# THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE DOG IN THE CITY: MELBOURNE'S LARRY LA TROBE

### James P. Lesh[1]

I believe that a poor statue about the place is better than no statue at all.
– Leslie Bowles, Melbourne sculptor, 1938.[2]

A 1m high Bronze Dog will be installed next to one of the seats in the City Square. Care has been taken that there will be no sharp protuberances, for it is envisaged that this will be a very popular sculpture with children.
– Public Art Committee, Melbourne City Council, October 1992.[3]

The City Square was an empty space / Crying out for a brand new Face! / The planners of Melbourne sent out a probe / And came-back-with-a-dog – Larry La Trobe. / Pedestrians stopped, patina head and coat / A top dog he became, by a popular vote. / Everybody took to Larry with a great shine / Now Melbourne's mascot is a brassy canine.
– Extract from poem 'Welcome Home Larry La Trobe' by Bruce Stephens.

Larry La Trobe was dognapped on the evening of 30 August 1995 from Melbourne's City Square. Despite a citywide campaign, and despite his motif being amplified into a Moomba float, poor Larry was never found; rumour has it he drowned in the Yarra River or was buried in a suburban backyard. Another Larry was subsequently bequeathed to the city; a second bronze dog statue was made from the original cast, and then (re-) placed in City Square, immortalising the mutt for all time. To unravel this popular story of shifting attitudes towards public art, theft and mystery, revelry and philanthropy through an academic paradigm triggers this article's use of a spatial approach to urban historical research. This approach captures many of the entanglements of space and place that intersect with Larry amidst broader urban change in Melbourne.

---

2    Gordon Williams, "Staring at Statues," *Argus*, 1 December 1938; Ronald T. Ridley, *Melbourne's Monuments* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 2.

3    Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV), VA 1025 Ministry for the Arts, VPRS 8373/P2 General Correspondence Files, Unit 389, Public Art Committee Minutes, 7 October 1992.

Figure 1: Larry La Trobe, 2012 (author's collection).

Larry (fig. 1) thus becomes our place maker. A part of the urban landscape, curiously civic, this bronze elicits propitious yet contested urban experiences. Through Larry – as urban material culture of the past and the present – this article unravels. Part of Melbourne, historically contingent, Larry resides in City Square, on the corner of Collins and Swanston Streets. Conjoined with Melbourne and its La Trobe Street, he is invoked in its central business district and its suburbs. Designed by local artist Pamela Irving, 70 centimetres in height, cast in bronze, Larry was conceived in 1992, went missing in 1995, and was refabricated the following year. He appears on ephemera, has ballooned into a parade float, and is often promulgated in the popular press. At this moment, people are appropriating him, constituting urban spaces through their personal and shared experiences with him on the street. Living in City Square and transcending his perch, Larry boasts numerous lives in the material and imaginary life of the city. This article contends that Larry contributes to our understanding of ubiquitous place-making processes.

This article seeks traces, both tangible and veiled, that are encoded in the urban landscape occupied by Larry. In the words of geographer Ash Amin, 'The symbolic projections of public space have to be taken seriously, not trivialized as distractions or inauthentic fetishes'.[4] It thus becomes the role of the urban historian to uncover how these spaces were constituted in the past, in order to understand their meanings and projections in the present. This enquiry begins with a theoretical discussion and a historiographical survey of relevant literature. This is necessary to expose the significance of Larry not only for Melbourne but also for academic history. Once preliminaries are complete, this article then unravels how Larry entered civic lore to become an expression of civic consciousness. It considers how dogs have been represented internationally and in Australia, the reasons the Melbourne City Council (MCC) commissioned Larry and the urban landscape that he then joined, and then initial responses to his placement. Taking the curious case of the dognapping as its watershed, this article's second half is concerned with how Larry continues to enrich the urban landscape, the ways urban actors propel him from the street into various local and international, civic and metropolitan, central and suburban, social, political and cultural spaces.

* * *

Despite their significance for urban life, diminutive things like Larry La Trobe are rarely taken seriously in academic circles. This is at once caused by and a product of disciplinary boundaries, which necessitates this article's interdisciplinary method, theoretical basis and historiographical approach, foundations for the case study on Larry that follows.

Following Michel De Certeau, there are few traces too minute, unworthy or insignificant for enquiry; all these traces not only add to but also constitute urban life.[5] In Larry's case, the trace boasts a physical presence, provoking a turn to material culture studies. Taking him as a part of contemporary urban material culture – a palpable object, manifesting itself in the present, carrying meaning and symbolism – paves a path into vernacular, public, civic, arty things. In his seminal essay on material culture, agency and small things, Frank Dikötter prescribes micro-history as an appropriate method for reading objects per-

---

4        Ash Amin, "Collective Culture and Urban Public Space," *City* 12, no. 1 (April 2008): passim, 15.

5        Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 91–92. See also Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

ceived as everyday things, so their atypical social lives will surface.[6] To employ micro-history requires us to recognise that Larry exists in a dynamic urban landscape and by extension urban space. For Henri Lefebvre space is socially constituted, always contested and ideological. He argues that everyday discourse endows space with meanings, by way of either an unrecognised code embedded in thought or a spatial code.[7] This article employs a micro-historical approach in an attempt to disentangle the thought/code that evoked Larry.

Informed by those insights on social spatial production, historian Dolores Hayden has developed a model for studying urban landscapes such as City Square and their constituent things.[8] Hayden offers two critical insights for studying Larry: the role of urban landscapes in constituting identity, and the contribution of historical and vernacular art forms to this process.[9] Urban anthropologist Setha Low adds a notion of being *embodied* in urban landscapes. Low considers space and place to be always embodied and material; at once metaphorically and discursively, yet also physically located and inhabited.[10] This configuration negotiates the tensions between space and place theory in urban practice; so allowing us to comprehend Larry as a corporeal and symbolic presence in City Square. The largely congruent approaches of De Certau, Dikötter, Lefebvre, Hayden and Low enable the enquiry that follows.

In addition to engaging with broader questions about cities, space and place, embodiment, identity and belonging, this article is also anchored in the substantial literature on Melbourne. Following Tim Murray, Alan Mayne and others' attempts to "read" the Melbourne, Sydney and London cityscapes as cultural landscape or social assemblage, this article negotiates many tem-

---

6    Frank Dikötter, "Objects and Agency: Material Culture and Modernity in China," in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), 174, passim; Jules David Prown, "The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction," in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 1–19; Karen Harvey, "Introduction," in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 1–23.

7    Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 16–17.

8    Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995). See also Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005).

