

CITY OF SYDNEY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
FATHER TED KENNEDY AND MUM SHIRL MEMORIAL
PROJECT

Name: Catherine de Lorenzo

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Place: University of NSW

Interviewer: Margo Beasley

Recorder: Marantz PMD 671

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **MB: This is an interview with Dr Catherine De Lorenzo. It's taking place in her office at the University of New South Wales. The date is 27 June 2008. The project is the Father Ted Kennedy and Mum Shirl Memorial Sculpture Project. My name's Margo Beasley and the interview is being done on behalf of the City of Sydney's History Program.**

So, Catherine, if you wouldn't mind just introducing yourself, perhaps giving us your position here and the year of your birth, if you don't mind - - -

CD: Ah.

MB: - - - and your full name.

CD: O.K. My name is Catherine Mary De Lorenzo. I was born in 1950 and I'm an art historian. I'm a senior lecturer here in the Faculty of the Built Environment and specifically within the Architecture programme. My research is to do with both photographic – especially Australian photographic – history and public art and looking at the integration of

art and the urban environment and some of my teaching from time to time since the early '90s has been to do with collaborative studios between architects and artists and landscape architects and so on, so that that interest in public art has a different kind of expression in some of the teaching I do.

MB: Now, as far as the Father Ted Kennedy and Mum Shirl Memorial Project goes, you come to it in a way with two hats, I guess we could say; that is you were, perhaps still are, a parishioner of St Vincent's Church in Redfern, which was [Father] Ted Kennedy's church and Mum Shirl's church but you also have this particular, very strong professional interest in public art. So, maybe if we could just talk a little bit first about your relationship to St Vincent's.

2.09 CD: Okay.

MB: Where do you fit into the picture there?

CD: Well, it's through Ted Kennedy first and foremost. I knew Ted when he was in Neutral Bay - I came to know him a little bit. And when he moved - he moved to Redfern in the early 1970s, very early 1970s, and eventually I went there as well. I started going there partly because I was trying to find some kind of relevant - a sense of relevant church. The main thing was, though, that Ted was such a warm kind of person. He became a very close friend, as he did of hundreds of people, and he was wonderful because he never gave advice, never judgemental, just listened, had lots of ideas. He seemed to attract around him a lot of creative people, a lot of artists, poets, all sorts of people, musicians. And he was very supportive of these people too, where he could be, and certainly promoted their work and so on. So, he was a very inclusive, encompassing, loving kind of presence. Shirley Smith [known as Mum Shirl] I came to know because of Ted's knowing her. So, I've known Shirley, oh, since the early '70s as well. They're both dead, of course, now. But, you know, Shirley held each of our children in her arms when they were babies. She - we've got lots of stories to tell about Shirley. I wasn't one of the people that would go off to gaols with her and drive her all around the countryside - I did drive with her around the countryside a bit but that was only because I was going places anyway; I wasn't putting myself out for her. A lot of people did that, though. I didn't. I suppose I had a young family and I was working and so on. But certainly, yes, lots of very strong memories of Shirley and of Ted.

4.10 **MB: Now, can I ask - I mean, it's fine if you don't want to answer this but it's rather more personal - I'm just wondering whether you did find more relevance in the church at St Vincent's in Redfern than what had been lacking at Neutral Bay or what you perceived as lacking at Neutral Bay?**

CD: Oh, yes, absolutely. I think Ted would kind of wince a bit at the clichéd kind of argument that he represented a form of liberation theology but that's certainly what was there. It was a – instead of being a notion of church being bound by guilt and rules it was just an expansive kind of concept and inclusive and challenging. I remember very clearly, when I first heard Ted talking, I remember crying at the beauty of the way in which he expressed his ideas and the upside-down way he had of seeing the world. It became – as he went on it became a very pronounced anti-institutionalist approach and trying to get back to really core values of Christianity. So, you know, I don't see myself as a – I don't sort of see myself as a card-carrying Christian in a sense. I'm not out there to – I don't care what other people are, I'm not out there to try and win over people, you know, so I don't see myself in any kind of evangelical kind of role, not that kind of Christian, not one tiny bit. In fact, I see myself as full of doubts about lots of things and more so now than ever, I'd say. But I certainly found a – I used to feel with Ted the deep relevance of what he was saying to my life and it's an approach that's not – I'm not finding it now within the clerics.

