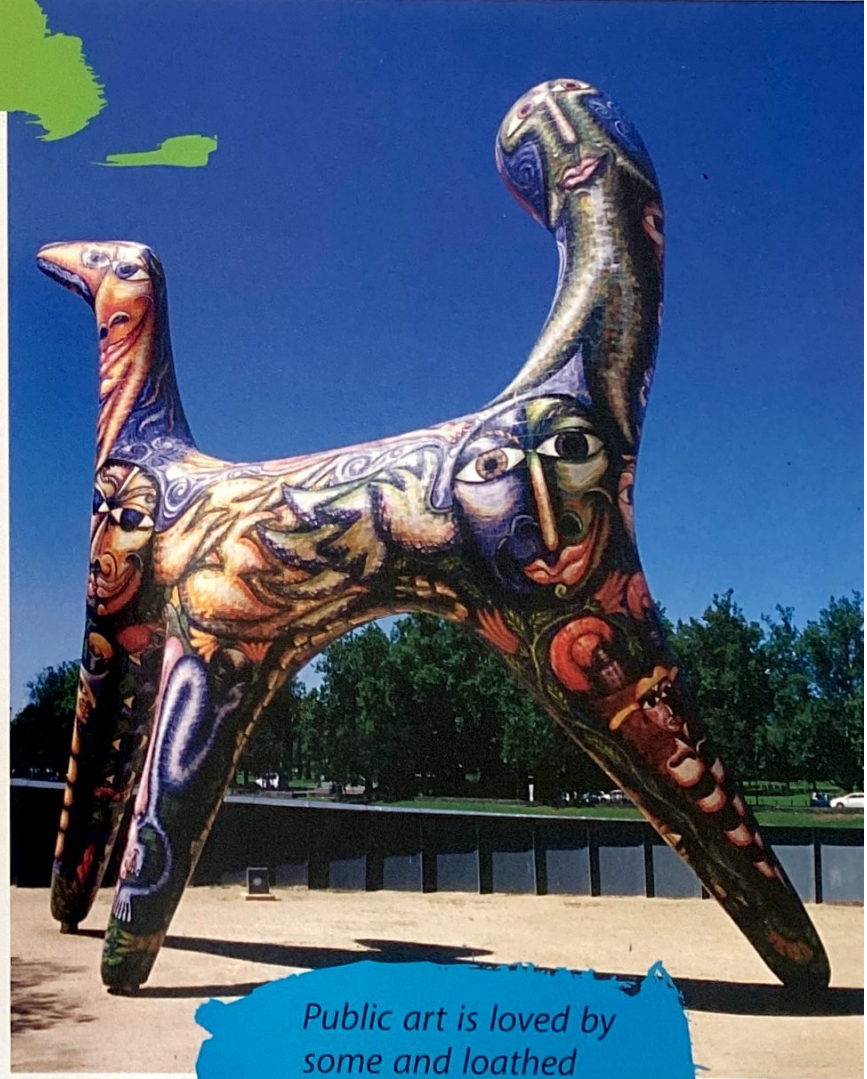


# PUBLIC ART: Love OR Loathe IT?

Carmel Reilly

## What IS PUBLIC ART?

Public art is art that has been made to be shown in public spaces. Public art can take many forms. These include sculptures, murals, paintings and installations. Some public art is made to last a long time. Other pieces are only meant to be seen for short periods. Art in public places usually adds interest and colour to an area. However, this kind of art is not always popular. There is often a lot of debate and disagreement about public art.



Public art is loved by some and loathed by others.

## What's TO LOVE ABOUT PUBLIC ART?



*Public art can make a dull landscape more interesting.*

First, art can help to make an area more beautiful or more interesting. Colourful pieces can put life into drab, grey urban landscapes. Art can make a place more fun to be in. This is not just because art is often very colourful. A lot of public art can also be interactive.

Second, public art can also make people think about issues. Art is often used as a way to remember people and events. It can remind the viewer about the history of a place. People can learn about history through looking at a statue of an important person from the past.

Third, having art in public spaces makes it more accessible. People can see and learn about art without having to go to art galleries. Art becomes a part of everyday life.

Finally, public art is good for artists. It allows their art to be better known by the public. Often, it also provides artists with paid work. This is a great thing for artists, as very few make a lot of money from their artwork.



Public art can provide great exposure for artists.

## What's to Loathe ABOUT PUBLIC ART?

- There are a number of reasons why some people do not like public art. For some, it can be about the works of art themselves. For others, it is about the cost.

First, many people believe that it is a waste of money to pay for art in public places. They think that businesses and governments should spend their money on things that are deemed necessary, like roads and schools. They do not believe that art is important.

*The artist of Vault was paid \$70 000 for this abstract sculpture in Melbourne, Australia.*



Second, there are also times when people do not like where a piece of art has been placed. Often, local communities are not consulted, and this can make people feel resentful.

Finally, some people object to public art because of the works of art themselves. Sometimes there are pieces of art that they simply do not like. People might think that the art is ugly, or they might not understand it. They might find it offensive.



*Some people dislike the Angel of the North sculpture in England, but others love it.*

There are many things to love and loathe about public art, and people have very strong opinions both ways. Admirers of public art believe that it can make a dull landscape more interesting and fun, especially if the art is interactive. Public art can also teach people about important events, and make art more accessible for everyone. On the other hand, many people believe that public art is a waste of money. Either way, public art provokes a response from people. This is surely a good thing as it means that people are thinking about art.

## LITTLE BULL

*Little Bull* is in Hamilton, New Zealand, at the heart of a large farming area. When it was erected in 1967, many people did not like it. Some wanted it removed. They did not understand the idea of a sculpture of a bull in a public place. They said it was a waste of money.

The sculpture shows a small bull sitting down. His legs are tucked underneath him and he has a friendly, gentle look.

*Little Bull* is made of bronze and sits in Hamilton Gardens. The sculpture's sense of calmness suits its surroundings.

*Little Bull* attracts many visitors every year. Children especially love him, which shows that he is seen as non-threatening.

I think that *Little Bull* is a good example of public art. The sculpture represents the area. It attracts visitors and it is also interactive.



### Strategy to Skill

- 1 (Literal comprehension) What is public art?
- 2 (Determining important ideas – cause and effect) What would be some suitable locations for public art that would make it accessible to more people?
- 3 (Determining important ideas – compare and contrast) How does the public art on page 2 make the area more interesting?
- 4 (Determining important ideas – compare and contrast) How can artists earn a living from their work?
- 5 (Determining important ideas – summarise the text) What are the main arguments for and against public art?
- 6 (Determining important ideas – visual elements) How does the sculpture of *Little Bull* compare with the sculpture of *Vault*?
- 7 (Response) What is your opinion about public art? Do you love it or loathe it? Why?