



Report and Recommendations of the Luke Kelly Working Group

Introduction

The Luke Kelly Working Group was established to consider the complex issues arising out of the selection of a proposal by artist Vera Klute of a sculpture of Luke Kelly (2015) and the subsequent offer to the city of a completed sculpture of Luke Kelly by artist John Coll (2016) commissioned by a private citizen Gerry Hunt. The Working Group was composed of Cllr Áine Clancy (Chair and Chair of the Arts and Cultural Advisory Group), Cllr Rebecca Moynihan (Chair of the SPC for Arts, Culture and Recreation) Ray Yeates (City Arts Officer), Ruairí Ó Cuív (Public Art Manager), Róisín Lonergan (Community Representative, Public Participation Network) and Anna O'Sullivan (external Art Expert and Director of the Butler Gallery, Kilkenny).

Background

In 2004, Dublin City Council passed a motion proposed by Cllr Christy Burke that a statue of Luke Kelly be commissioned for the city. As Dublin City Council did not have the required funding for such a major commission, the Dublin Dockland Development Authority made a commitment to put €80,000 towards the project for the commissioning of a sculpture of Luke Kelly to be located in the north inner city docklands area. However, with the collapse of the economy in 2008 the project did not proceed.

When appointed Lord Mayor in June 2014, Cllr Christy Burke announced that one of his key objectives for the year was to commission the statue of Luke Kelly and to this end the Public Art Manager and Administrative Officer in Culture, Recreation and Economic Services were assigned to work on this project. In view of the one year term of office as Lord Mayor it was proposed that a limited competition be held to expedite the commission. A long list of artists (28 artists) was compiled with nominations from Fire Station Studios (Dublin), National Sculpture Factory (Cork) and Leitrim Sculpture Centre as well as nominations by Dublin City Council. A short-list of five artists was selected by a panel of internal and external art experts. The brief was drawn up in agreement with the Lord Mayor and approved by the Arts and Cultural Advisory Group. At a final selection meeting chaired by the Lord Mayor in the Mansion House, the proposal by Vera Klute was unanimously selected. This proposal is for a 1.8 metre high bust of Luke Kelly to be located in Luke Kelly Park along the banks of the Royal Canal near the Convention Centre Dublin, which is also near the place of birth of Luke Kelly.

Proposed donation of a statue of Luke Kelly by John Coll to be gifted by Gerry Hunt

Gerry Hunt, a private individual, on his own initiative commissioned a statue of Luke Kelly by artist John Coll. The statue is of a seated Luke Kelly singing and playing a banjo. Gerry Hunt now wishes to donate the statue to Dublin City Council and has made a formal proposal in this regard. He does not have a specific location in mind other than that he would prefer 'a south city centre location'. Gerry Hunt has funded the costs of sculpture and Dublin City Council would have to pay for the costs of foundations, plinth and installation.

Terms of Reference

The City Arts Officer Ray Yeates presented proposed Terms of Reference to the SPC for Arts, Culture and Recreation and they were unanimously endorsed. These included meeting with both artists, the Kelly family, and public consultation.

Actions

The Working Group met with the following people on the 25th May, 2017.

Vera Klute, the artist selected through the Dublin City Council Process.

The Artist presented her proposal including, the maquette, visual images, and samples of stone and copper wire. Her written report set out the concept and technical issues, scale and location, materials, process, health and safety, maintenance and durability, time schedule and budget. She related how she was inspired by Luke Kelly as a subject for the sculpture and how she came to the idea of the large portrait of him singing as revealing the intensity, emotion and energy of the singer. The contemporary nature of the architecture and the site (specified in the brief) also contributed to her decision to design the large scale portrait. She explained how the limestone would add colour and variegation to the face which the white wax of the maquette does not have. She also described in detail the whole process from the digitalisation of the maquette to the initial outline carving taking place in Belgium using CNC scanning and computer technology and how the work would be returned to Dublin where she would work for several months with a stone mason and other technicians to do the detailed stone carving and the bending, patination and lacquering of the copper wire for the hair, etc.

Gerry Hunt (private commissioner of the statue) and artist John Coll

Gerry Hunt explained how he had first met Luke Kelly at a music session in Co Clare in the 1960s and how he himself as a folksinger had done sessions with Des Geraghty and Jimmy Kelly (Luke Kelly's brother). He explained how he had entirely at his own initiative commissioned John Coll (sculptor of the Patrick Kavanagh and Brendan Behan statues) to create a statue of Luke Kelly, and having done this he wanted to donate it to the City. He also stated that he had not really thought about process and procedure in relation to donating it to the city. He was happy to donate it to the city and that it would require a plinth (45 cm high) but that this could not be designed until a location was identified. He suggested that a suitable location would be in the south city in the Grafton Street area. He emphasised how he never intended to scupper the chances of a younger artist and how he thought that the other proposal was in its own terms excellent and with both being very different he thought that both should be placed in the city.

