

## 8.2. MM02: Vale Peter Kingston

Peter Kingston (“Kingo”) seems to have been part of the fabric of North Sydney life and the foreshores of Lavender Bay for as long as anyone can remember, although he first moved to his house in Walker Street, Lavender Bay in 1974.

Peter Kingston was born at St Luke’s Hospital, Darlinghurst in 1943 and grew up at Parsley Bay, Vaucluse. He attended Cranbrook School before commencing a Commerce degree at the University of NSW in 1960. He soon transferred from Commerce to study Arts and was immersed in the rich cultural life of the University during the early 1960s.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts, Peter Kingston studied Architecture and worked with graduating students under Neville Gruzman on housing for the aboriginal community at Papunya Tula.

From 1970 to 1975 Peter Kingston produced and/or directed films including a documentary entitled “*Brett and Butter*” on Brett Whitely’s mural at The Drip Gorge, Goulburn River, “*Fanta*” an experimental black and white film made with Garry Shead and Gavin Wilson in 1973 and the 1974 film “*Leichhardt*” based on the 19<sup>th</sup> Century German explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt.

In 1976, he began to work on the restoration of Luna Park with Martin Sharp and other artists. Peter Kingston’s work at Luna Park immersed him in the work of founding resident artist, Arthur Barton, and contributed to his love of Australian pop cultural figures and expressions. Of course, he went on to create several homage artworks to Barton and Luna Park (a number of which are held in Council’s collection).

Peter Kingston’s art is marked by a number of themes – Luna Park and Australian pop culture, Sydney Harbour and its ferries and, always close to the surface, concern about overdevelopment and the environment.

Whether it was giving his time and art to Friends of Luna Park to stop the demolition of the site, the battle to save Kialoa, the campaign to save the Hinchinbrook channel and dugongs, the campaign to save the industrial heritage of Walsh Bay, the campaign to save the “Lady class” ferries or his active engagement with Lavender Precinct, Kingo brought his passion, energy and humour to the cause.

In an essay in Artist Profile Issue 50, artist Luke Sciberras wrote:

*“Along with the unmistakable appeal of Kingston’s sentimental inflections comes a lifetime of absolutely fearless campaigns to champion his heroes and to fight the good fight against those who threaten that which he holds dear. This by no means comes from the consternation of a man of a certain age; it is in his every fibre, as shown in his earliest satirical cartoons for the University of New South Wales student newspaper Tharunka, and later OZ magazines in the 1960s.*”

*He is one of the very few artists who embeds a political or wry tone into almost every work he makes, however tacit or overt. In his own way he staunchly protects everything he stands for, everything that made him the child he was and the man he is.*

*The iron fist that hides beneath Kingo's velvet glove is quite possibly that swung by Popeye's Bluto, wielding a formidable "thwack" and at once comically gritting his teeth.*

*By its very nature, Kingston's work is obsessive and compulsive. This polymath's home of almost fifty years in Lavender Bay has become a series of studios devoted to his various media. One small room overlooking the bay and bridge through paint-splattered windows is for his elaborately hand-coloured linocuts; another larger room drizzled with countless layers of beautifully coloured paint is for large paintings, which in themselves are like portholes seeing the harbour from his own three-storey Edwardian ship. An entire area of the house is converted into his own cinema to share our delights and woes through the curtains of the "King's Theatre." Bronze sculptures, plaster casts, charcoals, etchings, enormous pop-art chess sets, Luna Park memorabilia – few houses on the harbour are used in this way anymore, where the creative urge leaves scarcely any room for repose or interior design."*

By the turn of the century, Kingo donated his work to our community with the creation of the Comic Walk on the foreshore at Lavender Bay – a series of bronzes of popular culture figures including "Boofhead" were cast and acquired by Council. At about this time, he became involved with Nutcote, volunteering and painting signage that references the work of May Gibbs. That association with Nutcote continued until his final days.

To the end, Kingo campaigned for the State heritage listing of the MLC Building, to save the Lady Heron and other "Lady class" heritage ferries and worked on the preparation of a new Conservation Management Plan for Nutcote. He remained a passionate champion and advocate for local heritage.

His energy, artistry, humour and passion will be sorely missed and long remembered by generations delighted by the bronzes on the Comic Walk at Lavender Bay.

Vale Kingo.

**I therefore recommend:**

**1.THAT** Council write to Peter Kingston's family to express sincere condolences on his passing and to recognise his contribution to the North Sydney community, Lavender Bay foreshore and the high esteem and affection in which he was held by the people of North Sydney..

**2.THAT** Council liaise with Peter Kingston's family to arrange a suitable community celebration and memorial.

**COUNCILLOR ZOË BAKER  
MAYOR**