6.14 Oh, you know, there are a few around that are very good, I think, but it's a kind of approach that seems to be seen by the hierarchy in the church to have had its day and so I think that's sad. But anyway, he was inspirational, yes, absolutely.

MB: Can you expand on that a bit, when you say it was extremely relevant to your own life and it was inspirational -?

CD: It was in lots of ways. Like, I remember when I finally had to try and wrap up my thesis. It had been dragging on with lots of maternity leaves and things like that and I really decided, "I have to finish this thesis", and I would come in every Sunday and just spend my day in at work and several nights a week. That was a kind of deal I did with the family; "I've got to get this thing out of my life". But if I went to Redfern to begin with in the morning I'd come in and I'd see a new kind of way of just thinking. And my thesis had nothing at all to do with any – I mean, it was to do with representations of Indigenous people, sure, and there was a lot of awareness and engagement and personal engagement with Aboriginal people around Redfern but there wasn't any kind of direct translation of ideas. It was just the kind of imaginative framework, imaginative way of seeing things and seeing the inspiration in the poets and seeing the – I don't know, it was just an approach I found deeply moving and deeply relevant in different aspects of my life, yes.

MB: And do you still attend at St Vincent's?

CD: Yes.

MB: So, you have remained a parishioner but - - -

CD: Yes, kind of.

MB: - - - you grimace. So, things have changed a great deal?

8.01 CD: No, I do. Yes, it's a feisty little community that is remaining there and there is actually an invisible and large community that cannot bear to go along and see what's happened to this place. But, you know, I try to hang on in. It's terribly hard because it's so soul destroying. But what's happened is there's a new sect of priests that's been put there and they've got the complete support of the Archbishop and so we, as a community, feel we've got no one, really, to turn to with any kind of power. Any clerics that we've turned to are as marginalised themselves within the system as are we. And so the kind of unstated assumption is that somehow we were all wrong and we just have to wake up and realise that we were wrong and we've got to come back to a fairly negative rule driven, guilt ridden notion of what being a true Christian or Catholic is all about and it's not a framework that I'm interested in.

MB: Now you, I suppose – there probably is no typical member of Ted Kennedy's parish but many people came there, apart from the immediately local people.

CD: Yes.

MB: It was a parish that really extended all over Sydney, I guess.

CD: Yes, yes. How come?

MB: I don't know how much that applied to Indigenous people, whether they tended to be local people but I think for non Indigenous people they came from everywhere, didn't they?

CD: They did. Prior to my knowing Ted he was the chaplain at Sydney University and there remains to this day a cohort of people, who by definition are a bit older than I am, who continued to be very loyal followers of Ted and friends of Ted.

10.14 He had such strong friendships through the university placement and so that's one that can account for a lot of people. But then there are the younger generations that are coming. Well, when I say "younger", I mean the really younger generations hardly go at all. I suspect that had Ted not died and there'd been some similar kind of inclusiveness and happiness they probably would darken the door from time to time but they're not darkening it now and they're not interested in going to a more straight down the line George Pell [then Archbishop of Sydney] kind of parish. So, they just don't go, the twenty year olds don't go. But in any case, yes, people just come because once the word gets 'round, you know, people used to come; they'd try it out, they liked it and then they'd just keep coming back. And in fact,

one really, really strong parishioner who now happens to live up the north coast but – or two of them live up the north coast now, they used to come down every Sunday from Newport, you know, and think nothing of it on a Sunday.

MB: On the northern beaches?

CD: Northern beaches. So, you know, and they've only in the last few years moved up the north coast. So, that's – and there's a woman who regularly comes from the lower Blue Mountains. You know, that's quite a commitment - be much easier just to walk somewhere or, you know, go somewhere pretty local. But the reason for that level of commitment is that Ted seemed to offer an experience that wasn't being replicated anywhere that we knew of.

