



Martin Sharp, Heritage Activist.

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Luna Park, an iconic feature of Sydney Harbour's foreshore is one of the world's most intact 1930s art-deco fantasy amusement parks. Since 1935, the Park's illuminated entrance face and unique amusements have provided Sydneysiders and visitors a place for social gathering and fun. Protected under all governmental tiers of heritage legislation, Luna Park is recognised for its historical, aesthetic, social and cultural significance.¹ From the 1970s onwards, a series of crises saw the Luna Park site come under threat of redevelopment. It was Martin Sharp, world-renowned pop-artist, who, in appreciating the Park's artistic, architectural and cultural importance, established a community action group who advocated for Luna Park's conservation. This article will argue that Sharp, and other artists who worked on the Park in the 1970s, recognised the cultural significance of Luna Park through connecting its aesthetic to their own pop-art. Sharp's participation in the 1960s and 1970s counterculture movements in Sydney and London provided him with the skills and tactics to advocate for Luna Park. Several crises, including the 1979 ghost train fire and a redevelopment proposal for the site in 1989, led Sharp to establish a formalised action group who successfully advocated for Luna Park to be recognised as a historically and culturally significant site on Sydney's foreshore- a position which it continues to hold.

To date, the significance of Martin Sharp's contribution as an activist to the heritage listing of the Luna Park precinct has not received a full examination. Studies on successful heritage activism during this period, such as Verity and Meredith Burgmann's *Green Bans, Red Union*, have typically focused on the heritage activism of urban green spaces and residential areas.² Caroline Ford's study "The Heritage of Public Space" explores the contested sites of amusement parks along Sydney's beachside suburbs and Milson's Point throughout the twentieth-century. Ford discusses the history of the 'amusement park' through the lens of disputed land use, and while Luna Park is a central focus of the study, it only briefly discusses

¹ *Luna Park Site Act 1990* (NSW); *North Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2013* (NSW); Australian Heritage Database, *Luna Park Precinct, Milsons Point, NSW, Australia*, Register of the National Estate (Department of the Environment and Energy, registered June, 24, 1997), http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;search=place_name%3Dluna%2520park%3Bstate%3DNSW%3Bkeyword_PD%3Don%3Bkeyword_SS%3Don%3Bkeyword_PH%3Don%3Blatitude_1dir%3DS%3Blongitude_1dir%3DE%3Blongitude_2dir%3DE%3Blatitude_2dir%3DS%3Bin_region%3Dpart;place_id=17944; NSW Heritage Register Database, *Luna Park Precinct*, (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, updated 2009), <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=50558278>.

² Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Union: The Saving of a City*, 2nd edn (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2017), 194-227.

the extent of Sharp's role amongst the triumvirate of Luna Park's successful advocates.⁴ Luna Park itself has been the focus of several studies including Sam Marshall's *Luna Park: Just for Fun* and the 2008 documentary *The Art of Fun*.⁵ Both of these studies not only provide a history of the Park but also highlight its cultural, architectural and artistic significance – including Sharp's artistic and vociferous support. Sharp has been the focus of many art historians: Anthea Gunn's "A-changin' Times" and Diana Warnes article in *Portrait*, examined the philosophical and political approaches to, and the production of, Sharp's artistic output.⁶ Whereas these studies have celebrated both Sharp the individual and the artist, they do not fully examine Sharp's ability to implement successful forms of tactics. This study, through an examination and analysis of university student newspapers, newsletters, reports, newspapers, and interviews, will reveal the ways in which Martin Sharp was able to harness support and implement successful tactics which led to the heritage listing of Luna Park.

