' knew. Mary's public statements show that she understood publicity as an important weapon to fight back against her attack, but her initial response was a desire to remain silent. Nonetheless, she found the courage to speak at the rally. In the Mary's Place documentary, Mary made an explicit link between her personal experience and the collective:

When I did speak out I talked about converting anger to positive action. And I was hoping that other people would join with me, and speak out with me, so what starts out as one voice becomes two and it's going to become a wider group action (Lee 1998).

So, from the beginning, the response was not only about this one attack but also about the broader issue of homophobic violence, and Mary herself helped to make that link. There is a sense that this was a tipping point around which it was possible to act. The hate crime was something the gay and lesbian public understood well, and the rape of a young woman was something many members of the non-gay and -lesbian public could empathise with. The publicity generated by the attack provided an opportunity for non-gay and -lesbian people to express opposition to such acts of violence.

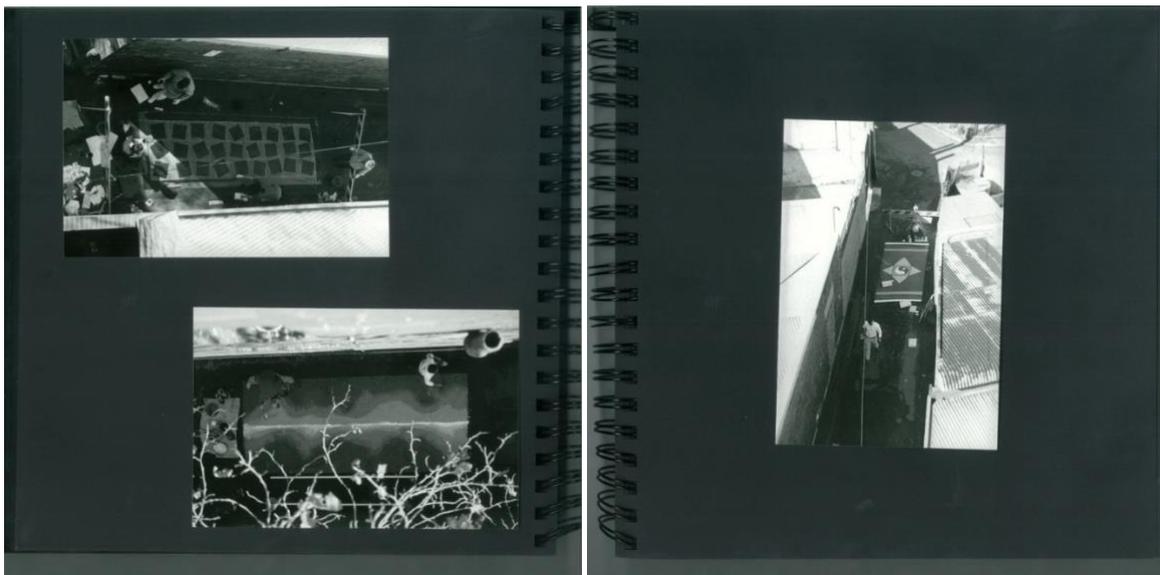
Nonetheless, calling the Mary's Place project a 'community' response masks the fact that the attack had an impact on different individuals and groups in different ways. Mary had first reported the attack to the AVP, a community organisation set up to respond to high levels of street violence. Client advocate Nicole Asquith took Mary's call, as first responder, and was deeply affected (interview with the author, 18 September 2014). She lived in the Surry Hills neighbourhood and Flood Lane was very close to her workplace and her home. After hearing about the attack, Asquith began altering her behaviour to avoid the area where the attack took place, meaning she moved into 'less safe' areas, putting herself at risk. Asquith credits Liza-Mare Syron, a friend who worked at the AVP as a volunteer, with the idea of taking the response further than an initial march or protest. As an Aboriginal woman, Liza-Mare Syron was familiar with the practice of holding smoking ceremonies to cleanse or clear spaces (Syron interview with the author, 22 September 2014). She brought these ideas into the gay and lesbian context, and the laneway was blessed by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

Officially, the Mary's Place Project was able to gain funding as part of the South Sydney Council's crime prevention strategy, under the auspices of the AVP's already existing Homophobia What are you Scared Of? campaign.

Mary's Place Project won the council's Community Event of the Year award on Australia Day 1998, for crime prevention through environmental design. Council by-laws were changed to restrict parking, since Mary had been attacked behind a parked car that blocked her from view. The group also convinced the council to install a mirror, to reduce the blind spot. A local business owner donated motion-sensitive lights. As a condition of their financial support, the City of South Sydney created a plaque, which emphasizes the role of the Council in working to combat homophobic violence.