12.09 So, that's why that happened, I think. I don't know how typical – I think it is fairly atypical that there would be such a large group. I have to say that when I say that there is a large community that only now can be seen on very rare occasions. Most of the time there's hardly anybody there, very tiny.

MB: There is a loose group that people generally refer to as 'The Friends of Ted Kennedy'.

CD: Yes.

MB: Which is, I guess, another thing again. I think it's a group that's formed into some sort of a concept since his death.

CD: Yes.

MB: Is that correct?

CD: Yes, that's right.

MB: And what was the function of that group? Did it have a purpose?

CD: It's solely for this project [Ted Kennedy and Mum Shirl memorial sculpture].

MB: It's solely for this project.

CD: For this project – it was invented for this project; it has no other existence beyond that. And so the way in which that's manifested itself is that we had a meeting last year some time, I think it was, and everybody that anybody knew who had any connection at all with Ted was contacted. So, there would have been a lot that were just sort of – we didn't have their phone numbers or contact things. Ted would have known how to contact them but we didn't necessarily know how

to trace down everybody and Bronwyn Crosby was the one that took a lot of responsibility for trying to collate that database together. And so they were called in and introduced to Tom Bass [Australian sculptor] because Marnie [Sister Marnie Kennedy, Ted's sister] – well, I think I'll leave it for you to find out from Marnie precisely how Tom came into this project – but given that he is involved in the project then his desire was to hear some of the ideas, not in the sense of artist ideas of telling him what the thing had to look like but the deep and meaningful ideas about what it was that mattered to people about Ted and about Shirley.

14.12 **MB: So, he came and talked to all of you then?**

CD: He did.

MB: And people fed him their thoughts and ideas?

CD: Ideas, yes.

MB: So, what kinds of things came up at that meeting?

CD: There were – I'd have to go back and look at those records and so this is just my memories of it now. But I think people did share a lot of their feelings, 'cause that's really what Tom wanted to hear, was their feelings and their insights. I think it's probably fair to say that Tom was a little bit surprised – Tom has known Ted for a very long time and so - and the altar in St Vincent's is a Tom Bass altar that was done for the church in Neutral Bay, that was actually done for the occasion of a wedding of one of Tom's daughters and Ted liked it so much he had it brought over to Redfern when he came. So anyway, they've known each other for a long time and I think Tom was a little bit kind of, like, "Who are all these people? I've never heard of you, never – did you really know Ted as well as I knew Ted?" and so on. And so he needed to hear these stories and he was also given the little booklet that we did at a particular time. Somebody had organised some memories of Ted to be published and I'm sure you've seen a copy of those memories.

MB: Yes, I have.

CD: And lots of people had different ways of expressing their thoughts. And so, yes, so that was a day when we could – there were people who also had brilliant solutions as to how the work or to what it ought to look like and what it ought to say and not say.

MB: You're speaking ironically, I think?

CD: I am speaking ironically. So, yes, so that was – and that's the only time that group has got together, so - - -

16.04 **MB: Really just on one occasion?**

CD: On one occasion - and I think that's correct to say that - and we certainly haven't met for a very long time. So, I presume that once - what's her name who's taken carriage of this within the studio? - the woman, the - - -

MB: Margo Hoekstra [sculptor and Tom Bass's wife]?

CD: No, the - - -

MB: Susan [Alexopolous]?

CD: - - - Susan comes back - she's currently travelling or she might be back by now - and she was - the whole studio, the Tom Bass Studio had decided to, having already brainstormed a lot of ideas, they decided just to let it settle for a while and see what would in the benefit of a bit of time and mulling about emerge as being the strongest possibilities. And I presume therefore that once Susan is back on, more physically kind of on the job and not only mentally, that there'll be another meeting so that people can respond to the ideas that they put to us. It's probably, I anticipate, the second meeting will be much more us listening to the artists and responding.

MB: Are there many Indigenous people in 'The Friends of Ted Kennedy'?

CD: Yes, there would be. Oh, I don't know numerically - I can't tell you what percentage. Sorry, I can't do that.

MB: But they're strongly represented?