9    Hayden, *Power of Place*, 9, 38.

10    Setha M. Low, "Towards an Anthropological Theory of Space and Place," *Semiotica* 2009, no. 175 (January 2009): 21–37. c.f., Carla Pascoe, "City as Space, City as Place: Sources and the Urban History," *History Australia* 7, no. 2 (2010).

poral and spatial scales simultaneously.[11] Much research has also been undertaken on Melbourne's public and civic spaces. [12] The point at which this local scholarship intersects with questions of civic identity, local belonging and public art is particularly relevant to this exposition. Specifically, Graeme Davison has traced Melbourne's 'lament' for a propitious public square, and so this enquiry narrows in on a particular aspect of a now realised square. Davison also discussed how such a square could be made welcoming. Adorning it with public art might assist with increasing its conviviality.

Before closing this theoretical and historiographical discussion, it would be useful to touch upon a framework for considering the relationship between public art and Larry. This relationship not only troubled many Melburnians when Larry was installed, but also is relevant to an academic inquiry into this kind of artwork. Are dog statues the kind of public art that municipal authorities should commission for public space? Is Larry a "good" work of art, or even art at all? And consequently, is he "worthy" of academic inquiry? This article takes Marcel Duchamp's dictum that, 'art may be bad, good or indifferent, but, whatever adjective is used, we must call it art'.[13] Nevertheless, there is reluctance to identify things such as Larry as art; particularly when they are not avant-garde, high or challenging works. Moreover, characterising them as public art – a highly contested term – amplifies these debates. According to Cher Krause Knight, this is a product of 'traditional modes of art historical inquiry [that] cannot fully accommodate the "social life" of public art'. [14] The MCC indeed defined "public art" broadly in 1992: 'any original work of art, created by an artist, which is accessible to the general public [on/in] streets and squares'.[15] Things such as Larry are thus not subject to serious examination, dismissed in the academic literature and chastised by many in

---

11        Tim Murray, "Expanding Horizons in the Archaeology of the Modern City A Tale in Six Projects," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 5 (2013): 848–63.

12        Graeme Davison, "Public Life and Public Space Lament for Melbourne's City Square," *Historic Environment* 11, no. 1 (1994): 4–9; Andrew Brown-May, *Melbourne Street Life: The Itinerary of Our Days* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1998); Joanna Bush, "An Analysis of the Design of Melbourne City Square," (University of Melbourne: Faculty of Architecture and Planning, 2003); Andrew Brown-May and Norman Day, *Federation Square* (South Yarra: Hardie Grant Publishing, 2003); Geoffrey Joseph Wallis, *Peril in the Square: The Sculpture That Challenged a City* (Melbourne: Indra Publishing, 2004).

13        Marcel Duchamp, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Arturo Schwarz (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969), 33.

14        Cher Krause Knight, *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), chap. 4, 5.

15        PROV, VPRS 8373/P2, Unit 381.

the art world. [16] In accepting that Larry is folksy and aesthetically unchalleng-ing, conceivably kitsch, sculpted by a content local artist, at once statue and sculpture, a departure point is thus established for the enquiry that follows.
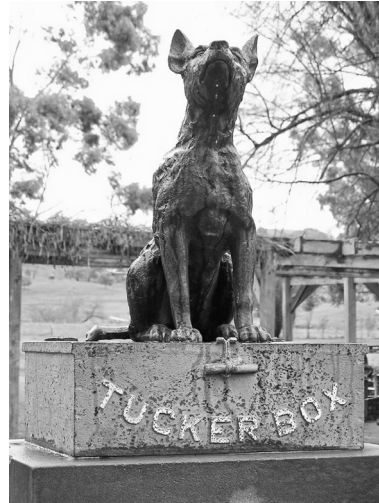
\* \* \*



Figure 2: Famous Dogs. Clockwise from top left: Capitoline Wolf (Musei Capitolini: Rome, Italy), c. 500-480 BCE. (Wikipedia user: Rosemania / CC BY 2.0, 2010); of Greyfriars Bobby, Edinburgh, c. 1855-6. (Rebecca Siegel / CC BY 2.0, 2010); Hachikō, Tokyo, 1934 (author's collection, 2010); Photograph of 'Dog on the Tuckerbox', Snake Gully, New South Wales, 1932 (Wikipedia user: AYArktos / CC BY-SA 2.5, 2005).

---

16      Linda Williams, "Reshaping Melbourne (Part 1)," *Art & Australia* 38, no. 2 (December 2000): 327–8; Robyn Riddett, "Melbourne's Monuments: Conservation Issues and Approaches," in *Monuments and the Millennium: Proceedings of a Joint Conference Organised by English Heritage and the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation*, ed. Jeanne Marie Teutonico, John Fidler, and United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (London: English Heritage, 2001), 144.

Larry joins the ranks of numerous other urban, bronze, immortalised dogs, (fig. 2). Associated with history, memory and commemoration, inscribing paganism and religion, empire and imperialism, murder and death, local, civic and national virtue on the urban landscape, monuments have lined boulevards, forums, markets and squares since antiquity.[17] Animals and particularly canines have featured prominently throughout this history, attributable to the ways in which dogs endear themselves to humankind.[18] They were, after all, the first animal to be domesticated and introduced to the city; 'man's oldest companion', writes Lewis Mumford.[19]

Whilst the Urban History of the Dog is yet to be written, there are numerous examples of civic dogs that would feature in such an endeavour. At the turn of the Common Era, Cicero mentioned the Capitoline Wolf statue, part of the founding myth of Rome; here, in sculpture, less unruly, remarkably approachable.[20] These days, cities including Brussels, Edinburgh, Tokyo and Wellington boast dog statues with associated mythologies.[21] Tokyo's Hachikō – the faithful dog who awaited his owner's arrival at Shibuya Station every day for many years after his owner's death – appears on countless picture books, tourist guides and postcards.[22] A recent popular history on the nineteenth-century Greyfriars Bobby of Edinburgh argued the adored dog, who reputedly guarded his master's grave, was actually concocted by businessmen as part of a promotional stunt; even statues of dogs are imbued with politics.[23]

David Paxton speculates on the curious relationship between Australia and dogs. He employs a naturalistic perspective (a predecessor of actor-network theory) to tie settler colonialism, sizeable rates of urbanisation, and urban ani-

---

17    Kirk Savage, "History, Memory, and Monuments: An Overview of the Scholarly Literature on Commemoration," *American Historians and the National Park Service* (2006), http://www.nps.gov/history/history/resedu/savage.htm.

18    Claudia Kawczynska, ed., *Dog Is My Co-Pilot: Great Writers on the World's Oldest Friendship* (New York: Random House, 2003); Hal Herzog, *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard to Think Straight About Animals* (London: Harper, 2010).