Mary's Place is, however, about more than crime prevention. The laneway mural was a political and celebratory statement of gay and lesbian identity. Sinead Roarty put out a call for artists which she describes in the documentary as a "call to action" to create a site specific work that responded to the event of Mary's attack. Four artists were selected, each responding in very different ways. The concept of painting the laneway itself came from the artists and was seen as a good way to proceed, both from a practical perspective, because of the relatively low cost of paint, and again in relation to the idea of claiming and re-activating the space. Roarty said she chose the works to be able to reach out to other publics who might come across them unexpectedly.

The original Mary's Place road mural now exists only in photographs and film. Melissa Lee's documentary shows the painting taking place and contains short interviews with each artist about the meaning of their work. Nicole Asquith's personal archive includes photos of each artist and a photo



of each artwork, taken on the day.

Figure 1 and 2: Scans of Nicole Asquith's project album showing Mary's Place laneway on the day the mural was painted. Copyright Nicole Asquith.

However, there is no image to capture the whole laneway or even to fully capture each individual artwork. I describe each painting here to give an insight into the varied ways the original project acknowledged and told the story of the attack.

Lachlan Warner's painting engaged most explicitly with the violence of Mary's attack. Mary had described seeing the contents of her bag spill out onto the laneway as the attack took place, and Warner tried to get people to imagine themselves in her place. The painting was framed by words that asked "What would you do?" and "What would you see?" if you were attacked and your personal items were strewn across the ground. Within this frame were 27 squares each painted with X-ray images of items that might be the contents of a bag. Warner used stencils to create a forensic, crime scene feel.

Jane Becker's work was more abstract and painterly. A jagged line, like a lightning bolt, runs down the centre. This strip, suggesting white hot fire, fades out to orange and red at the edges. The only woman in the group of painters, Becker described imagining the pain and anger Mary would have felt at being attacked. She said her painting also represented cleansing and purifying fire.

Juan Carlos Camacho's work was firmly positive. A black silhouette of a female body was framed by two buildings, suggesting the woman dominating rather than being controlled by the urban landscape. In the background, a peace symbol hung over a night sky. A pink triangle covered the woman's genital area, and a bold red heart shape was in the centre of her chest. Camacho said he wanted to focus on the future, rather than the past, in his work.

Finally, Stephen Brunner offered a 'welcome mat' to people entering the laneway. He made use of gay and lesbian icons including the rainbow as the edges of the mat, and pink triangles which frame a yin/yang symbol in the centre. This work was about carpeting a place of pain with something welcoming and comforting. Similarly, at the other end of the laneway the Mary's Place 'logo' used a female symbol on a rainbow background, symbolising gender diversity, and the words "Mary's Place".

There is a sense of celebration in the photos and video of the painting day. Mary is shown joking with the artists and painting some of the lines of the 'logo'. This day offered an important opportunity for a wider group of people to get involved and show support in a practical way. Flyers had been distributed around the local area to explain what would be happening.

Nicole Asquith recalled an elderly local resident purposefully getting down from her walking frame to join in the painting as a symbolic act of solidarity. AIDS patients from the palliative care ward at the local hospital were brought along to watch, and the Beresford Hotel staff set up tables and chairs outside, making a festive atmosphere. Mary's two sons and sisters also joined in the painting. Liza-Mare Syron identified this as a symbolic way they were able to show their acceptance of Mary's lesbian identity.

Lamp for Mary

The neighbourhood of Surry Hills in the late 2010s is different from the place it was in the late 1990s. The Beresford Hotel still exists, but has a very different feel. It markets itself as a "neighbourhood pub" (Merivale 2018), reflecting changing demographics and a decreased need for gay-only spaces. The laneway, Mary's Place, has also undergone significant changes. Partway down the laneway there is a set of double doors made of reflective stainless steel that lead into the back of the Beresford. Near these doors, a kitchen worker or two is often found resting on an upturned milk crate. There might be a car parked near the doors, which suggests that the by-laws that were changed in the wake of the rape are no longer rigidly enforced. Most significantly, the laneway mural was removed in 2008. Details are a little vague, but it appears that the council needed to do road repairs and the work was completed without concern for the paintings. When South Sydney Council and the City of Sydney merged, the paintings had not been listed on the City of Sydney's public art register, the part of the council responsible for roadworks had no idea about their importance. Some Beresford customers saw the destruction and tried to stop it. They were unsuccessful but alerted the City of Sydney to the mural's demise (Pip Ditzel, interview with the author, 23 September 2014). These members of the LGBTIQ counterpublic clearly felt a strong enough sense of connection to or perhaps even ownership of the Mary's Place mural that they were willing to protest at its destruction. Around the same time, in the late 2000s, there had been a return of homophobic violence and abuse in the area. The City of Sydney's LGBTIQI community program officer was working on a strategy to reactivate the area around the nearby Taylor Square (Pip Ditzel, interview with the author, 23 September 2014). Responding to community concern about the disappearance of the original mural dovetailed with the council's plans and, as was the case with the original Mary's Place project, the decision to respond was influenced by factors other than a desire to acknowledge Mary's experience.