CD: Yes, I would say so, strongly. You know, they're - it's always quite difficult because quite often with a lot of the Indigenous people that do come to the church have very mixed addresses, they're not necessarily on the phone and so on. So, the word of mouth thing happens quickly. There are people who, of course, are very easy to contact and so on, with more stable addresses and mobile phones and the rest of it. So, it varies. Certainly, the bush telegraph works very well, though, within the Indigenous community; the word gets 'round when things are happening.

18.12 **MB: I asked that question, really, because one of the complications of this particular project is that it's actually going to be a memorial to two people in a sense or what those two people stood for. I believe that Ted actually left some money in his will - - -**

CD: He did.

MB: - - - for a memorial to - - -

CD: Shirley.

MB: - - - Shirley, which hasn't transpired for one reason or another. And I think when the idea came about that there should be some sort of a memorial to Ted who would, everybody says, himself be completely opposed to that idea.

CD: Yes.

MB: Then it sort of came together that perhaps it could be the two of them, a memorial to both of them and whatever things that they represented. Is that how you see it?

CD: Yes, I think so, and I suspect – although Marnie and Tom would be better at answering this – I think the idea to have the combined memorial probably came more from Tom and then it's kind of moved on from there. I think that's how it happened. It would not have come from Marnie as a first-off idea. And, you know, I think by the time 'The Friends' got together it was already a coupling of people at the centre of it.

MB: I should say here that when we talk about Marnie we're talking about Marnie Kennedy - - -

CD: Kennedy.

MB: - - - Ted's sister.

CD: That's right.

MB: O.K. So, we're talking here now when and if this project gets off the ground, we're talking here then about a very complex process. We haven't got one artist in a studio, dreaming up ideas - - -

CD: That's right.

MB: - - - and working through them in a way that satisfies them - - -

20.03 CD: That's right.

MB: - - - and may or may not work for the people who are viewing it at some stage. Here, we're talking about enormous numbers of people with quite a strong emotional investment in this - - -

CD: Yes.

MB: - - - particular work of art. It also, should it come to pass, will be situated on the footpath outside St Vincent's - - -

CD: Yes.

MB: - - - which is another issue. That means it's going to be not just a work of public art with all the usual complications about commissions and mixed ideas and how does the artist forge their way through all of that but you've got lots of ideas from lots of people about what it needs to represent and then it's got to fit in with all the kind of logistical requirements of a public space and in this case it's also going to be a collaborative work of art: that is to say, we're going to have four or really five sculptors working on it, all coming from the Tom Bass school, Tom more or less supervisory, I think, but four of the younger people actually physically making the sculpture and feeding their own ideas into it.

CD: Yep.

MB: So, I guess if we start with just talking about a public work of art, without all those other complications, what other considerations when if a single artist makes a public work of art, what sort of things does that artist have to think about.

CD: Well, that is – on the one hand that's a good starting point but there's another really basic one as well. So, let's just start with that. One of the dilemmas with public art is that it is in the public domain. The artwork is in the public domain; it is no longer in the artist's studio. In the mid '90s there were a lot of publications on what was called 'New Genre Public Art' and New Genre Public Art put a strong emphasis on the meaning of the very place where something goes.

22.14 So, the idea that a sculpture – let's say, assuming public art, 'cause in many peoples' mind public art equates with sculpture - that's a seriously old fashioned way of thinking about things. But let's say an artist has a maquette in a studio that could be scaled up for the public space: that is a kind of approach that was prominent within modernism up until to some extent the 1970s but particularly by the 1990s, that kind of idea that this modern, abstract artwork could pretty much go anywhere if you just got the scale right and the position right and so on, became rejected as a way of proceeding with art. And so within the concepts of New Genre Public Art it wasn't just a matter of scale and fitting in in some kind of formal way with an available space but the meaning of the place and how that meaning gets embodied within the artwork became extremely important. As a result, quite a lot of New Genre Public Art an added emphasis on the local community and the meanings and memories and things like that. So, you know, that became very strong, it became quite strong here in various aspects of art production, public art production in Sydney as well. That

kind of approach, though, one of the weaknesses of the New Genre Public Art is that it can, in trying to satisfy everybody's needs and getting the story right and the sense of memory and the sense of history and so on, sometimes it was aesthetically quite conservative in doing that.