19    Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, 1961), 10.

20    Cicero *Cat.* 3.19; Cicero *Div.* 1.20; Cicero *Div.* 2.47.

21    Ruthven Tremain, *The Animals' Who's Who* (New York: Scribner, 1982).

22    See Leslea Newman, *Hachiko Waits* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004).

23    Jan Bondeson, *Greyfriars Bobby: The Most Faithful Dog in the World* (Amberley, 2011). See also Eleanor Stackhouse Atkinson, *Greyfriars Bobby*, 2001, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2693.

mal management.[24] A recent book traces this 'iconic partnership' from the First Fleet onwards.[25] Besides Larry, two other prominent Australian sculptural dogs are Islay and the 'Dog on the Tuckerbox'. Outside the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney is a wishing well adorned with Queen Victoria's favourite dog Islay; a recorded message by radio presenter John Laws encourages donations for charity.[26] The 'Dog on the Tuckerbox' is a bronze tribute to colonial settlement, located near Gundagai, New South Wales, immortalised in poem and song, which sustains national myths concerning Australia's pioneer history.[27] In addition to encouraging "beyond-the-archive" public histories of place, in a recent article Hilda Kean also problematizes these two dogs. Kean argues they have at once foreclosed alternative, post-colonial narratives of Australian history and yet also offer possibilities for different histories of Australia's past.[28]

All of these statues of dogs venerate "man's best friend", their respective owners and the suburb, city, or nation in a similar way to other civic monuments. But this is not the case for Melbourne's Larry La Trobe. When Larry was sculpted in 1992, he possessed no past or commemorative function; in MCC documents, he was described as something that 'will be very popular with children', perhaps because he is at their height, meeting them on street level.[29] Larry does not sit on a pedestal anticipating recognition; rather his four paws stand on the ground, upright, excitable, ceaselessly forging his own place amidst the urban landscape. Larry's place in the civic consciousness was indeed seized after his placement. So how did this bronze materialise, eventually appearing on tourist itineraries, even having a kennel reserved for him at Melbourne's Lost Dogs Home? The sections that follow sketch Larry's atypical biography.

\* \* \*

Larry is bound to Melbourne, and was commissioned for the city at a spe-

---

24      David Paxton, "Community Involvement and Urban Dogs," 1994, http://www.ccac.net.au/files/Community_involvement_dogs_UAM94Paxton.pdf.

25      Jane Duckworth, *Not Every Dog Has His Day: The Treatment of Dogs in Australia* (Melbourne: Axiom Creative Enterprises, 2009), 20, 250. See also Steven Miller, *Dogs in Australian Art* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2012).

26      "Surreal Sydney", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 2002.

27      Lyn Scarff, *The Dog on the Tuckerbox* (Kenthurst, N.S.W.: Kangaroo Press, 1994).

28      Hilda Kean, "Public History and Two Australian Dogs: Islay and the Dog on the Tucker Box," *The Journal of the History of Culture in Australia* 24 (2006): 135–162.

29      PROV, VPRS 8373/P2, Unit 389, Public Art Committee Minutes, 7 October 1992.

cific temporal and spatial intersection. As a proud Victorian era city, from its earliest days grand monuments adorned Melbourne's thoroughfares[30] Melbourne's first public monument was of the unfortunate explorers Burke and Wills. Unable to raise funds from private donors, under the patronage of colonial parliament, artist Charles Summer unveiled Burke and Wills to a crowd of 10,000 people in 1865.[31] Fashioned in the grand tradition of European monuments – heroic, celebratory and civic, pedestalled, bronze and solid – over the following 130 years Burke and Wills were installed in various locations around the city. Other illustrious Melburnians were offered similar sculptural treatment including John Batman, John Pascoe Fawkner, Redmond Barry and John Monash, along with Queen Victoria and King Edward VII; this tradition extended to all of Australia's cities and many of its towns.[32] These works venerated – and continue to venerate – the city and its past in the boldest of ways, an imprint of permanence and grandeur upon the landscape.

By the 1970s, in response to changing artistic, architectural and urban philosophies towards public art and open space, cities sought new kinds of art works to adorn their streets.[33] Outdoor sculpture was commissioned as part of 'per cent for art' programs, which posited public art as integral to and a benefit of urban redevelopment.[34] These programs first proliferated in North America, triggering debates about the purpose and form of public art works; detractors still lament that the resultant works are unchallenging and too populist.[35] Contests also emerged in Melbourne and not only in relation to Larry. In 1978, for instance, the MCC commissioned Ron Robertson-Swann's infamous Vault for the new City Square.[36] Dubbed 'The Yellow Peril' by its many critics, Vault was a challenging and assertive abstract sculpture, fashioned from many bright yellow horizontal planes. After just eight months in situ, late one evening in December 1980, it was removed from City Square. Despite its ignominy, Vault exemplified a new kind of civic and heterogeneous public sculpture,

---

30      Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), chap. 7.

31      Ridley, *Melbourne's Monuments*, 39–40.

32      For a database of over 18,000 monuments throughout Australia see Kent Watson and Diane Watson, "Monument Australia," 2010, http://monumentaustralia.org.au/.

33      See Brian Goodey, "Art-Full Places: Public Art to Sell Public Spaces?," in *Place Promotion: The Use of Publicity and Marketing to Sell Towns and Regions*, ed. John Robert Gold and Stephen Victor Ward (New York: Wiley, 1994), 158–62.

34      Ibid., 162. Local authorities across Australia now have similar programs.

35      Knight, *Public Art*, 10ff, Chap. 2.

36      See Wallis, *Peril in the Square*.

leaving an artistic legacy for City Square that effected future commissions.[37]

In the words of a recent newspaper article, unlike Vault, which was 'banished', it was Larry that 'stayed on'.[38] Bred to be more personable and less contentious than Vault, Larry appeared in the original City Square in 1992.[39] He was a product of the Swanston Walk project – an attempt to rejuvenate Melbourne's major thoroughfare, principally by removing cars – during which the MCC reserved $100,000 for public art.[40] The Swanston Walk project called for art works of varying sizes to 'allow for incremental enrichment of the city'.[41] The MCC sought 'proposals which incorporate a thematic and/or physical link with the chosen site [and] reflect contemporary visual arts practice'.[42] In early 1992, the council welcomed submissions from artists, and 14 were then shortlisted that July. On that shortlist, the MCC committee envisaged that the 'Bronze Dog [would be] a very popular sculpture with children'.[43] No other details of proceedings – for instance, minutes of why Larry was selected or what he was envisioned to represent – were deposited with the Public Record Office.