Figure 2: "Lamp for Mary" text by Michael Taussig and view of Beresford Hotel window.

By the time I visited Mary's Place, in mid 2013, the new 'Lamp for Mary' artwork was in place. However, I arrived at the laneway entrance unsure what to expect, since everything I knew about Mary's Place at that stage came from the Places of the Heart database, which contained a single, small image of the (now removed) entry logo. The first thing I noticed was the street name: Mary's Place. I entered from Burke Street and walked up and down the lane. I remember the sense of un-ease, as I stopped to think about what had happened here. The 'Lamp for Mary' by Mikala Dwyer is about half way down the lane, and text by internationally renowned poet Michael Taussig runs along the outside wall of the Beresford Hotel, below a narrow window. A white van was parked in the laneway, blocking my view, so I had to move into the space to be able to read the pink cursive text: "This is a lane with a lamp and a name in memory of a woman who was raped here. She happened to be a lesbian" (Taussig 2011). That little sentence brought me up short: "she happened to be a lesbian." Then and now, I wonder at that choice of words. This woman was raped *because* she was a lesbian. She was raped by men wanting to exert their power, making her responsible for their rejection at the bar, responding with violence to her lack of need for them. The original laneway mural, with its rainbow background and female symbol, clearly recognised her lesbian identity. But now it is a side issue. The text continues: "When the sun sets this lamp keeps vigil along with you who read this in silent meditation." In the daylight, the lamp was turned off. The sky was dark and overcast, and I was glad I didn't have time to stay long. Some of the lettering was missing, but a sprig of blossom stuck into the wall in the middle of the word "vigil" offered a sign of hope.

The 'Lamp for Mary' artwork by Mikala Dwyer is pink, like the words, and made of layers of circular metal. In contrast with the immediacy of the



Figure 3: 'Lamp for Mary' (Dwyer & Taussig 2010), view of text and lamp, Surry Hills, New South Wales.

the painted murals, the lamp is fabricated and purposefully generic, suggesting a link between this laneway and other places. It looks like an oversized lounge-room lamp, connecting ideas of safety and security. If you visit at night, holes cut into the sides of the lamp transmit little circles of light, like a disco ball. The pink colour of the lamp and the accompanying text reference the iconic pink triangle, a symbol of LGBTIQ oppression and resistance since WW2. The lamp's refracted light sends out rainbows, another symbol of the LGBTIQ community. The wording of the text breaks through this sense of safety and celebration.

The original Mary's Place Project was auspiced by the AVP, with support from South Sydney Council. However, the AVP was the kind of not-for-profit organization that runs on a shoestring budget with the help of volunteers. The divisions between paid and unpaid staff were blurred, and the Mary's Place Project was, in the end, a group of four women working together with some structural support from the AVP and the local council. The 'Lamp for Mary' public art project, in contrast, was driven from within the Council and constrained by existing public art processes. Other groups or individuals who had an interest in the project were positioned as 'stakeholders' rather than participants. These stakeholders—including other users of the laneway and representatives of neighbouring organisations—were involved in the project through a series of structured processes (City of Sydney public art officer, interview with the author, 23 September 2014).³

³ Stakeholders involved in the consultation process included Houghton Design, Wesley Mission, NSW Police Force, ACON Anti-Violence Project, ACON, Wesley Mission, St Michael's Anglican Church, ACON Young Lesbians Project and Twenty 10.