John Coll explained why he had chosen the pose and details such as the flares and boots (of 1970s fashion) with him sitting on a 1960s classic design chair. He stressed how the sculpture was made to be strong. He saw the sculpture as being accessible and viewed at eye level. He imagined people being photographed at it.

Meeting with Patrick and John Kelly (brothers of Luke Kelly) with Des Geraghty

Patrick and John Kelly explained that their brother Jimmy was away. Des Geraghty also explained that Jimmy had particularly asked him to attend to represent his intentions and thoughts about the commissions. He explained why the Kelly family had some discomfort with the sculpture by Vera Klute with the pallor of the maquette and that the family wanted a 'Street Sculpture'. It was explained to them that Vera Klute's proposal was for a large scale portrait and that the stone would be much more flesh-like than the white wax. The Kelly brothers and Des Geraghty acknowledged that they had not understood the scale of the proposed sculpture and that they now understood the proposed artwork better. They stated that they did not want to criticise the artwork by Vera Klute, or to 'knock the process for the commission' and that one sculpture was radical and the other traditional. They stressed that they did not want to discommode Vera Klute.

Des Geraghty explained about knowing Luke Kelly since the 1960s and how the music and art scene in Dublin was radically altered by the emergence of folk / traditional music and writers like Patrick Kavanagh, Brendan Behan, etc and how Luke Kelly and the members of the Dubliners had contributed enormously to the revival of Irish Music. He described the various haunts of the music and literati circles of the time in a geographic area from Grafton Street to Baggot Street and that this area would be appropriate. They also acknowledged the difficulty with liaising with other agencies e.g. the OPW if it was to go in Stephens Green and how this could delay the process of placing the statue in public.

The meeting concluded with Patrick and John Kelly and Des Geraghty stating that they would 'go for both sculptures if you could' but emphasising their desire to have the matter settled as soon as possible.

Public Consultation

The public were invited to attend a meeting to give their opinions on the matter. The invitation to this meeting was managed through the Public Participation Network (PPN) which was established 'to empower and assist groups to participate in local decision making'. This is the same forum which was used to elect the Community Representative, Róisín Lonergan. This meeting took place on the 13th June, 2017. After discussion, the consensus which emerged was that the best solution to the complex issues was to commission the Vera Klute sculpture as selected through the Dublin City Council process but also to try identify a suitable location for the John Coll sculpture. It was stressed that the unfortunate situation whereby the City Council ended with two sculptures of the same individual should not occur again and that the established policies and procedures for the commissioning of statues and sculptures be adhered to. The meeting discussed how if commissioned the creation of the sculpture could offer opportunities to document the process and also give scope for interaction with community groups and schools in the Docklands through Fire Station Studios.

Conclusions of the Consultative Process and Research

The consultation with those with a vested interest in the sculptures and beyond yielded a consistent respect for the proposal by Vera Klute once the scale, materials and intentions of the artist were fully explained. The consensus which also emerged was that if possible both sculptures of Luke Kelly should be accommodated in the city.

Learning

- Consultation with the family and relatives of individuals to be commemorated, as well as local communities are an important aspect in the commissioning of statues and monuments. However, a balance has to be maintained between these concerns and sectoral interests and the policies and overview of the City Council.
- In the future, there should be greater adherence to the intentions and meaning of the Commemorative Naming Policy which states that 'an individual should be commemorated with only one monument'.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the Luke Kelly Working Group are:

- That Dublin City Council commission the Luke Kelly Sculpture by Vera Klute as designed and proposed by her for Luke Kelly Park along the Royal Canal in the North Inner City Docklands. The commission should commence as soon as approved by Council. The process of fabricating the sculpture offers great possibility for engagement with the local community, and in particular children and young people, be it through workshops at Fire Station Studios (in the North Inner City) where the work will take place or through music.
This engagement would heighten knowledge of Luke Kelly and his music, as well as visual art processes in the local area of Sheriff Street. This process would also offer great potential for a film documentary or TV programme. The original intention to combine funding from Dublin City Council with public and private subscriptions will be pursued.
- That the gift from Gerry Hunt of the statue of Luke Kelly by artist John Coll be accepted and that Dublin City Council immediately commence to find a suitable location in the south city centre, as preferred by the Kelly family. The Kelly family have requested that the suitable location should be in the area of the city which Luke Kelly is most associated with as a musician and well known figure in Dublin. Dublin City Council will have to fund the commissioning of the plinth and foundations which will be done in consultation with the donor and the artist.

**Ray Yeates,
City Arts Officer.**