Irving was paid $1,000 for her design concept, and the bronze amounted to $6,550 including installation, with 'each additional Larry' to cost less.[44] (In the original proposal, 'sculpted "lifelike" dogs' were to be 'strategically placed within the walk' at locations to be determined.)[45] This was inexpensive, economically rational public art. The works proposed for Swanston Walk were

---

37      E.g., the Public Art Committee was concerned the sculpture called "Architectural Fragments", a piece depicting classical ruins, today located outside the State Library of Victoria, 'may be destined the same fate as Vault'; per PROV, VPRS 8373/P2 Unit.

38      Simon Plant, "Must see THAT…", *Herald Sun*, 10 October 2009.

39      Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), *Interviews with Pamela Irving*, 2011, http://15secondplace.acmi.net.au/content/larry-la-trobe.

40      Of the $15 million budget, 0.66 per cent was allocated, per *Age*, 28 February 1992. Officially, the Melbourne City Council suggested that one per cent of their capital works budget was for public art, per Virginia Trioli, "Cute Bronze Doggies Do Not A City Make", *Age*, 13 October 1994.

41      Urban Design & Architecture, City of Melbourne, "Design Concept for Swanston Street and Elizabeth Street: Melbourne Swanston Wall", 1992, located in PROV, VPRS 8373/P2, Unit 381, 92/2718-1 Exhibitions.

42      Ibid..

43      PROV, VA 1025 Ministry for the Arts, VPRS 8373/P2 General Correspondence Files, Unit 389, Public Art Committee Minutes, 7 October 1992.

44      Ibid.; Agenda for Swanston Street Walk Artworks Panel, 8 July 1992; Irving's files, 1992.

45      PROV, VPRS 8373/P2, Unit 389, Public Art Committee Minutes, 2 September, 7 October 1992.

subsequently presented to the MCC's independent Public Arts Committee for comment, even though the decision to commission one 'lifelike dog' had already been made by the MCC, sometime during the previous three months.[46] Despite Irving also proposing 'Bazza Burke' and 'Clarrie Collins' with their own motifs, there would be just one Larry, a singularity that was essential for his subsequent lore.[47] If there had been more than one Larry, a single theft would have been largely insignificant; in the documents considered by the council, all the additional dogs would have been identical (from the same cast), making it unlikely such pervasive meanings would have been attached to him. Installed in December 1992 next to a green park bench on Swanston Street, orientated towards the Melbourne Town Hall, Larry soon received company. The following year he was joined by Burke and Wills; their expedition to find a permanent home having come to an end.[48] This lead to City Square's intriguing spatial tableau of sculptures (fig. 3); in proportion, small versus large; in signification, explorers versus a dog; in presence, prominent versus little; and in material, both bronze.



Figure 3: Larry La Trobe with Burke and Wills and City Square, 2012 (author's collection).

---

46      Irving's files; PROV, VPRS 8373/P2, Unit 389, Public Art Committee Minutes, 2 September, 7 October 1992. C.f. Alison Fraser in private correspondence noted in Wallis, *Peril in the Square*, chap. 10f17. A decade later, Fraser told Wallis that in her capacity as head of the Public Art Committee, only one submission was received for the commission, which seems unlikely. Minutes show 14 works were under consideration, and only some of them were ultimately commissioned. Fraser was also a member of the subordinate council committee that judged the works (*Age*, 26 February 1992). The agreement signed by Irving is dated 19 January 1993, after the work was installed, per Irving's files.

47      Irving's files.

48      For debates over relocation of the Burke and Wills statue see PROV, VPRS 8373/P2, Unit 389, Public Art Committee Minutes 1992 – 1994; and contemporary newspapers.

* * *

After Larry was installed in City Square he immediately provoked a re-action, in spite of his ingenuous demeanour. Artist Pamela Irving, born in Melbourne in 1960, graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Masters of Arts in 1987.[49] Her work takes inspiration from folk art tradi-tions in the form of print, ceramic and mosaic sculpture and community art practice.[50] Irving does not explicitly challenge artistic or social conventions, employing largely genial, humorous and figurative motifs. Drawing inspi-ration from her own dog, Larry – although of indiscernible breed – boasts a pleasing form, compact yet life-size, a grooved body, a rascally expression, adoringly cheeky eyes, endearingly tipped ears, and a playful demean-our.[51] Irving contributed playfulness to Swanston Walk and City Square.

Seen from the distance, Larry's studded collar may appear threatening, but as one walks closer, one becomes aware that there is nothing to fear. His love-able snout and bronze coat have been worn away by rubbing and patting, leaving traces of human adoration. The studs on his collar turn out to be smooth, he does not dominate in form or size, and so constitutes an approach-able and safe site. Sharing the space where Burke and Wills reside and Vault once stood, despite being bronze and located across the street from the majes-tic nineteenth-century Melbourne Town Hall, Larry is neither grandiloquent nor provocative in style or subject (subsequently raising the ire of critics). He moreover boasts a memorable name, a pleasing alliteration taken from the artist's uncle, Larry, and the northernmost street of the city grid, La Trobe, named after Charles La Trobe, the Colony of Victoria's first governor. Male by virtue of his name, certainly not a Mr. La Trobe, Larry according to Wikipe-dia was 'crafted to generate a sense of Australian larrikinism in the viewer'; a description congruous with that asserted by the 'Dog on the Tuckerbox'.[52] From the outset, Larry was personable by virtue of his biography and his ap-

---

49      Alan McCulloch, Susan McCulloch, and Emily McCulloch Childs, *McCull-och's Encyclopedia of Australian Art* (Fitzroy: The Miegunyah Press, 2006), 337.

50      Pamela Irving, "Pamela Irving Web Site," 2012, http://pamelairving.com. au/; Joseph Pascoe, "Pamela Irving: Decade of Images.," *Ceramics (Sydney, Australia)* no. 37 (1999): 37 – 39; Australian Centre for the Moving Image, *Interviews with Pamela Irving*.

51      "Doggone! Larry's Back", *Age*, 17 September 1996.

52      Wikipedia contributors, "Larry La Trobe," *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia* (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., April 18, 2012), http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?ti-tle=Larry_La_Trobe&oldid=485890070.

pealing form, and suggestively civic owing to his patron, name and location.

