

The Idea

My priorities for this artwork proposal were that, firstly the piece should have a strong link to a story about the town that few people aware of. Secondly, to make sure my style is not compromised by the content of the idea in order to have a very contemporary piece of street art in the town. I was keen to make sure any idea I put forward was also sympathetic to the local culture and environment, so when walking around the site and looking into the history of the place I was delighted to discover the full story of the Earl Of Kilmarnock and his wife, The Countess. The location of this wall is between the St Marnock Street car park and the Howard Park - this places it between the foundations of Kilmarnock House where the Earl and Countess lived, and its Gardens. I have lived in Kilmarnock all my life, brought up a stones throw away from the Howard Park, and I am embarrassed to say I was unaware of the fascinating story behind the Lady's Walk that lies within it.

The history behind this area and the involvement of the Earl of Kilmarnock in the Jacobite rebellions of the 18th Century was unknown to me. During the 2nd Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, the Earl supported the Jacobite's cause. As Colonel in the Horse Grenadiers, he fought at the battle of Falkirk while his wife detained the opposition General at lunch and made him late to the battle to ensure victory! The Earl went on to fight on the Battle of Culloden, where he was captured. For collusion with the Jacobite cause he was sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered in London in 1746, although this was later commuted to beheading. He was also attainted, meaning his titles were not inherited by his descendants. The Lady's Walk in the Howard Park commemorates the grief-stricken walks taken by the widow, who died of heartbreak a year after his execution.

The artwork I am proposing for the wall would be a representation of this fascinating story. It is in the perfect place for a visual tribute or representation of the Countess of Kilmarnock, who would regularly takes walks in the grounds of Kilmarnock House mourning her husband. The subject matter and mood of the piece also works really well with the style and figurative representations I am familiar with. I go for strong clean outlines and striking colours, which probably comes from an artistic background heavily influenced by graffiti and graphic art. I would also hope that the viewer sees something in the image that they can relate to in a personal way. I like the simplicity of one or two colours and line to hopefully create a simple but emotionally and visually bold effect.



The Countess of Kilmarnock, Lady Anne (Livingston) Boyd - walking from Kilmarnock House to the Howard Park to spend time mourning her executed husband, William Boyd. A depiction of an actual event that happened right here.



St. Marnock Square Mural [cont.]

Tom Lightbody

Process

After the initial idea, all my work starts with an illustrative sketch, a fine liner drawing. When I am happy I have found the correct textures or pose - I then would start a more detailed drawing again with fine liners, but this time drawn from reference. The mock ups and drawings I have put forward just now are first stage sketches - I would like to further research the dresses and lace of the day and then draw from reference to gain a more accurate depiction.

The images below are details from a mural I did for the Shawlands Art Trail, where I was chosen specifically for the wall in question due to the fact it was a boutique and my work is recognisable for its strong female representations. I chose an image where the model is wearing an intricate lace top which was not difficult to draw with fine liners, but scaling this up to a wall with spray-paint proved more challenging. I am particularly pleased with the results as I actually had to make my own tools and caps for the spray-paint in order to achieve this lace effect.



Fineliner Illustration



Shawlands Mural Trail Wall

When putting together all the elements for my design here, I was keen to call up on this technique again. Not only did the mourning garb of the day contain a lot of lace, the town of Kilmarnock and Ayrshire in general has strong links to the lace industry and to highlight this in the design would be a fitting nod to this industry. It creates a visual link to the heritage of the town as well as the industry.

When I have settled on my figure or pose and happy with the image, I can then start to look at colour. Most of my pieces only have one or two colours - strong flat areas that are vibrant and bold, I would need more than two for this image and composition. I think that is very important to try and represent the actual walk from the House to the Park and in turn link the town to the green area. There is a need for bright colours that are also sombre to reflect the mood of the protagonist. The tone needs to also blend in with the trees and natural environment around it in all seasons. It is essential that the figure should not look alien to the area - she is part of it and walking through it. When viewed from the street across the road, the trees near the river and the grass in the square surround the wall, so form is important as it needs to be there tying the image to the park in the back ground. This coupled with the lace effect will mean we have a mural referencing both environment and industry in a very contemporary way through Street Art.