24.12 And other times too it shied away from providing a kind of pivotal space for the public to be challenged in their thinking. And so that remains a kind of potential weakness of New Genre Public Art. Like any kind of public art, whether it was the old fashioned site specific art of modernism or whether it was a New Genre placed in community and memory, both these kinds of public art production can be very easily learnt by artists and when they become overly learnt and familiarised to artists it can become very bureaucratic. And that's part of the difficulty that you have, necessarily. Councils must have some guidelines and some rules but, you know, the process itself, it's really important that we as a community at all possible levels ensure that there is a level of excitement and of innovation and of, you know, surprise and of relevance and all those things. So, there is no foolproof way of coming up with something that's going to work really well. The challenge is that every single time it happens it's got to be made really exciting, you know, that both informs the public – usually to do with informing the public about some kind of idea that's driving the work – and engages with them, you know, that doesn't – in informing the public - doesn't require a huge long spiel to begin to make sense of it. You know, some of the ideas need to be communicated visually to people, especially in a case like this, pedestrians going past - perhaps wouldn't be focusing first and foremost on the people in cars, driving past.

26.20 So, it's a tough task. But that's to do with the public domain and trying to think of what are some issues beyond me, myself, I, as the artist in the studio, what is it that is relevant? And in this instance we have – the position is absolutely relevant – the proposed position because we don't know what's ever going to come of it all – but the proposed position is right for these two people; being out on the street seems entirely right for these two people because they didn't go and hide inside a church; they were out there, engaging with people and issues and very much in the public domain. So, there are a whole lot of good things about the way this is beginning to emerge. But the other point I raised in my head at any rate and will now address: at the beginning of that response was that one of the crucial aspects of this particular work is that you have – the subjects are Indigenous and non Indigenous and we've got a studio that is entirely non Indigenous and, you know, that's an issue that we are all very, very much aware of. And we've tried within the small committee that's - I'm not just a 'Friend of Ted Kennedy', I'm also on the small committee that's kind of a sounding board, I think, for the Tom Bass Studio - and we've certainly tried to locate some Indigenous artists who might be interested to actually work on this project as well.

28.03 We went to Eora [college, primarily Indigenous], we contacted some artists in the area that we suspected perhaps wouldn't be interested in working on this particular project but might know others who would be. One way and another, you know, we've really tried a number of possibilities and we haven't been able to identify someone who, I s'pose, wants to come in and work within that particular kind of studio setting. It's not a criticism of the Tom Bass thing; it's just that there's an unfamiliarity, I think, with that kind of way of working. And so the studio has spent time with Shirley's family, with members of Shirley's family and with other Indigenous people; they've tried to do as much as they can to feel that there's a serious level of Indigenous input in terms of ideas.

MB: That brings me around then to what the kind of physical form that the sculpture might ultimately take, assuming it is sculpture.

CD: Yes, yes.

MB: Well, it will be sculpture if it's a sculpture school that makes it. Because there are all sorts of issues there, I think, probably not necessarily completely accurate but about what Indigenous people might want, what non Indigenous people might want, arguments about whether a literal or figurative representation of either of those two people is appropriate or desirable in some way. And also, I think, you know, yes, quite a bit of consultation from people about what they think is right and so on. Some people, for instance, I understand some Indigenous people have actually said they would actually like a literal, physical representation of Shirley at least. So, could you talk about that a bit, what those sort of issues might be?

30.08 CD: Yes. Well, this is where I become schizophrenic in a project like this because I think when I look around at public art that is exciting for me, it's usually not literal. So, the idea of literal representations has almost no appeal to me. But that's just me and I'm really – you know, I recognise that there are many valid and different points of view but I think - - -

MB: You would, of course, have a highly educated palate - - -

CD: Yes.

MB: - - - as far as public art is concerned, I guess?

CD: Yes.

MB: Yes.