The 1960s and 1970s in Australia saw the rise of social movements calling for political, legal and social change. Community groups formed agitating for women's rights, Indigenous citizenship and equality, and an end to Australia's involvement in Vietnam.⁷ Social movements, argues Verity Burgmann, are an 'assertion of a community' which, through public expressions of dissatisfaction, increase and broaden public awareness which often can lead to change.⁸ Initially viewed by the wider public with disdain, the social movements formed in this period changed political thought and transformed society.⁹ Their aims, tactics, longevity and adaptability were diverse. The 1965 small-scale anti-Vietnam protests grew over time with constantly evolving tactics and by 1970, had gathered broad support as was evinced in the 25,000 member Sydney Moratorium march.¹⁰ Community groups also formed to demand a voice in urban planning.¹¹ Resident Action Groups protested against the redevelopment of traditional working-class inner-city suburbs in Sydney and Melbourne and a Hunters Hill middle-class resident action group formed a relationship with a left-wing union that led to the Green Bans of the early 1970s.¹² The arts community were also contributing their voices in calling for change. From cartoonist Michael Leunig's participation in anti-conscription protests to writer Patrick White's support of Green Bans action to preserve Sydney's Centennial Parklands, artists were often highly visible participants in social movements.¹³

⁴ Caroline Ford, "The Heritage of Public Space: Bondi Beach, Luna Park and the Politics of Amusement in Sydney," in *The Amusement Park: History, Culture and the Heritage of Pleasure*, ed. Jason Wood (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 77–97.

⁵ Sam Marshall, *Luna Park: Just for Fun*, 2nd edn (Redfern: Luna Park Sydney Pty Ltd, 2005). Cris Parker and Helen McGrath, *The Art of Fun*, documentary, (North Sydney: Browns Lane Productions, 2009).

⁶ Anthea Gunn, "A-changin' Times: The Art of Martin Sharp in the 1960s," *Journal of Australian Studies* 34, no. 2 (June 2010): 179-193. Diana Warnes, "Oz and Beyond: Martin Sharp Fulfils the Pop Art Idiom of Merging Art and Life," *Portrait*, no. 23, (March 1, 2007), <https://www.portrait.gov.au/magazines/23/oz-and-beyond>.

⁷ Verity Burgmann, *Power, Profit and Protest: Australian Social Movements and Globalisation* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 56-58, 101-104, 169-171. Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia* (South Yarra: Hyland House, 1991), 11-35.

⁸ Burgmann, *Power, Profit, 5*.

⁹ Clive Hamilton, *What Do We Want? The Story of Protest in Australia* (Canberra: National Library of Australia Publishing, 2016), vii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4, 28. Donald Horne, *Time of Hope* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980), 52-65.

¹¹ Horne, *Time of Hope*, 60.

¹² Graeme Davison, "A Brief History of the Australian Heritage Movement," in *A Heritage Handbook*, ed. Graeme Davison and Chris McConville (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 20-21.

¹³ Peter Ferguson, "Patrick White, Green Bans and the Rise of the Australian New Left," *Melbourne Historical Journal*, no. 37 (January 2009): 73-88. Hamilton, *What Do We Want?*, 4.

Emerging artists in Sydney were also raising awareness of government censorship of political expression through art and literature. One such artist was Martin Sharp (1942-2013). A world-renowned pop-artist, cartoonist, film-maker, songwriter and enthusiastic promoter of Tiny Tim, Sharp's iconic artworks are imbued with and are part of Sydney's popular visual culture. In the early 1960s, Sharp entered the National Art School before briefly studying architecture at the University of New South Wales.¹⁴ Sharp and fellow students responded to the emerging counterculture movement, not just through art, but also expressing their advocacy for change through university student magazines.¹⁵ In 1962 Sharp and Garry Shead founded the National Art School student newspaper, the *Arty Wild Oat* before co-founding *OZ* magazine the following year with Richard Neville and Richard Walsh.¹⁶ *OZ* magazine was controversial; its content addressed 'taboo' topics ignored in mainstream media from sexuality through to politics.¹⁷ Sharp's cartoons printed in student magazines challenged conservative Sydney to the point of prosecution. The only cartoonist to be officially censored by the government, Sharp was charged and sentenced in 1964 under the *Obscene and Indecent Publications Act* for several contributions in *OZ* and *Tharunka*.¹⁸ Following successful appeals, Sharp joined the 'exodus' of Australian artists to London and established a studio in The Pheasantry in Chelsea.¹⁹ During this period, Sharp's artworks embodied 1960s counterculture and ranged from commercial psychedelic pop-art album cover's for Eric Clapton's band Cream to anti-Vietnam cartoons for Richard Neville's *London Oz*.²⁰ Sharps artworks were produced in mediums that were affordable and accessible to a mass audience, and so too were the political messages within them. Returning to Sydney in 1969, Sharp continued to use art as a means of political protest and created a poster, *We are them... they are us... Moratorium*, for the 1970 Sydney Moratorium march.²¹ The communities Sharp returned to were continuing to call for political and social change through organised movements, including demanding a voice in the decision making surrounding urban environments.²² Action groups were responding to the city's swiftly changing skyline driven by a pro-development State government; historically significant buildings, areas of working-class suburbs and places of popular culture were being replaced with high-rise developments.²³