With some popular fanfare, conjoined with whiffs of elitism, Larry punctured Melbourne's consciousness, immediately triggering debate. In August 1993, the MCC launched the 'Melbourne Open Air Sculpture Museum', incorporating a range of works from Burke and Wills to Larry La Trobe.[53] Constructing this 'sculpture walk' from Melbourne's assorted public art produced an eclectic narrative; works diverged in style and theme, period and patron, their only unifying feature was being located in the area governed by the MCC. The council then embarked on a promotional campaign for this walk.[54] The outcomes of the MCC's 'per cent for art' program were publicised, which drew attention to the city's newest pet. An enthusiastic *Age* columnist described how 'everybody stops to fondle Larry La Trobe and even some adults talk to it. (I do.).'[55] The *Herald Sun* plastered his photograph across page three, and he appeared, cryptically, in an *Age* crossword.[56] Melbourne University's student newspaper *Farrago* toasted Larry as 'the recipient of countless friendly pats … [a work of] art that is seen and remembered and relevant'.[57]

At the same time as being popularly celebrated, some members of the art world criticised the populism of the city's public art program, which in their view made the city look unappealing. Before the work was commissioned the Public Art Committee – comprising eminent Melbournians including art historian Bernard Smith, sculptor Kenneth William Scarlett and journalist Terry Lane – discussed the work and recorded no objections.[58] The criticism began after Larry was installed. Gallery director Maudie Palmer called Larry 'small and weird'; architect Joe Rollo bemoaned that Swanston Street was full of works 'selected for their potential to appeal as objects of whimsy and curiosity'; and commentator Virginia Trioli declared that Mel-

---

53      Works included "Architectural Fragments" and an angel on a plinth, per "Burke and Wills are Back in Town", *Age*, 5 August 1993; see also Melbourne City Council, *Outdoor Artworks*, October 2009, http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/About-Melbourne/ArtsandEvents/Documents/publicart_outdoorartworks.pdf. 389, Public Art Committee Minutes, 1 July 1992.

54      John Robert Gold and Stephen Victor Ward, *Place Promotion: The Use of Publicity and Marketing to Sell Towns and Regions* (New York: Wiley, 1994).

55      John Lahey, "Pioneers Goggle-eyed Before The Public's Gaze", *Age*, 20 April 1994.

56      *Herald Sun,* 2 May 1994; *Age*, 15 October 1994.

57      "In the streets", *Farrago* (University of Melbourne student union), ca. 1995.

58      PROV, VPRS 8373/P2, Unit 389, Public Art Committee Minutes, 7 October 1992.

bourne needed a tougher and grander public art vision. [59] These accounts resonated with American art critic Clement Greenberg's 1939 essay called 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch'. In this essay, Greenberg reaffirmed the distinction between high and low art in a similar way to the Frankfurt School. In contrast to the declarations of Duchamp and others, Greenberg expressed a dystopian view of new popular art forms, termed 'kitsch', which meant meaningless, uncritical, ultimately oppressive forms of cultural expression.

Even though Trioli declared Larry as 'kitsch', in terms of 1990s Melbourne, Larry merely became a vessel for the waging of grander battles.[60] It was the sort of debate that mixed quibbles over low and high art – and questions about the kinds of art works authorities ought to commission – with a civic and urban outlook; termed in ways that were irresolvable, subjectively impartial, intellectually populist, the conflict was ultimately one of taste and distinction.[61] Although this debate showed civic concern, it was wrapped up in a discourse of art world elitism. As hierarchies of artistic merit were eroded by "per cent for art programs", entanglements thus emerged around how streets should be decorated and who should be the ultimate arbiters of public taste. After *Vault*, the MCC selected a work unlikely to generate too much controversy, but the contested and relational character of space held, and frictions emerged as different members of the public imposed their views upon the urban landscape. In the end, these arguments subsided because they were somewhat extraneous. Larry had already endeared himself to Melburnians in popular discourse, and was, unlike Vault, ostensibly a permanent fixture amidst the city.

\* \* \*

---

59    Maudie Palmer intvd in Andrew Stephens, "Three Dimensional Delights", *Age*, 4 February 1994; Joe Rollo, "Walk For The Cute At Heart", *Age*, 11 March 1995; Trioli, *Age*, 13 October 1994 (and see subsequent response from Elizabeth Proust, CEO of MCC, in a letter to the editor, *Age*, 15 October 1994). For the treatment of this debate by an art historian see Wallis, *Peril in the Square*, chap. 10.

60    Trioli, *Age*, 13 October 1994.

61    E.g., Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

**On Larry's trail:** It seems we are not the only ones searching for the MCC's canine sculpture Larry LaTrobe, missing from the City Square for more than 60 days. In Carlton last week, our eagle-eyed photographer Peter Weaving spotted a heart-felt plea (below) for Larry. At the same time, many Melburnians probably thought they'd put an end to the mystery after believing they'd seen Larry travelling on the Garden Tram (right) which has been doing loops of the city tourist route during the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts. So close, but so far. Larry, please come home.

Figure 4: 'On Larry's Trail,' *Melbourne Times*, 1 November 1995 (courtesy of *Melbourne Times*).

Already a subject of popular discourse, following the bizarre dognapping incident in 1995, Larry was written into Melbourne lore.[62] By tracing the reaction to these events over the subsequent year, this section unpacks how this inscription ensued. Although over the previous three years contests over public art evoked him, Larry remained firmly anchored in the ground, possessing a sculptural permanence, impervious to the greater debates he provoked. The bolts that fastened him to his perch were not strong enough, however. As recounted earlier, Larry was removed from City Square in August 1995.[63] Irving thought Larry's theft was a prank and he would be returned; perhaps similar to when Picasso's *Weeping Women* was stolen from the National Gallery of Victoria and subsequently returned in a failed attempt to exhort increased arts funding.[64] But no clues to this or any other effect subsequently surfaced.

To the dismay of Larry's critics, the *Melbourne Times* and the MCC staged a campaign dubbed 'Larry Come Home', which called for the statue's return.[65] 'Larry Come Home' would have also resonated with an earlier gen-

---

62      *Herald Sun*, 31 August 1995.

63      "Council howls as mongrel cuts loose", *Herald Sun*, 31 August 1995; "Missing Dog", *Herald Sun*, 1 September 1995.