The development of the second memorial began with a call for expressions of interest publicised among the art community. Mikala Dwyer was the sole respondent. She described having an immediate sense of connection to the project brief when her gallery sent it through to her, despite the very small budget — about A\$30,000 — which would have included production costs. The information pack provided by the City of Sydney included some images of the original work, and Dwyer was also able to access Melissa Lee's Mary's Place video. Keenly inspired by the images of Stephen Brunner's carpet mural; she knew she wanted to create a similarly domesticated space within the laneway (interview with the author, 14 November 2014). The City of Sydney's Public Art Advisory Panel approved the proposed new artwork, and the public art officer emphasised that this was not because there were no other proposals, but because there was an immediate feeling that Dwyer's design captured something important about the Mary's Place story. It is likely that Dwyer's status as an already well-recognised artist represented by the prestigious Roslyn Oxley9 gallery also influenced this decision. From this acceptance, the concept was developed further, with the involvement of the 'community stakeholders' through a series of council-facilitated community forums.

Dwyer said that as the concept developed, she was aware of the need to find a way to counter the risk that the lamp would simply be seen as decoration. This was reinforced by comments made in the consultation process. She invited poet and academic Michael Taussig to contribute the text. In interviews, the City of Sydney staff emphasised how well the text fit with the project. Dwyer, on the other hand, focused on the struggle to find an agreed form of words. She recalled that the first draft of Michael Taussig's text was influenced by Mary's description of the attack in the Melissa Lee documentary, in which she talked about having her used tampon shoved in her mouth and struggling to breathe. The current form of words is the result of negotiation and redrafting.

Whereas the original artwork clearly positioned Mary within the gay and lesbian community/counterpublic, in the current artwork Mary's sexuality is almost incidental. She "happened" to be a lesbian. Perhaps in the intervening decade the LGBTIQ community has moved into a more central role, and because of this, claiming the attack as a 'hate crime' has become less important than mainstreaming the event — it could happen to anyone because "she [just] happened to be lesbian". Perhaps this was a function of the process already developing during the first Mary's Place project, in which Mary herself made the link between her experience as victim and

survivor of a homophobic attack and the wider experience of all people affected by violence and abuse.

Mary's involvement and emphasis on the power of speaking out continued to be important as this second project developed. She agreed to participate in some community consultations and when local business owners complained about the use of the words 'lesbian' and 'rape' in the final version of the text, Mary spoke out at a community forum. She explained that she had always named her attack, even when explaining it to her young children, and that the power of language was important. Although I have not been able to hear directly from Mary herself, the impression I have is that she agreed to be involved because of a sense of social obligation, rather than because the renewal of the memorial was personally important for her. In a media interview she again reinforced the importance of speaking out and naming homophobia, offering her own analysis of the meaning of the new work:

Hot pink is a colour that talks about future and recovery and healing, while through the story it tells, the artwork is saying that we aren't going to remain silent and allow the perpetuation of violence to go unnoticed (Mary quoted in Potts 2010).

This interpretation is consistent with Mary's public speeches during the original Mary's Place project, making a connection between her experience of violence and a collective response. This consistent message coming from Mary had an impact on the council, and convinced them that it was important to stick with the "difficult" words (Pip Ditzel, interview with the author, 23 September 2014).

Although opposition to the wording only came from a few local residents, it almost derailed the entire project because of a perception that the artwork might negatively affect the reputation of the local area. When the lamp was installed in December 2010, the owner of the Beresford, Merivale, was yet to give its permission for the text to be attached to the wall. The pub supplies the electricity for the lamp, so their support was crucial. Mikala Dwyer started up a Facebook page to encourage people to contact the council and the Beresford with messages of support. The range of people joining the support group reflected a diverse audience, including people from the art world, LGBTIQ activists and community workers, and others who were interested in the project. One person wrote at length on the Facebook page about the use of the term 'vigil', in the sense of keeping watch. She suggested that perhaps the real offence was not in the words

(rape, lesbian) but in the call to get involved in the task of paying attention: "If there is offence for any words, it could easily be for this request as it calls us to reflect upon fear and hatred — both uncomfortable human emotions" (Hogarty 2010). While such sentiments might be important ways that those who engage with 'Lamp for Mary' make sense of it, ultimately, Merivale's approval and support was contingent on them being convinced that the artwork would not deter their customers. As far back as the 1960s, cultural theorist Henri Lefebvre bemoaned the fact that what he termed the "use value" of the city was being taken over by "exchange value" (Lefebvre 1996, 67-8). Having gained Merivale's approval, the 'Lamp for Mary' public artwork now represents a significant investment by the City of Sydney, giving it a commercial value outside of the meaning given to the Mary's Place mural. One positive outcome is that this makes it much less likely to be accidentally removed without Council permission.