After the completion of the Harbour Bridge in the 1930s, the site of its construction workshops at Milson Point became available for development. Herman Phillips and David Atkins, who had unsuccessfully attempted to establish amusement parks along Sydney's beaches, were awarded tenure and opened Luna Park on the site in 1935.²⁴ The State Government and North Sydney Council envisioned the amusement park would attract businesses and rejuvenate the area after land resumptions had denuded the Milson's Point

¹⁴ Joyce Morgan, *Martin Sharp: His Life and Times* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2017), 35, 40

¹⁵ Martin Sharp, interview, Deborah Beck, *City of Sydney*, July 25, 2013, <http://www.sydneyoralthistories.com.au/martin-sharp/>. Gunn, "A-changin' times," 181.

¹⁶ National Art Student's Club, *Arty Wild Oat*, East Sydney, 1962. Wayne Tunnicliffe, "'The Easel Did Not Go Pop: It Went Bang!'. Australian Pop Art," in *Pop To Popism*, ed. Wayne Tunnicliffe and Anneke Jaspers (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2014), 140-141.

¹⁷ Gunn, "A-changin' Times," 182-183. Warnes, "Oz and Beyond".

¹⁸ Peter Coleman, "Censorship: Publish and Be Damned," *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy*, no. 150 (February 2014): 39.

¹⁹ Warnes, "Oz and Beyond".

²⁰ Gunn, "A-changin' Times," 186-187. Warnes, "Oz and Beyond".

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Davison, "A Brief History," 20-21.

²³ Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 128.

²⁴ Ford, "The Heritage of Public Space," 77-83, 85. Sue Rosen, "Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy and Public Fiction," *Public History Review* 1, (1992): 53-54.

community of much of its identity.²⁵ Opponents to its establishment, including the Town Planning Association, had advocated for the site to be a green space and asserted that Luna Park would ‘disfigure’ Sydney’s foreshore.²⁶ The Park, originally located in Glenelg, South Australia, and modelled on New York’s art-deco Coney Island amusement park, was constructed over a three-month period. It was later given a distinctive Australian identity through murals and colour schemes painted by artist-in-residence, Arthur Barton.²⁷ Opened on a seasonal basis that allowed for regular maintenance, Luna Park’s welcoming face, fantasy architecture, amusement rides, entertainments and art-deco lights, were major attractions from its opening until the late 1960s.²⁸ The appeal of the Park was not just the big dipper nor Coney Island, argues Ian Hoskins - it also provided an environment for ‘people to engage in non-respectable behaviour’; its rides and amusements created opportunities for physical contact that deviated from the social norms of the period.²⁹ While patronage was in decline by the late 1960s Sydneysiders had become attached to Luna Park’s existence in the Harbour.³⁰

As visitor numbers declined in the late 1960s, Luna Park’s leasehold was sold to Leon Finks’ World Trade Centre Pty Ltd who intended to redevelop the site.³¹ After the Harry Seidler-designed world trade centre redevelopment of the site was rejected by the NSW Askin Government, the Park’s majority shareholders, Fink and Nathan Spratt, formed Luna Park (Holdings) Pty Ltd and continued to operate the site as an amusement park.³² The change in ownership of the Park from experienced amusement park owners and managers to developers and entrepreneurs led to the facilities at Luna Park to fall into decline. Maintenance crews under Ted Hopkins were retired or replaced, and the introduction of year-round opening resulted in the once effective winter maintenance program ceasing.³³ The new managements upgrade program for the Park, argue scholars, resulted in Luna Park ‘looking like a mobile ride parking lot’; through removing traditional rides and the fantasy architecture and art at the entrance, Luna Park lost much of its traditional amusement park aesthetic.³⁴ Nevertheless, the entrance towers and face were to receive rejuvenation as part of the improvement program. Making the connection between pop-art and fairground art, Fink’s partner Margaret Elliott suggested that Sharp would be the most qualified artist to undertake the commission.³⁵

