

8 February 2021

ATTN: Michael File
Architectus
Level 18 MLC Centre
19 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Michael File,

RE: Response to Sirius Design Integrity Review Report (3 August 2020)

The following responses relate to comments raised during the second Design Integrity Review undertaken by the Design Integrity Panel (the Panel) for the Sirius site on Friday 17 July 2020. Specifically, the comments relate to Section 3.6 'Public Art' of the Design Integrity Review Report endorsed by the Panel on 3 August 2020.

UAP thank the Panel for their detailed consideration of the Draft Public Art Strategy (July 2020) prepared for the adaptive reuse of the Sirius site and their endorsement of the Cumberland Street forecourt and through-site link as potential zones for public art.

Panel recommendation: The storytelling in the draft Public Art Strategy, as provided to the Panel, should be reconsidered.

UAP response UAP agrees the background of the site is rich and layered. UAP has re-drafted the curatorial rationale in partial response to the Panel's appraisal and BVN's preliminary themes for the site. UAP proposes an open, forward-thinking brief for artists to respond to the contemporary condition of the Sirius site in addition to providing opportunities to create artworks that synthesise the complex narratives of millennia bygone, resulting in a commission that stands the test of time 20-plus years into the future.

Panel recommendation: Proposals for public art should be presented to the City of Sydney Public Art Committee for evaluation.

UAP response: UAP welcomes the opportunity for the City of Sydney Public Art Committee to review public art proposals and provide input.

Panel comment: The Panel support BVN's initial proposal of December 2019 to utilise public art as an interpretation device.

UAP response: UAP proposes clear didactic information such as bronze plaques be placed across the site to convey its rich history to audiences in a concise and educative manner. UAP notes the Panel's interest and support of public art adding further depth to interpretation of the site. UAP proposes alignment with the City of Sydney Council's best practice recommendations for an artwork commission to respond to the site, history and architecture and in that way support the objectives to:

- recognise and celebrate Aboriginal stories and heritage in public spaces;
- promote the integration of high quality art in new developments; and,
- contribute significantly to the City's collection of permanent artworks.

In this way UAP will encourage a highly collaborative approach between the artist/s, architects and relevant project team members.

Panel recommendation: The Public Art Strategy could be utilised as a means to incorporate conservation and public access initiatives for the Phillip Room.

UAP response: UAP understands the Phillip Room will be conserved and restored with integrity and will be used as a common room for residents of the Sirius building. The Phillip Room may be opened to the general public for viewing at agreed times and in consultation with the building management, and during key events, such as Sydney Open. The room is not intended to be a 'public' space and will not meet the requirements under the interpretation of City of Sydney guidelines for public art and hence will not be considered in the Public Art Strategy. UAP is therefore focussing the public art approach to publicly accessible and well trafficked environments.

Museum of Contemporary Art: Endorsement of Public Art Approach

The following commentary has been provided by Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, in response to the Public Art Strategy for the Sirius redevelopment.

1. Curatorial Rationale

- The themes of 'utopia' and 'Indigenous identity' identified in the curatorial rationale are appropriate for the site and should directly inform the artists' briefs and site placement. Asking artists to respond to either or both themes would be acceptable.

2. Artwork Placement

- The three opportunities identified for placement of works on the site provide an interesting range of possibilities.
- We note that there are diverse opportunities of scale, medium and type of public work available for artists, which are likely to be of interest to a wide range of contemporary Australian artists.
- We think that the opportunities for ground plane works/paving treatments and other potential infrastructural works are interesting; equally the public spaces lend themselves to siting a 3-dimensional work for place-making purposes.

3. Implementation

- The MCA has been asked to advise on strategy development, and also be involved on the artist selection panel and the concept selection panel – we're potentially happy to be involved in these capacities, as the Sirius Building is a neighbour in The Rocks Precinct and we have an interest in the quality of public art commissioned around the environs of the Museum.
- We're interested to explore UAP's suggestions in due course that the MCA may be able to be involved in the following areas: a possible link with C3West; public programming opportunities; and a potential partnership with Sirius Developments to fund a future MCA Sculpture Terrace Commission (which would then be relocated to the Sirius Building after showing at the MCA).

We look forward to future conversations with UAP and Sirius Developments – and wish you all success with the Public Art Strategy proposal.