Conclusion

The story of Mary's Place shows how both processes of commemoration and responses to violence against LGBTIQ people have changed in the past 20 years. When Mary was attacked in the 1990s, the response was immediate and community-led. By engaging with discourses around crime prevention and community safety, the project team were able to secure funding from the local council, while being allowed to manage the process relatively autonomously. By the late 2000s, however, the Mary's Place murals had come to be understood as 'owned' by the City of Sydney, and their redevelopment was managed by the Council within established public art guidelines. At the same time, a different conception of 'ownership' framed the memorial as belonging to the LGBTIQ community, leading them to fight for its renewal. The bureaucratic processes adopted for the second project took ownership away from the LGBTIQ community while broadening the meaning of the memorial. The more formal processes adopted for the second memorial also led to the involvement of an established artist, Mikala Dwyer, and poet Michael Taussig, with the effect of translating some of the space's "use value" into "exchange value" (Lefebvre 1996, 67-8).

The initial impetus for the Mary's Place project was to stand up against the violent oppression of lesbian and gay people and to reclaim a space. That act of reclamation has only ever been partial and, for this reason, the memorial has remained important, despite its radical change of form and broadening focus. For Mary, despite having participated in painting the murals in 1997, returning to the laneway for the 'Lamp for Mary' launch

was difficult (Ditzel, interview with the author). At night, when the light is turned on, Mary's Place is a beautiful space, but it is not a comfortable one. Yet that sense of discomfort is part of what makes this commemoration important. 'Lamp for Mary' is a memorial in the "lest we forget" tradition. It does not offer a sentimental memory of loss but a sense of 'unsettlement' that asks people to take on the responsibility of paying attention.

References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2013. *Personal safety, Australia, 2012* (cat. no. 4906.0). AusStats.
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>.
- Ashton, Paul and Paula Hamilton. 2011. *Places of the heart: Post 1960 memorials in Australia*. Australian Centre for Public History, Sydney. Electronic database. <http://www.acph.nicheit.com.au/>.
- Ashton, Paul, Paula Hamilton and Rose Searby. 2012. *Places of the heart: memorials in Australia*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing.
- Atkinson-Phillips. 2018. "Re-remembering Australia: Public memorials sharing difficult knowledge." *Coolabah* 24&25: 76-93.
- Benny-Morrison, Ava. 2016. "Police to review 88 possible gay-hate deaths." *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 22, 2016.
<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/police-to-review-88-possible-gayhate-deaths-20160519-goz7x6.html>.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. 2003. *An archive of feeling: Trauma, sexuality and lesbian public cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Franck, Karen A. and Lynn Paxson. 2007. "Transforming public space into sites of mourning and free expression." In *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*, edited by Karen A. Franck and Quentin Stevens, 132-153. London: Routledge.
- Fraser, Nancy. 1992. "Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy." In *Habermas and the public sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun, 109-142. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hayden, Delores. 1997. *The power of place: Urban landscapes as public history*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hogarty, Laine. 2010. "Lamp for Mary Facebook Post". *Facebook*, November 25, 2010.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/131416873578206/permalink/134309246622302/>.
- Hornery, Andrew. 1996. "Gays go for gold (ever so gently)." *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 29, 1996, 3.

- Lee, Melissa. 1998. *Mary's Place*. Documentary directed by Melissa Lee. Sydney: Queer Screen. Videorecording (VHS), 50mins.
- Lefebvre, Henry. 1996. *Writings on cities*. Translated and edited by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Massey, Doreen. 2005. *For space*. London: Sage.
- Merivale. 2018. "The Beresford". Accessed 21 May 2018. <https://merivale.com/venues/theberesford>.
- Pierce, Joseph, Deborah G. Martin and James T. Murphy. 2011. "Relational Place-making: The Networked Politics of Place." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36 (1): 54-70.
- Potts, Andrew. 2010, "Mary's light still shines." *Star Observer*, November 3, 2010, www.starobserver.com.au/news/national-news/new-south-walesnews/mary-s-light-still-shines/32818.
- Warner, Michael. 2002. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books.

Author biography

Alison Atkinson-Phillips is a social and cultural historian currently working as an associate researcher at the Newcastle University Oral History Unit & Collective (UK). This paper was developed with the support of a Postdoctoral Transition Research Fellowship at the Australian Centre for Public History, University of Technology, Sydney. Alison's PhD thesis was a study of Australian public memorials that commemorate lived experiences of loss and trauma.

Email: Alison.Atkinson-Phillips@newcastle.ac.uk