Restoration began in early 1973 with an aim to complete by the opening of the Sydney Opera House.³⁶ Sharp, alongside Tim Lewis and Richard Liney were commissioned to rejuvenate the entrance face and towers and to repaint the facades of the art-deco buildings.³⁷ During their six-year tenure, they were joined by pop-artists Garry Shead, Peter Kingston and Leigh Hobbs, who worked on restoring the older rides and refreshing the murals and architectural features within the Park.³⁸ The artists themselves recognised the relationship

²⁵ Ford, “The Heritage of Public Space,” 75, 92. Ian Hoskins, *Sydney Harbour: A History* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 224.

²⁶ “Luna Park: North Shore Protest”, *Sun* (Sydney), April 30, 1935, 6.

²⁷ NSW Heritage Register Database, *Luna Park*.

²⁸ NSW Heritage Register Database, *Luna Park*.

²⁹ Parker and McGrath, *The Art of Fun*, documentary.

³⁰ Ford, “The Heritage of Public Space,” 92.

³¹ Ibid. NSW Heritage Register Database, *Luna Park*. Rosen, “Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy,” 55.

³² Ford, “The Heritage of Public Space,” 92. Rosen, “Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy,” 55.

³³ Rosen, “Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy,” 55.

³⁴ Ibid. Marshall, *Luna Park*, 105-106;

³⁵ Lowell Tarling, *Sharp: Road to Abraxas. Part One: 1942-1979. A Biography of Martin Sharp as told by Lowell Tarling* (Exile Bay: ETT Imprint, 2016), 182.

³⁶ Marshall, *Luna Park*, 106.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 106-107.

between pop-art and the fairground art of Luna Park; both shared the commonality of ‘high’ art which was accessible to a mass audience.³⁹ Sharp further argued that Luna Park’s physical aesthetic was the ‘ultimate manifestation of pop art as an architectural expression’.⁴⁰ Yet it wasn’t just the fantasy art and architecture that drew Sharp to work in the Park; it was the opportunity to work beside Barton’s artworks. Barton, Sharp later reflected, had been an influence on his artistic aesthetic; ‘I learned about lettering from watching’ Barton paint at the Easter Show in the 1950s.⁴¹

The Sharp-led restoration work at Luna Park during the mid-1970s coincided with social, legal and political changes and increasing awareness of heritage. The election of the Gough Whitlam-led Labor federal government in 1972 saw changes implemented in response to social movements including the withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam and an increase in the funding of the arts.⁴² The Whitlam Government were also responsive to the growing awareness of heritage. This growth, Paul Ashton and Jennifer Cornwall argue, can be attributed to three factors: a rise in nationalism; growing interest in Australian history; and the re-emergence of the environmental movement.⁴³ At the federal level, the 1973 Inquiry into the National Estate led to the passing of the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975* and the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission, who, through the *Environmental Protection Act 1974*, were to manage and recommend the preservation of sites of national significance.⁴⁴ In NSW, the election of the Wran Labor government in 1976 led to an immediate implementation of measures to protect the State’s heritage and the *NSW Heritage Act* was passed the following year.⁴⁵ With aims to conserve the built and natural heritage, the Act led to the creation of the NSW Heritage Register, the establishment of the Heritage Council and the ability for the Minister to impose preservation orders on sites of significance.⁴⁶ The introduction of heritage legislation at federal and state levels increased the ‘awareness of concepts and language of heritage’ and broadened what was considered important to keep beyond grand homes and institutions.⁴⁷

The election of the Wran government led to heritage legislation, yet sites of popular culture, particularly those built in the inter-war period, like Luna Park, continued to be threatened by redevelopment.⁴⁸ For the owners of Luna Park, the election of the Wran government led to a collapse of lease negotiations. Later Fink would attribute the degradation of the Park’s facilities to Wran’s personal interference in the negotiation process.⁴⁹ However, Sharp’s approaches to the Park’s management requesting urgent repairs were often dismissed

³⁹ Martin Sharp and Peter Kingston, “An Informal Discourse on Luna Park,” November 14, 1980 in *Report on Luna Park Sydney, Australia*, Friends of Luna Park, (Sydney, 1980), Mitchell Library MLMSS 3955X.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Tarling, *Sharp*, 24.