64      "Doggone! Larry's Back", *Age*, 17 September 1996; Justin Murphy and Susan Cram, "Stolen Picasso" (Melbourne: Australian Broadcasting Commission, September 19, 2004), http://www.abc.net.au/tv/rewind/txt/s1199862.htm.;

65      Virginia Trioli (column), *Age*, 18 September 1996; ACMI, *Interviews with Pamela Irving*.

eration of Melburnians that had watched *Lassie Come Home* in 1943, an American film based on the novel of the same name, set in Yorkshire during World War II. Many newspapers ran stories on Larry's theft. The *Melbourne Times* was on the lookout for 'loveable Larry', (fig. 4); the *Caulfield Leader* wrote 'all is forgiven'. [66] Larry was even included in the *Age's* 'Best of Melbourne' of 1995 under the heading 'Best Sculpture'; described as 'Larry the bronze bitser dog statue', Larry was preceded by 'Best Theatre' (Princess) and followed by 'Best Established Artist' (Arthur Boyd).[67] By placing Larry in this new context, he was conjoined with two significant local features: a grand theatrical institution and an eminent visual artist. This unsettled previous accounts of Larry, fixing him to Melbourne like the architecture of the Princess Theatre and suggesting an association with high art. Unpremeditatedly, inadvertently, spontaneously, an absent Larry propelled himself to fame, in the process appropriating an authentic perch amidst civic lore.



Figure 5: Larry La Trobe Moomba Float, ca. early 1996 (courtesy of Pamela Irving).

---

66        "Who snatched loveable Larry?", *Melbourne Times*, 18 September 1995; "Missing: One bronze dog", *Caulfield Leader*, 18 March 1996, 1. The *Melbourne Times* and the *Caulfield/Glen Eira Leader* published about Larry regularly from September 1995 (theft) until September 1996 (recasting).

67        "Best of Melbourne," *Age,* 30 December 1995.

The 'Larry Come Home' campaign reached its apex during the 1996 Moomba Festival. Founded by civic visionaries in 1955 to bolster the declining inner city, held on the Labour Day long weekend, Moomba is Melbourne's end of summer carnival.[68] Each year an exuberant parade is held on the festival's final day, with Melburnians lining the streets to watch the floats cavalcade past. On 12 March 1996, according to the *Age*, the highlight of the Moomba Parade was a portrayal of Larry La Trobe.[69] With Irving's consent, Larry's motif was appropriated, magnified and recoloured into a float (fig. 5), alongside another recreated Swanston Street public artwork, 'Three Businessmen Taking Their Lunch into the City'. In anticipation, the *Melbourne Times* featured the float on its front over.[70] Parading down Swanston Street to the acclamation of a crowd of 150,000 people, enlarged Larry would have seen the former perch of his namesake in City Square.[71] Originally of manageable proportions, touchable and relatable, the life-size statue having vanished, Larry re-emerged as a giant thing, rising above the crowd, reaching new heights, presiding over the city's major thoroughfare; a spatial metaphor for his swollen prominence.

After almost a year, the original bronze had not been found, with futile rumours about his whereabouts continuing to circulate in local newspapers.[72] Having drawn much public attention, he was now to be (re)immortalised, in the process becoming a more democratic expression of the desires of the local population. With much acclaim, to the hum of an original poem, a second Larry La Trobe was placed in City Square on 16 September 1996.[73] Peter Kolliner, a prominent gallery owner, who owned the foundry where Larry was first cast and had held onto the original cast, bequeathed the replacement bronze upon the city.[74] Unlike the adjacent Burke and Wills statue, Larry boasted a private

---

68      Craig Bellamy, Hilary Ericksen, and Gordon Chisholm, *Moomba: A Festival for the People* (Melbourne: City of Melbourne, 2006), 5.

69      *Age*, 11 March 1996. Irving allowed the MCC to appropriate Larry. Private correspondence between Irving and MCC, February 1996.

70      *Melbourne Times*, 6 March 1996.

71      PROV, VA4416 Arts Victoria, VPRS13158/P1 General Correspondence Files, Unit 12 Moomba/International River Festival Report 1997.

72      For kennel: *Melbourne Times*, 11 October 1995; "Larry licked", *Herald Sun*, 17 September 1996; for Yarra River drowning see Melanie Wright, "Moving parts", *Australian Financial Review*, 11 December 1998. In 2005 Irving received private correspondence about Larry's whereabouts, apparently buried somewhere in Broadmeadows or Glenroy by a 'psychotic' individual; the MCC was advised, but choose not to follow this up; per Irving's private correspondence.

73      Poem per above n 3; "Doggone! Larry's Back", *Age*, 17 September 1996; *Melbourne Times*, 18 September 1996.

74      Kolliner is acknowledged on a plaque in City Square. One reporter called

patron: Kolliner showed civic pride, whilst also cultivating public recognition for this philanthropic act. The second Larry had a slightly redder tinge, which distinguished him from the original pup. The MCC then fastened him to the ground by locking him into a concrete block with thirty-centimetre bolts.[75]

This tale was seemingly over, a Larry statue having been returned to City Square, except that the MCC appropriated Larry for one more activity. In 1997, the 'Larry Come Home' Moomba float was taken to Osaka, Japan, Melbourne's sister city, for their annual Midosuji Parade.[76] Perhaps conjuring their Hachikō statue, it provoked much excitement and was awarded best float. Larry thus travelled, becoming an emblem of the city alongside Flinders Street Station or the Melbourne Cricket Ground; at least fleetingly, he became an especially prominent and voracious local icon. Architectural theorist and Melbourne resident Kim Dovey describes these kinds of activities as exercises in 'urban boosterism', whereby increasingly corporatised government authorities employ spectacle for the purpose of self-promotion.[77]

Larry had spawned an eccentric Melbourne tale. In contrast to Burke and Wills or the Greyfriars Bobby for instance, the tale invoked by Larry followed his sculpting, and embraced nothing particularly extraordinary. He was not part of Melbourne's foundational mythology, saved no lives, showed no astonishing loyalty, and having never actually lived, possessed no celebrated owner. Sculpted by a suburban artist, Melbourne's emblematic mutt produced its own imaginary life; metamorphosing from a folksy, disputed statue, a palpable thing, to become part of the city. There was no orchestrated campaign to control the dissemination of knowledge around Larry, and few benefited financially from the arrangement. Rather this was an organic and imaginative expression of local pride, a little bit of fun for those who involved themselves in the events. Following Dovey, there were elements of spectacle culture evoked, especially when the MCC appropriated Larry for its promotional activities, which bounded the bronze with broader economic and urban processes, spe-

---

this second bronze "Son of Larry", per *Australian Financial Review*, 11 December 1998.

75    *Age*, 17 September 1996; "Sweet, Dogged Revenge", *Herald Sun*, 11 November 1998.

76    *Herald Sun*, 18 February 1996; *The Australian Financial Review*, 11 December 1998; Australian Centre for the Moving Image, *Interviews with Pamela Irving*. For the Melbourne-Osaka city relationship see PROV, VA4416 Arts Victoria, VPRS 13158/P1 General Correspondence Files, Unit 210, 73185-1 Meeting in September 1995; VPRS 13158/P1, Unit 300, 92942 International Arts, June 1997.