CD: Well, I accept the notion that art is to do with ideas. It's to do with ideas and I actually think that quite a lot of Tom Bass' work is like that, even those aspects of his art that are to do with quite – you know, with figures and representations of things. I mean, at this university, at the University of New South Wales, we have a number of Tom Bass' works. We have a major piece of his on the very first building that was ever built here – it remains here, it looks very good – and it's to do with ideas. There might be components in it, sure, that you can recognise, you know, the elements. Fundamentally, what holds it together is the conceptual framework and I think that interesting art, especially in the public domain has to do more than have a literal representation; I think it's too boring nowadays - you know, it's all right in the nineteenth century – I think it's too boring. And so, you know, who knows how that demand from some of Shirley's family, for example, that it be a literal representation – I don't know how that's going to pan out. Personally, I'd find it awkward and, you know, a physical representation of Ted awkward and unnecessary; I'd much rather see the development of ideas.

32.20 **MB: There is also, just to throw this into the mix, concerns about whether Indigenous people, which is a huge, broad category - - -**

CD: Yes.

MB: - - - anyway, with thousands of different ideas in it but concerns about whether actually literal representations are O.K. or not.

CD: That's right.

MB: That many Indigenous communities would prefer not to have a literal representation.

CD: That's true.

MB: But that's a whole other argument. I'm just sort of throwing it into the mix.

CD: I think that argument can be resolved within the family. Like, it would be a terrible mistake if non Indigenous people just went ahead and did a representation without approval. I mean, that's an absolutely unforgivable kind of mistake. Different communities will respond to that issue differently and so at a very primary level can you represent or not is entirely – we, the non-Indigenous people, have to listen to the Indigenous people on that, and most specifically the relatives. But on the other hand, if there's an argument, saying - coming from the relatives - you know, "Couldn't we have a literal representation?" and the answer might be it might be possible to think of other ways of doing that, of saying, "Well, yes, let's work towards that and find just the right location for it. Is right outside the church the best place to go and put

a representation of Mum Shirl?" Probably not. I mean, she did a lot of work in prisons, she was out and about on the countryside. Why would you limit that woman's persona to the church?

MB: Just to the church.

34.02 It's not big enough a kind of context. It needs, I would argue, a different context. So, my own kind of response would be to brainstorm that and locate some support that could be given to help develop an appropriate response to properly celebrating Shirley Smith. This is not this project though because this project as it has evolved to this day is to do with two people who were working together in terms of their connections with the church as a kind of – Ted used to say, "It's not a sanctuary, it's a sign". So, the walls – it's not something where you're trapped inside the confines of – or the theoretical or theological confines of the church. It should be, if it's working at all in any healthy kind of way a beacon of light and that shines out and that can be seen from all sorts of other places. And they were both – so that's why I think that having that juxtaposition to the church area but not being inside the church, not being on the church but being out in the street works very well for this project.

MB: So, yes, it's preferable to – I think there was also some idea that there might be something put beside the church. I think there's a little garden or an open area or something.

CD: Yes, there is a little "courtyard" area and I actually – personally, I would have preferred that and that's for two reasons: one is that were that space – it's a little courtyard, let's say, a tiny - it could be a little garden almost if it were not overgrown and in a complete shambles as it is at the moment – between the church and the presbytery and part of the reason that hasn't been available is because the archbishop won't make up his mind as to what should happen to the presbytery. So, it seems like a threatened space at the moment, as to whether or not that presbytery remains and, if so, what might happen.

36.10 The other reason I think that would have been good because it would have been – and this is a counterargument to what I was just saying – it would have been highly visible from the street and addressed to the street but not be out in the public domain and for the simple reason that, you know, the public domain is not like the World Youth Day [held in Sydney in 2008] kind of stuff from, you know, George Pell. We're a society here that is a pluralist society and if you start having one kind of religion, you know, demanding to have its kind out artwork out in the public domain, where do you stop? And so I'm a bit kind of, I s'pose the secularist in me is sort of saying, "Well, if there's something that's going to have a churchy kind of edge to it, why should that be on public territory?" I think in this case I think there's a good case for it but as a general rule then do we want everybody, you know, putting their favoured parishioners, as it were, out on the street.

It doesn't seem like a really Australian way to go and it's probably not appropriate. So, I can see that there's a good argument in having it inside that little courtyard except that it's not – the permissions and things just haven't been able to come through; it's too undecided, it's too threatened, I think, as a space. So, the public domain becomes probably the easier space.