⁴² Mike Rann, “Gough Whitlam: A Man Who Changed Australia,” *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 103, no. 6, (2014): 600.

⁴³ Paul Ashton and Jennifer Cornwall, “Corralling Conflict: The Politics of Australian Federal Heritage Legislation Since the 1970s,” *Public History Review*, 13 (May 2006): 55.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 55-56. Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 (Cth); Environmental Protection Act 1974 (Cth); Burgmann and Burgmann, *Green Bans*, 282-283.

⁴⁵ Ibid. James Colman, *The House that Jack Built: Jack Munday, Green Bans Hero* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2016), 150.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Sheryl Yelland, “Heritage Legislation in Perspective,” in *A Heritage Handbook*, ed. Davison and McConville, 55.

⁴⁷ Yelland, “Heritage Legislation,” 54-55.

⁴⁸ Peter Spearritt, “Demolishing Sydney: Property Owners vs Public Rights,” *Heritage Australia* 4, no. 2 (1984): 5.

⁴⁹ Parker and McGrath, *The Art of Fun*, documentary. Marshall, *Luna Park*, 109.

with indifference.⁵⁰ Sharp and the Luna Park artists recognised their aims and management aims were opposed. Management wanted minimal maintenance, installation of modern attractions and profit, while the artists viewed that a successful restoration of the last intact art-deco funfair would guarantee financial success.⁵¹ Personally, Sharp envisioned that the Park could ‘be more amazing than ever’, that through his art, he could ‘make something unique’.⁵² Hampered by knowing that restoration work was often superficial, ‘that they were decorating a rotting cake’, Sharp, Liney, Shead and Kingston began using advocacy tactics that had been successful in the past.⁵³

Engaging their social networks, Sharp and fellow artists utilised their contacts within newspapers, magazines and the arts industry to spread awareness of the importance of Luna Park, and highlight its state of disrepair. Through 1977 and 1978, Sharp and the Park’s artists working on the restoration formed Friends of Luna Park (FOLP) and began to actively create broader awareness of the heritage significance the Park to the city.⁵⁴ Approached by its editor Peter Coleman, Sharp and Liney published two opinion pieces in *Quadrant* magazine.⁵⁵ Elevating it as ‘a work of art itself’, Sharp wrote of the historical importance of Luna Park while criticising the National Trust for allowing ‘our popular heritage’ to vanish.⁵⁶ Liney also highlighted the Park’s unique art-deco and popular culture features but also appealed to the *Quadrant* readership to be part of the ‘dream museum’ through philanthropic support.⁵⁷ The artists also utilised their industry to promote the Park’s artistic and historic importance. Held at the Art Gallery of NSW as part of the 1978 Sydney Festival, members of FOLP curated ‘Fairground Arts and Novelties’, a month-long exhibition displaying Luna Park’s art and moveable objects.⁵⁸ While seemingly a passive form of protest, Sharp’s utilisation of social and industry contacts resulted in a broadened awareness of Luna Park’s significance, and an awareness of its state of disrepair.

Luna Park Holdings continued to operate the Park with minimal investment in maintenance, resulting in two significant accidents in 1979. In April, thirteen people were injured on the big dipper.⁵⁹ Two months later, six children and an adult were killed in a fire on the ghost train ride.⁶⁰ Governmental response to the fire and deaths was an immediate closure of the Park.⁶¹ The cause of the fire was disputed. The Police and the Park’s operators suggested an electrical fault.⁶² However, the NSW Coroner’s findings indicated that the operators failed to meet fire safety recommendations.⁶³ A National Crime Authority investigation later dismissed allegations of underworld figures lighting the fire to gain control of the site.⁶⁴ Sharp and the Park’s artists themselves felt responsible for the fire. In restoring the facades and rides,

⁵⁰ Tarling, *Sharp*, 227-228.