77    Kim Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), chap. 11.

cifically, the tourism industry. Larry's story was appropriated to differentiate Melbourne and its sculpture from other cities and their public art. Larry transcended his thing-ness, went beyond his sculpted, material self, undergoing an out-of-doggy experience, emerging as a most intriguing work of public art.

* * *

At once leading a material and an imaginary life to the present day, Larry remains an amplifier of urban and civic experience. Almost two decades having passed since his dognapping and subsequent events, Larry, the statue, no longer achieves the same level of fame. Yet his story is still retold countless times in newspapers and tourist guidebooks, on the Internet and as part of the Melbourne Open Air Sculpture Museum.[78] After City Square underwent redevelopment in 1999, Larry was walked to a more prominent perch, nearer to the Swanston and Collins Street intersection, safeguarding City Square, facing Melbourne Town Hall. In 2003 Larry appeared on the front cover of commuter daily *Melbourne Express (MX)*; in 2009 he flew onto Virgin Blue's on-board magazine; and in March 2012 Larry challenged Melburnians in the *Age* super quiz in the lead up to the Melbourne Romp – a mass scavenger hunt for children and adults alike, premised on civic and spatial knowledge.[79] A prestigious engagement was a write-up alongside Rodin, Moore, and Picasso in an international coffee table that selected 500 public art works from antiquity onwards.[80] All of these instances preserve Larry's stature; not impacted by copyright laws, these publications appropriate his motif, sometimes for commercial gain, sometimes out of playfulness.

Residing in City Square, Larry remains part of the urban fabric; thus he con-

---

[78]     E.g., MCC, *Outdoor Artworks*; "Larry La Trobe," *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne* (Melbourne: School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2010), http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM02093b.htm; Wikipedia contributors, "Larry La Trobe"; Walking Tours of Melbourne, "Melbourne Unsolved Crimes Tour (Cold Cases)", n.d., http://melbournewalks.com.au/solving-melbourne's-cold-cases/. Recent coverage includes "The city gets another dead white bloke, but that doesn't mean women are standing still", *Age,* 20 August 2006; "Must see THAT", *Herald Sun*, 10 October 2009; "Live list", *Herald Sun*, 18 December 2010; *Weekly Review* (Melbourne), 12 January 2012.

[79]     "It takes all Kynes to create a masterpiece", *MX*, 30 June; *Virgin Blue Voyeur,* February 2009, p. 76; *Age*, 6 March 2012. See also *Melbourne News,* August 1999; *Melbourne Times*, 21 August 2002; *Age*, 7 June 2006; and in April 2002 the *Age* subscription advertisement incorporated Larry's silhouette with the byline 'Do the Melbourne thing.'

[80]     Chris Van Uffelen, *Art in Public: 500 Masterpieces from the Ancient World to the Present* (Berlin: Braun Publishing, 2011).

tributes to what Dolores Hayden calls 'the power of ordinary urban landscapes to nurture citizens' public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory'.[81] When Larry is featured in those publications or played with at street level, he becomes part of everyday spatial practice, allowing for communal experience, because he is a diminutive work of public art. His lore is understandable and relatable, readily entered into or reimagined by those that enjoy such stories, especially children and tourists. So Larry is appropriated and reappropriated to constitute and reconstitute a sense of urban belonging.

His artistic stigma having subsided, today he is largely unproblematic – a tangible presence and a fluid symbol – reimagined by not only the artist but also the public. As part of this process, writes geographer Doreen Massey, social spaces are produced, possessing realities, trajectories, multiplicities of their own; spaces that are open, shifting, dynamic and continuous.[82] These circulate amidst the city; and operate on different planes of time, permitting simultaneous historical and contemporary narratives. As opposed to formalising and thus bounding these spaces, the remainder of this article takes this peculiar thing, Larry La Trobe, and evokes some of the urban and civic, social, political and cultural spaces that he intersects with in the present, exploring his relationship to individual and collective identity, and thing, place, and space.

This approach to treating Australia's public art as fluid, social and appropriable is consistent with Jennifer Harris' understanding of the Eliza sculpture. Eliza is moored off the foreshore at the site of the former, impressive Crawley Baths, Perth. Integrating social heritage theory and guerrilla art practice, Harris writes how Eliza punctures a split between 'official history and collective memory [which] has not only been used by its audience to intensify the social value desired by official heritage practice, but that audience has also convinced government officials – more or less – that community play with a statue enriches community life.'[83] Whilst Larry has not (yet) been evoked in heritage discourse – perhaps because his relationship to his own past is in essence self-referential – and even though this article has different theoretical foundations, Harris evokes the heterogeneous relationship between history, heritage, and art in Australian public spaces, especially how art can be appropriated through use and re-use in place.

---

81        Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 13.

82        Massey, *For Space*; see also Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 26.

83        Jennifer Harris, "Guerilla Art, Social Value and Absent Heritage Fabric," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, no. 3 (2011): 215.

As a part of the landscape that constitutes City Square, Larry contributes light-heartedness to the feel of the space. Opening in 1976, Graeme Davison expressed disquiet for City's Square's original design because of its architectural rather than participatory vision, its consumerist rather than civic approach. [84] Davison called on the MCC to be more democratic with its future planning for the square. After its redevelopment in 1999 – reduced by two thirds, becoming a rectangle, essentially privatised – Larry endured. Today, he inhabits a prominent perch on one edge; at its other end, facing him, in conversation, is an oversized wooden wombat. Along with Burke and Wills these art works, which permanently occupy the square, add to this square's aesthetic features.



Figure 6: Larry La Trobe with tourists, May 2012 (author's collection).

City Square has become more prominent in recent years, with Larry capturing the attention of those walking the city. Perceptible from Swanston Street trams, discernible from the Town Hall – where a replica of him was permitted to stay during an exhibition on public art in 2011 – children pat him and tourists take photographs with him, (fig. 6).[85] There is constant foot traffic around Larry, particularly at lunchtime as workers and tourists walk past; it is one of the few open spaces within the city grid (though Federation Square, on the

84    Davison, "Public Life and Public Space Lament for Melbourne's City Square"; Williams, "Melbourne"; Bush, "An Analysis of the Design of Melbourne City Square."

85    Ken Scarlett, *From Public Figures to Public Sculpture in Central Melbourne, 3 February to 16 April 2011* (Melbourne: City of Melbourne, 2011).

grid's edge, is more prominent). He maintains his charm after two decades, eliciting smiles on many of the faces of passers-by, children and adults alike.