MB: Which brings me to probably a pretty large question but you're probably fairly used to putting it down to a few straightforward ideas. That is, what is the function of public art then, what's it for, why do we do it?

38.05 CD: I think ideally to stimulate debate. I'll give you an example – this remains my ideal, it's a very real case but absolutely ideal and it comes from Paris, so maybe it's wishful thinking in coming to Australia. In '99, just before the millennium, on the Champs-Élysées, there were these installations, temporary installations of public art, including one by an Australian, and they were quite large, they were bold, they were in your face. And I had just arrived in Paris - it was a rainy day, it was pretty muddy where these things were - and nonetheless I thought, "Well, I'll go out and see them" because it sounded like it was a big event, it was the talk of the town and there were crowds out there. The language I kept hearing was French; these were not tourists, these were locals. And they talked and talked and talked and debated things and it said to me that something was working very well, that people would actually stop and bother to talk. Now, they were temporary so it's a bit different from permanent ones because we do become familiar but I think that public art should not be invisible.

MB: So, what were they?

CD: Oh, they were all kinds of – they were by very well known artists all around the world. Some of them were very whacky designs, some of them were very typical of those artists' works, many of them were large; you know, they're quite kind of like – you couldn't not see them.

MB: Sculptural or -?

CD: Sculptural and – well, yes, I guess that was – well, some of them were more linear, like a more sculptural version of a painterly idea, you know, embedded in a freestanding wall or something like that but most of them were things, installations of things.

40.14 **MB: Primarily three dimensional?**

CD: Three dimensional, yes. Yes, I don't think that there were – I can't recall at any rate – works that were soundworks or, you know, that were primarily to do with lighting or movement and things. Yes, so they were conventional, really, but what I noticed was the capacity of the passerby, as it were, to talk about the works, to engage in

conversation. So, that's a kind of ideal that we probably won't quickly and often see here. But I do think that they need to both inform and delight and provoke. And I think, you know, when art does not provoke in some way, provoke debate about why it's there and what it looks like and what it's trying to say, then it's reneging on – I don't know it's a duty - but anyway an opportunity that is there for public art. But I think it's good to kind of engage with the polis the sense of the public space as a space, a democratic space for debate.

MB: Have you got any examples in Sydney that you like; pieces of public art that you feel favour about?

CD: Oh, absolutely I do, yes absolutely.

MB: So, which would those be?

CD: Oh, well, I have to say that I'm a very strong fan of Jennifer Turpin and Michaelie Crawford's piece down at Pyrmont Point called 'Tied to Tide'. The scale of that is fabulous. Because often the scale is not terrific of these things – the scale is fabulous.

42.14 It has a very strong phenomenological presence, I think. It's responsive to the tides, the water, the backwash from ferries, it's responsive to breezes and the visual language links up with maritime industrial cranes and colours, the orangey-vermillion colour of those cranes and a just sheer kind of poetry in place. It's wonderful. I actually think that a lot of the works that the City of Sydney Council did for the sculpture walk were very good – not all of them but many of them, I think, were very good. I was very sorry when that was cancelled after only ten of the twenty were completed. There was a lot of freshness in those ideas and, you know, interesting places where they were put and, instead of being, like, in your face kind of in the middle of a square or something like that, you had to go a little bit off the beaten track to find them and then to engage with them and a lot of the artists had really thought about place. They were required to and they did think about the meaning of the work in that particular place and how a public might start to engage with it. So, they worked – not all of them but many of them worked at an intellectual level, at an effective level, the level of materiality and scale and all of that, which is always important in artwork. It can't just be to do with the politics and the ideas. I think they're really important in public art; there has to be that kind of engagement with the materiality and, you know, a degree of surprise that comes in, like, why this - - -

44.07 **MB: And I guess what you're saying more generally with the overall aesthetics of the whole production?**

CD: That's right.

MB: It has to make you want to look at it and experience - - -

CD: That's right.

MB: - - - makes you want to be there and engage with it?

CD: Yes, yes. Yes.