⁵¹ Parker and McGrath, *The Art of Fun*, documentary.

⁵² Martin Sharp, interview, James Gleeson, National Gallery of Australia: The James Gleeson oral history collection, November 7, 1979, <https://nga.gov.yelau/Research/Gleeson/artists/Sharp.cfm>.

⁵³ Sue Rosen Pty Ltd, *Historical outline: Luna Park/Lavender Bay*, Heritage study prepared for Godden Mackay Pty Ltd for NSW Department of Planning, (Sydney, 1991), 47.

⁵⁴ Marshall, *Luna Park*, 107.

⁵⁵ Sharp, interview, 1979.

⁵⁶ Martin Sharp, “Notes from the River Caves: For Tom,” *Quadrant* 21, no. 2 (February 1977): 34-36.

⁵⁷ Richard Liney, “Towards a Dream Museum,” *Quadrant* 21, no. 2 (February 1977): 36.

⁵⁸ Marshall, *Luna Park*, 109.

⁵⁹ Rosen, “Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy,” 56.

⁶⁰ “Seven Die in Luna Park Fire”, *Canberra Times*, June 11, 1979, 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Rosen, “Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy,” 57.

⁶³ “Court Reports: Deaths Accidental, ‘Care failure’ at Luna Park,” *Canberra Times*, September 4, 1979, 10.

⁶⁴ Rosen, “Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy,” 57.

through making ‘it look safe’, Sharp and Kingston considered they were ‘unconsciously responsible’.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the artists continued to assert that poor safety maintenance was a consequence of the failed lease negotiations between Luna Park’s management and the State and as a result, Sharp would later remark that ‘Luna Park died that night’.⁶⁶ While the artists felt that their restoration work gave visitors a false sense of safety, the ghost train fire was catalyst for more vigorous activism by Sharp and the Luna Park community.

After the fire, the NSW Government’s call for tenders for use of the site in July 1979 saw an increase of tactics to create awareness and support were implemented by Sharp and the Park’s artists.⁶⁷ Utilising existing relationships with universities, Sharp and the Luna Park artists together with Sydney University’s Architecture Faculty held their first exhibition, ‘Luna Park’, at the National Trust.⁶⁸ Promoted with a Sharp-designed poster, the exhibition displayed original Luna Park objects and archival material beside current works of the Park’s artists and improvement designs of the Lavender Bay site by students.⁶⁹ The exhibition, stated Jennifer Taylor, ‘underlined’ the importance of Luna Park’s architecture and art, and emphasised that ‘safety and conservation’ should take priority in determining the site’s future.⁷⁰ Through engagement with university faculties and students, Sharp and FOLP were able to expand awareness of the importance of the Park in Sydney’s past and present, increase membership, and encourage participation in calling for its conservation through organised forms of protest.

In early 1980, FOLP organised two public forms of protest in response to the NSW Government’s third round call for tenders which they viewed as favourable to developers. The first, ‘Save Luna Park Day’, was held in June 1980. Organised with support from the University of NSW’s architecture faculty and student magazine *Tharunka*, the protest was promoted with a Sharp-designed poster.⁷¹ Peacefully marching from the Opera House to Luna Park, the diverse range of demonstrators were entertained by *Mental As Anything* and performances by students.⁷² As a result of successful lobbying by Sharp and members of FOLP, the National Trust announced during the protest its classification of the Park’s entrance face and towers.⁷³ The second organised protest was a public FOLP meeting at Sydney Town Hall in July 1980. Its primary agenda was to discuss clauses added to the Government’s tender guidelines which favoured development.⁷⁴ The Sharp-emceed meeting reflected how FOLP were able to harness the support of prominent individuals in the fields of urban design, heritage and conservation. Professor Peter Johnson, Dean of the Architecture at the University of Sydney and Harry Seidler outlined the Park’s unique architectural features while labelling the tender process as ‘questionable’.⁷⁵ Howard Tanner and Leo Schofield extended the National Trust’s support

⁶⁵ Morgan, Martin Sharp, 219; Lowell Tarling, *Sharper: Bringing It All Back Home. Part Two: 1980-2013. The Biography of Martin Sharp as told by Lowell Tarling* (Exile Bay: ETT Imprint, 2017), 5-6.