Figure 7: Larry La Trobe 'occupied' by Occupy Melbourne movement, May 2012 (author's collection).

Recently, Occupy Melbourne – a contentious, transnational urban social movement – appropriated Larry, (fig. 7) as 'Occy the Occudog'. [86] On one occasion, Occupy protestors draped a sign over his neck, reading: 'Stand for your Rights' – on other occasions they forced him to speak on their behalf: 'Occupy sez, get a dog Julia', an obscure statement, directed towards then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard. Appropriated as a temporary emblem of their civic activism, Larry entered the political space produced by Occupy Melbourne at City Square, and became an expression of urban protest, an organic part of the urban landscape, occupying without threat of eviction. Larry thus lives numerous lives, tangible and symbolic, intersecting with the various social spaces – visitor and protester – produced amidst this city.

---

86      For Melbourne's *Occupy Movement* see e.g., *Age,* October 2011.

Figure 8: Pamela Irving, ***Black Larry Dreaming***, 2011. (Melbourne: The Light Factory Gallery, courtesy of Pamela Irving).

Outside of the city centre, Irving has been involved in reimagining Larry, weaving him into the suburban fabric, reusing his familiar motif to produce ceramics, paintings and public murals.[87] The Moomba float, for instance, was immortalised outside Shepparton Art Gallery, north Victoria.[88] In another treatment, *Black Larry Dreaming*, 2011, (fig. 8), shown at a gallery in Eltham, a suburb in northeast Melbourne, Irving appropriated Larry for a work that referenced the Aboriginal Dreamtime. Larry was flattened, shaded in an almost uniform black, though he still possessed his familiar motif, silhouette and expression. Here, Larry intersected alternative civic discourses, those bounded with the city's indigenous past. At first appearing playful, this work was haunted by the darkness enveloping the dog, perhaps a tunnel into uncomfortable parts of the city's consciousness. In a gentler intervention, Irving incorporated Larry into public murals as part of community art projects at places such as Patterson Railway Station near Bentleigh and Luna Park, St Kilda (both in south-east Melbourne). Irving described how she brings school students together to undertake 'cultural sprawl' on suburban walls as a re-

---

87      Irving, "Pamela Irving Web Site".

88      "Artist not 'happy as Larry'", *Shepparton News*, 26 May 2005. The float was covered in fibreglass and placed outside the Gallery in September 2004, but was destroyed a few months later by vandals. It has since been replaced with another Larry.

sponse to 'urban sprawl'.[89] In both of these projects, Irving employed Larry in ways that reimagined the city and its suburbs. These are not merely reproductions of Larry, however; rather Irving produces potent, fresh cultural and political spaces that intersect with her original creation, at the same time as conceding that Larry possesses an existence outside her direct control.

Larry amplifies place through his incongruous presence in City Square, whilst also intersecting with other social, political and cultural spaces beyond City Square. With the benefits of historical distance, this enquiry could have focused on the 1990s. For instance, when Larry's critics conjoined civic and public art vision with Larry's aesthetic; the potent moment when Larry left his physical confines and the destructive forces thus evoked; or when he materialised in Moomba ephemera and paraded in Melbourne and then Osaka. This article, instead, showed how the most peculiar of things become civic in the past, and this section focused on these broader processes in the present; for the city, like the past, is dynamic, transpiring on the streets of Melbourne at this very moment. To draw from geographer David Pinder's inquiry into Europe's post-War utopian urban art movements, '[such visions can] fuel conviction that things do not have to go on as they are.' Pinder adds, 'They can help to estrange taken-for-granted aspects of urbanism and city living, and to challenge common definitions about what is impossible and possible'.[90] Larry links the city's past with its present, whilst also proposing inclusive urban futures.

* * *

Larry La Trobe is the most intriguing of civic things. Attracting advocacy, controversy, thievery, and mystery, Larry spawns a stimulating imaginary life, appearing in the urban landscape at numerous times in an abundance of guises, seizing a place amidst civic lore. In the present, Larry continues to produce spaces – some more contested than others – interacting with Melburnians on street level, whilst also being recreated in the local imagination by not only the artist, but also Melburnians as they forge a sense of urban belonging.

For cities to be inclusive, accessible and welcoming to all, the entire urban landscape demands attention. Larry reminds those with the power to reshape cities that congenial, diminutive and inexpensive things can make for propi-

---

89      "Station's pieces de resistance", *Age,* 5 July 2011.
90      David Pinder, *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 265.

tious places and experiences; in this way, he might be tied with contemporary demands for social-spatial justice, the calls by David Harvey, Kurt Iveson and others to a recognised right to the city. [91] Larry indeed reveals how vernacular things demand the attention of academic historians, for they are instrumental in social spatial and place making processes amidst living cities.

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1: Photograph of Larry La Trobe, 2012 (author's collection).

Fig. 2: Collection of famous dogs:
Photograph of Capitoline Wolf (Musei Capitolini: Rome, Italy), c. 500-480 BCE. (Wikipedia user: Rosemania / CC BY 2.0, 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:She-wolf_of_Rome.JPG, accessed November 2013.)
Photograph of Greyfriars Bobby, Edinburgh, c. 1855-6. (Rebecca Siegel  / CC BY 2.0, 2010. http://www.flickr.com/photos/grongar/5114712728/, accessed November 2013.)
Photograph of Hachikō, Tokyo, 1934 (author's collection, 2010).
Photograph of 'Dog on the Tuckerbox', Snake Gully, New South Wales,  1932 (Wikipedia user: AYArktos / CC BY-SA 2.5, 2005. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:DogonTuckerbox.jpg, accessed November 2013.)

Fig. 3: Photograph of Larry La Trobe with Burke and Wills and City Square, 2012 (author's collection).

Fig. 4: 'On Larry's Trail', *Melbourne Times*, 1 November 1995 (courtesy of Melbourne Times).

Fig. 5: Larry La Trobe Moomba Float, ca. early 1996 (courtesy of Pamela Irving).

Fig. 6: Photograph of Larry La Trobe with tourists, May 2012 (author's collection).

Fig. 7: Larry La Trobe 'occupied' by Occupy Melbourne movement, May 2012 (author's collection).

Fig. 8: Pamela Irving, *Black Larry Dreaming*, 2011. The Light Factory Gallery. Melbourne. http://thelightfactorygallery.com.au/artists/dreaming-with-open-eyes/black-larry-dreaming/, accessed May 2012 (courtesy of Pamela Irving).

---

91      David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review* 53 (2008): 23–40; Kurt Iveson, "Social or Spatial Justice? Marcuse and Soja on the Right to the City," *City* 15, no. 2 (2011): 250–9.