

# MEGAart

by Michelle McGoldrick



Deborah Harry, Violet Town Victoria

## Chris Duffy - Ha Ho Art

Rock music and pop art have a commonality: both began as a revolt against dominant and traditional views of what art should be. Pop art draws on consumerism, mass media and mass consumption – themes the music industry knows well – but it is kitsch and irony in these themes that makes pop art so visually intriguing. Australian/Pommie Pop artist, **Chris Duffy**, is a prolific pop art painter who creates challenging street art featuring rebellious musicians - and regal dames.

Ask Duffy about the meaning of art and his response is decisive: “Art is for communication. If I change someone’s perspective even temporarily then I’ve done my bit.” Duffy’s impact on urban and rural landscapes around the world has

been anything but temporary however as Duffy divides his time between Bendigo Victoria and the UK where he lived as a boy for 18 years. His street murals have become a fixture around the world including Australian rural cities like Bendigo that astutely embrace the value of an art-driven economy and cultural revival.

Duffy’s murals give a street voice to structures which once stood lifeless; Amy Winehouse, David Bowie, Keith Richards, Deborah Harry and Sid Vicious now give laneways, walls and doorways a story; “I make street art, the clue is in the name ... street ‘art’. Art is about affecting people and the community in a positive way - it’s not just putting your ‘tag on something’.”

There’s no denying the English influence either, “I dig the original 1960s English pop artists who invented the style - artists like Peter Blake, David Hockney, Peter Phillips, Pauline Boty, Michael Andrews ... and others,” Duffy said.

Women are well represented in Duffy’s art - and not without curiosity either, “I paint a lot of women in my work. Someone asked me if I worry about the sexism [of women in my art] but you know, I’m not so stylistic to pretend I don’t love women - there are no [women] victims in my work. I want the women in my work to be strong and in control, and curvy ... I like to be cheeky,” he explained.

True iconic women feature on Duffy’s pop art in Chancery Lane Bendigo: Amy Winehouse, Kylie Minogue, Dame Edna and Queen Elizabeth amongst others. Duffy explained, “My original idea for a mural of Amy Winehouse was inspired by a tiny pixelated photo of her falling off steps coming out of her mum and dad’s terrace in London. I thought ‘that’s my Amy!’”

“My idea was to give her wings and call her ‘fallen angel’ but then this mural came up. I put a paste up of the photo on the mural, it’s interesting how

someone is always trying to peel it off.”

and provocative image with a narrative full of innuendo as is characteristic of Duffy’s work “Kylie would dig my mural because she knows better than most that sex sells, and that’s exactly what she does. Kylie is all about image,” he said. “Did you know she is on British television almost on a daily basis? We hardly hear about her in Australia.”



Duffy’s larger than life sized mural of Amy Winehouse  
Photo: Sue Hedley

Sid Vicious: “I never saw the Sex Pistols in England; I was into more underground punk like Crass and Flux of Pink Indians. Then I got into ska like a lot of punks did ... wasn’t racist, lot of punks weren’t.” Duffy said.



Kylie Minogue  
Photo: Sue Hedley



Sid Vicious  
Photo: Sue Hedley

Pop diva Kylie Minogue is painted with a hint of the famous butt, luscious locks - and imp horns jutting from her head. It’s a fun

Keith Richards: “That’s Keefe” said Duffy, “green and orange - and sucking on a ciggie.” What else is there to say.



Keith Richards

Bowie: "I painted the mural of Bowie before he died. I was in the Little Desert in the Mallee in Western Victoria when he died, but I didn't find out until the next day when I was told, "he's gone" ... seemed everyone was aware of it except me."



David Bowie

"Bowie was a strange one, that's what we liked about him. I 'kinda' met Bowie on a street in London ... but, I shat myself really! After that I decided I'd never ask anyone for a photo even though they are famous and in the public domain."

Always the Englishman; Duffy could not resist a crack at Queen Elizabeth who, as always, is a woman never far from controversy. "My mural of the queen got me in trouble." Duffy explained, "I pasted it up three days before the Christchurch mosque massacre which was linked to white supremacy. A few people weren't happy with her hand gesture of "A-OK" in the original version of

the mural. In the end I changed the hand gesture and added a badge with a kiwi on it on her dress. I got a Channel 9 news report out of it; the report went with a positive rather than a negative spin and said 'wasn't it a good thing that the artist changed his mural in response to Christchurch tragedy'... I didn't want to be known as "that pom artist - he's a fascist" - I said, "no, I'm not!"



Queen Elizabeth and her corgi

Photo: Sue Hedley

"The corgi dog at the bottom of the picture is taking a piss and there were concerns this might also cause controversy, but my argument was that Australians will get it because the English have doing it to us for years! She was just meant to be a grumpy old queen with her dog taking a piss. I think the royal family are fair game myself."

In the same vein; Duffy's depiction of Dame Edna is spot on as Edna stares the viewer down with her evil smile and shock-horror makeup. "I grew up watching Dame Edna" he said "and now she follows me on Instagram. I occasionally get messages from her, last

message she said she adored my mural. We are currently working on a collaboration.”

in Bendigo and Violet Town. In October I’m hoping I’ll be painting a mural at a David Bowie festival in outback NSW. I’ve thought about visiting Adelaide too, I wouldn’t say no to creating street art in Adelaide.

“For someone who’s pretty much homeless most of the time I’m doing alright”, he laughed.

Links:

Facebook: Duffy – Ha Ho Art

Instagram: ha\_ho\_art



Dame Edna  
Photo: Sue Hedley



Prince



Queen Elizabeth loves a cold beer  
Photo: Sue Hedley

Under his trademark, **Hackney Hockney**, Duffy’s artwork has been shown in Australia, UK, USA, Canada, Germany, Italy, France & Vietnam. “For me it’s about the art and the travel, they feed each other and when I come back from the UK I like to ‘hit the tarmac’ running. I have a small studio in Bendigo, and I’m currently working on murals



Elvis is dead

# Chris Duffy cont . . .



Jarvis Cocker



Lou Reed



Adam Ant



Ha Ho Art on a gate



Chris Duffy  
Photo: Sue Hedley