⁶⁶ Martin Sharp, “Luna Park,” 1979, in *Report on Luna Park*. Parker and McGrath, *The Art of Fun*, documentary. Tarling, *Sharper*, 5-6.

⁶⁷ Tarling, *Sharper*, 9.

⁶⁸ ‘Student Designs for Luna Park’, *University of Sydney News* 11, no. 24, October 29, 1979, Architecture Supplement, vi.

⁶⁹ Jennifer Taylor, “A Very Special Funfair: What Now?” *Architecture Australia* (1980): 64.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ “Walk to Save Luna Park,” *Tharunka*, June 10, 1980, 2. R. Liney, “Why Move Luna Park?” *Tharunka*, May 26, 1980, 10-11.

⁷² Friends of Luna Park, *Report on Luna Park*. Tarling, *Sharper*, 9.

⁷³ “National Trust Classification 1: Luna Park, Face Over Entry and Flanking Towers,” June 23, 1980, in *Report on Luna Park*, Friends of Luna Park.

⁷⁴ Charlton, “Just for Fun,” 5.

⁷⁵ “Transcript from the Meeting of the ‘Friends of Luna Park,’” Lower Sydney Town Hall, July 13, 1980, in *Report on Luna Park*, Friends of Luna Park.

stating the Park was an architecturally and culturally significant site.⁷⁶ And lastly, Jack Munday, from the Australian Conservation Movement and former Green Bans leader, reminded the audience of the importance of community participation in the decision making of their environment.⁷⁷ Motions carried by the meeting clearly defined the groups broadening aims: the retention, conservation and continuing amusement park usage of at the present site; the conservation and protection of trees surrounding the Park; and for the park to be child-friendly, low-cost and alcohol-free.⁷⁸ An immediate outcome of the meeting was the National Trust classification of the entire Luna Park site.⁷⁹ An additional outcome of the meeting was the NSW Department of Public Works request to FOLP to prepare a report of recommendations for conservation and future use of the Park.⁸⁰

Rather than turning the site over to developers, the NSW Government granted the Luna Park lease to Harbourside Amusements Pty Ltd and the following year passed the *Luna Park Site Act 1981*.⁸¹ Under the Act, Luna Park Holdings were ordered to vacate the site; its major shareholders Fink and Spatt reacted by holding a two-day auction to sell the Park's moveable objects, rides and artworks.⁸² Members of FOLP again implemented organised tactics as a means to not only highlight the Park's historical significance but save its moveable objects. Kingston later reflected that while Sharp had 'physically lost interest', the artists actively purchased many of the artworks, rides and amusements.⁸³ Sharp stored the majority of the pieces at the family home, in the 'Dream Museum', before later returning them to the Luna Park Trust in the 1990s.⁸⁴ Harbourside Amusements took over the lease the following day and demolished many of the rides within the amusement park leaving only Coney Island and the Dodgem buildings standing.⁸⁵ With new rides installed, Ford states, a 'diminished' amusement park reopened for weekends and school holidays in 1982.⁸⁶ Public forms of advocacy by Sharp and the members of FOLP lessened until the Parks new lessee, Prome Investments, closed Luna Park in 1988 for 'renovations'.⁸⁷

The re-emergence of FOLP in 1989 was instigated by multiple factors: closure of the Park contra to the lease agreement; removal of North Sydney Council's planning powers; possible sale of the public site to private developers; and the Heritage Council approval for the proposed demolition of the entrance face and towers.⁸⁸ The action group implemented tactics that had been successful in the past. Sharp and the members of FOLP created awareness and broadened support through media and student magazines *Honi Soit* and *Tharunka*; holding a community rally and concert; and curating an exhibition, *Luna Park: Fragments of a Funfair*,

⁷⁶ "Transcript from the Meeting of the 'Friends of Luna Park'," Lower Sydney Town Hall, July 13, 1980, in *Report on Luna Park*, Friends of Luna Park.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ "Transcript from the Meeting of the 'Friends of Luna Park'," Lower Sydney Town Hall, July 13, 1980, in *Report on Luna Park*, Friends of Luna Park. Ford, "The Heritage of Public Space," 94.