MB: I'm mindful of the time because I know you have to get away but just one last question, if you would like to answer it. I'm just wondering what thoughts you have about how this work of art representing Ted and Shirley might actually manifest itself. Do you have any ideas about what kind of thing you would prefer to see?

CD: Well, I think I'm going to respond by picking up on the ideas that I last heard because I think that's the better way to go. There are a number of ideas that the Tom Bass Studio have come up with. They included sort of "portraity" kinds of ideas or two figures that were, you know, doing things together. It included an idea of hands for some reasons that require a bit more unpacking than we've got time for here but to do with hands and so on. The idea, however, that I most preferred was one that had – whatever it is going to be and I still, you know, don't know and the ideas that were presented I understood as being entirely notional – but whatever it is, whatever the ideas are, that it would take a physical form right at the kerb at a point of the kerb where actually it's at the end of a bus stop so that people getting off the bus would be further down the footpath, it would not obstruct people. There's no one who can park there, so it seemed like a very good place, actually, to have something on the footpath that was not going to be a nuisance.

46.04 But nonetheless that this work would in some way reach across the footpath, maybe through just something like a different paving stone, and then engage in some way with – that's right – that there would be trees, making use of existing trees on the edge of the footpath, maybe others as well, I'm not sure, and some possible trees in this little, like, I call it a pocket park, this little opening between the church and the presbytery, assuming that that was possible to do something there, so that there is a minimalist but nonetheless real link across the footpath. And I like that idea because at a literal level it kind of connects it in with the church. It's not so much that, though, that's not really the main thing for me: it was that it embraced the idea of the footpath, it provided a space through which people just walking down the footpath without having to go off the beaten track at all would be made aware that something is slightly different and maybe just turn to the side to have a look at this sculpture that seems to be associated with this change of pavement or whatever. So, I quite liked that idea of using – of not just being a footprint in the footpath but embracing a space, quite subtly embracing a space, and I thought that that had the makings of being a good idea in terms of engaging the passerby.

MB: And I guess in some sort of broadly symbolic way, if it's on the footpath it means we all become physically engaged with the work at whatever level we might want to - - -

CD: We do. That's right.

MB: - - - but we're actually physically touching it.

CD: That's right.

MB: So, you're embraced by the work in some way?

CD: That's right, that's right, that's right. And it is also very close to a seat which is on the same footpath but it backs on – it's just a regular kind of - - -

48.08 **MB: It's a bench?**

CD: - - - a bench with a back to it and it's against the wall of the church and it's a seat that is dedicated to Mum Shirl. And, really, the only people that I ever see sitting on that are Aboriginal people and they love that space and so it's another kind of connection to something that's already there, without mimicking, you know, that seat in any way. So, I think that that reach of whatever the artwork might be across the footpath has the makings of energising the space a little bit in a way that a straight sculpture stuck in the footpath is less likely to do.

MB: Now, are there any other ideas you'd like to mention today. We're getting very close to windup time.

CD: O.K. I can't think of any. You know, I hope for everybody's sake that what emerges from all of this is something that we're all proud of, that the Tom Bass Studio is really proud of and that it can be carried through to completion in a very appropriate and elegant kind of way. It's going to take quite a bit of money because this is a project that has never sought any Council money other perhaps – no, well, we haven't sought any Council money but I don't know what happens with installation issues and repairing the footpath and all that sort of thing. But in terms of actually physically making this artwork it's got to come through donations, so that's going to be quite a big task that's going to face 'The Friends of Ted Kennedy' and others.

50.04 So, we're right at the beginning. The beginning has been a very long, drawn out beginning - it's gone on now for several years - but it is picking up pace now and hopefully that long gestation time will add to the quality of the work that we see and enable its realisation.

MB: And given the idea that really public art, generally speaking, is meant to be permanent – generally speaking – I guess a long gestation is a very good idea.

CD: Yes.

MB: It's going to hang around for a long time.

CD: Better get it right.

MB: You'd want to think about it for a long time.

CD: Yep, yep.

MB: O.K, Catherine, thank you very much for that. That was terrific.

50.48 CD: It's a pleasure, Margo.

Interview ends