RE: Response to Environmental Impact Statement, Sirius Development, 2-60 Cumberland Street, The Rocks – SSD 10384 – Comments and Recommendations from authorities and organisations

The following responses relate to submissions and comments resulting from the Sirius Developments Pty Ltd Environmental Impact Statement for the restoration and refurbishment of Sirius, The Rocks, received 18 December 2020.

UAP thanks the multiple entities – authorities and organisations – who have reviewed and provided feedback on the Sirius Public Art Strategy dated October 2020.

Place Management NSW submission: Extend budget to \$1,702,573.30.

UAP response: UAP is confident the significant budget of \$1million will deliver high quality public art for Sirius that is commensurate with the exciting restoration and refurbishment of one of Sydney's most iconic and historically socially sympathetic buildings. This budget is in line with the City of Sydney guideline – and industry best practice – of 1% of the Capital Works costs. UAP will work closely with the artists and broader team to manage and utilise the budget to its full potential.

In addition to the public art spend, amenity to the area and public realm is enhanced with the Sirius refurbishment which includes significant upgrades to the site and surrounding precinct including the Through-Site Link, and the refurbishment and upgrade requirements to provide a publicly accessible lift within the heritage-listed Cleland Bond Store. The Through-Site Link will offer new spaces for the public to enjoy and opens access and expedited passage (by foot or bicycle) from Cumberland Street to Gloucester Walk and The Rocks via a light, open oculus. The upgraded and refurbished Cleland Bond Store lift will provide an accessible link from Gloucester Walk to the lower Rocks precinct in Playfair Street. In addition, Lower ground building pods will house bespoke commercial and hospitality enterprises, in this way supporting local grass-roots industry.

Public art will be a significant and important contribution to the revitalisation of the public spaces.

Save Our Sirius comments: Public Art to represent social and cultural history of Sirius.

UAP response: UAP agrees the background of the site is rich and layered. UAP has carefully composed the public art strategy and curatorial rationale in light of this. UAP proposes an open, forward-thinking brief for artists to respond to the contemporary condition of the Sirius site in addition to providing opportunities to create artworks that synthesise the complex narratives of millennia bygone, resulting in a commission that stands the test of time 20-plus years into the future.

The aspiration for public art at Sirius is to commission a pre-eminent artist/s working to create innovative, site specific conceptual responses to a curatorial rationale that captures the history of the area, at the same time canvassing a future that aspires to equality and freedom. The curatorial rationale *Finding Utopia and Identity in the Antipodes* posits the Sirius building and site as a conduit to examine antithetical layers of The Rocks' history and aspirations, embodying a direct nexus to the original motivations behind the Sirius building itself. The rationale aims to guide artists broadly with the aim of commissioning conceptually rigorous public artwork that draws national and international audiences closer to understanding Australian history and identity.

In addition to the curatorial rationale directly speaking to the social and cultural history of Sirius via the analysis: *Utopia as it relates to Sirius itself and its initial policy objectives to provide equal housing opportunities in the climate of the Green Bans Movement*, UAP has clearly included a section in the public art strategy on the history of the building: its architecture and socialist fabric. When the future public art stages of artist selection and briefing for concept design are reached, this information and history will be consciously conveyed and emphasised so that it may inform creative thinking as regards public art and engagement.

Millers Point Community Resident Action Group comments: That one or two units could be set aside and used in a residency program and associated with nearby arts organisations (performance or visual arts – MCA, Sydney Theatre, Sydney Dance, Bangarra, etc.). In recognition of the role of women in leadership and advocacy in this area, these residencies could focus on women in the arts.

UAP response: Currently UAP and Sirius Developments Pty Ltd are in conversation with the nearby Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) who have read and endorsed the existing public art strategy and approach. A partnership has been positively welcomed and agreed upon in principle, to be developed and formalised in future stages. UAP has suggested the following (non-exhaustive) opportunities for collaboration with the MCA that fall outside a typical public art response and commission for a new development or building refurbishment:

- That the Sirius development links with MCA C3West initiative. This Western Sydney initiative may create strong dialogues with the original premise of Sirius i.e. providing equal opportunities to marginalized or disadvantaged demographics. Further there are many established practicing artists in Western Sydney that may be considered in the artist selection stage for Sirius.
- That the MCA and UAP provide in-kind public art curating mentorship to emerging curators under C3West umbrella.

Kindest,

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Senior Curator | Art + Design