Details

I think the contemporary design of this mural can draw in a modern audience to look further in to the details of the piece. Who is she? Why the veil? As part of this, I would propose an appropriate sized plaque on the bottom left corner explaining the story of the Countess and The Earl of Kilmarnock - a story which I'm sure everyone will find interesting regardless of age. The picture however, is not a history lesson, it is very modern piece of art and the interaction between it and the public will be accessible and engaging on two levels.

As I previously stated, to progress this idea I would proceed with a photo shoot using a model dressed in the correct clothing from the era [it is possible artistic license may creep in here!]. From these photos I would create the image I plan to scale up on the wall. Using a process sometimes called 'doodle grid' I scale up the drawings to be an exact match to the fine liner drawings using spray-paint and masonry paint.

I would suggest a cherry picker would be required as scaffolding obstructs the view from the ground when painting. We would need to cordon off the area directly below and around the site where the cherry picker is and I would think the whole piece could be completed in just over a week. The work would be done by myself with 2 assistants for painting and general help - all three of us will be equipped with appropriate IPAF licences and PPE. All materials, licenses, PPE and safety equipment would be included in the financial plan along with paint, tools and labour. Regarding timescales, weather will be an important factor as the months targeted for completion are during winter time when the weather can be restrictive, in my experience it would be best to start the actual wall around March. Please take this as a first draft statement of intent regarding the image, colours and stylistic aspects of the final piece. Further research on colour matches and lace patterns would be necessary along with additional illustrations.

If I can time things correctly - it would be good to finish on the same day as the inaugural celebration day, meaning painting can be going on in the background while other activities take place in the square. My initial ideas are spray painting /graffiti workshops for kids and possibly get in touch with the organisers of The Cube Project, who host creative activities for events and festivals.



First Draft Fine liner Illustration



The Kilmarnock Mural Trail

As a street artist walking around Kilmarnock, I am constantly excited by the possibilities and blank canvases around the town regularly appearing in high visibility areas. From the bottom of Bank Street, around the Laigh Kirk and through the Strand there are at least 9 fantastic blank grey colourless slates. This is before we get the top of the foregate, around to the bus station and the drive down Sturrock street.

I have imagined these walls painted , each one representing a different little known or unusual tale from close to the site. Subject matter concentrated on interesting stories, details behind events instead of the events themselves. I feel that in order to connect the town with the younger residents we need walls of very contemporary street art in the most modern sense with stories behind each image to draw the viewer in and let them learn about the characters of the town.

Images that are a break from the traditional, each with a plaque explaining the funny or tragic tale behind the picture. A brief time spent researching the town centre introduced me to characters and stories not previously known. People like Wullie Hats, Mama Lee or Sanny Mackie - who walked from Kilmarnock to London backwards tied to a pram - stories regarding things like why Kilmarnock is the only place in the world to hold Halloween on a different date each year.

Instead of a striding man mural for instance , a street artist's interpretation of a story connected to the people who worked in Johnnie Walkers would be more relevant and interesting. My grandfather worked at Johnnie Walkers for over 40 years and told me a story about a tap that was sneakily fitted to the pipes that fed the bottling vats. Only a select few members of staff knew about this never ending supply of Johnnie Walkers whisky! A story like this, unique to the town and characters would be an interesting backdrop to whatever artwork is conceived from it.

It could work as part of the town regeneration which would compliment the work being done on projects such as the white tile building. Engaging with a contemporary artist and letting them do their own style and take on something would mean we would have a piece of interest attached to a lesser known story about the town. Nine or ten of these in succession would create a very popular attraction I am sure. I have first hand experience of the interest, excitement and energy of several street art pieces being done at the same time within a small community. To do this on a slightly larger scale in our town is entirely possible and we could end up with an art trail that further helps with the redefinition of the towns image. I am aware this is not part of the proposal, but I thought it would be a good platform to put forward further ideas.

Thank you for taking the time to review my proposal.

Tom Lightbody