⁷⁹ "National Trust Classification 2: Luna Park Conservation Area", August 18, 1980, in *Report on Luna Park*, Friends of Luna Park

⁸⁰ Friends of Luna Park, *Report on Luna Park*. Tarling, *Sharper*, 9-10.

⁸¹ *Luna Park Site Act 1981* (NSW), Rosen, "Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy," 56.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Parker and McGrath, *The Art of Fun*, documentary. Tarling, *Sharper*, 10.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Ford, "The Heritage of Public Space," 94. Rosen, "Luna Park: Fact, Fantasy," 56.

⁸⁷ "Wet Blankets of Lavender Bay," *Turkey Trot: Friends of Luna Park Newsletter* (thereafter *Turkey Trot*)1, no. 8, October 1993, 3. Sue Rosen Pty Ltd, "Historical Outline", 55.

⁸⁸ Sam Marshall and Geoff Thompson, "Luna Mission," *Honi Soit* 18, August 15, 1989, 11.

at Hyde Park Barracks.⁸⁹ Governmental response to community advocacy for the Park saw the passing of the *Luna Park Site Act* in 1990.⁹⁰ The Act's aims were twofold: to ensure the Park and its foreshores remained 'available and accessible for the enjoyment of the people' of NSW, and the establishment of the Luna Park Reserve Trust to develop and administer the Park's conservation management plan.⁹¹ Informed by heritage legislation and a growing acceptance of adaptation as a means of financial viability to ensure the conservation of significant sites by the heritage sector, new tactics of open communication, compromise and collaboration with stakeholders were employed by FOLP.⁹² Its members documented the Park's architectural, artistic, and cultural features, prepared management plans and heritage register applications, lobbied the State government for the disused railway yard behind Coney Island to be used as public park, and accepted the need to mix the 'best of the old and new' amusements to stimulate income streams.⁹³ While not in total agreement with the adaptive approach the Trust was taking, Sharp and the artists continued working on the 'fantasy elements' of the Park, restoration of Barton's artworks and reinstating the objects purchased during the 1981 auction.⁹⁴ Sharp also vociferously lobbied for a memorial to be dedicated to the victims of the 1979 ghost train fire.⁹⁵

A refurbished and restored Luna Park opened in January 1995. Its opening was short-lived; low-patronage and local resident objections to the new rides saw the Park close in early 1996.⁹⁶ During this period, submissions requesting classification were prepared by Kingston, Margaret Parks and Marshall on behalf of FOLP to the National Trust and the Australian Heritage Commission.⁹⁷ In 1997, after its closure, the site was listed on the Register of the National Estate.⁹⁸ The Luna Park Precinct, including the Entrance Face and Towers, Crystal Palace and Coney Island, were recognised for their social, cultural, architectural, artistic and historical significance.⁹⁹ Metro Edgely were granted the lease of the heritage-listed site; a \$100 million restoration and refurbishment of the amusement park to meet the conservation management plan ensued with the Park opening in 2004.¹⁰⁰ From its re-opening, Sharp and Kingston were critics; their primary objections were that the Park had 'been reincarnated as a multi-purpose entertainment complex', that the installation of the new rides broke with original fantasy architecture, and that there was 'a noticeable lack of vision'.¹⁰¹ However, other members of the action group argued that the operators of the Park should be commended for 'reinventing' Luna Park while simultaneously 'preserving ... its heritage buildings and

⁸⁹ "Save Luna Park Day," *Tharunka*, August 14, 1989, 18. Anne Flanagan, et al, *Luna Park: Fragments of a Fun Fair*, exhibition catalogue, (Sydney: The Trust, 1991). Marshall and Thompson, 'Luna Mission', 10-11.

⁹⁰ *Luna Park Site Act 1990* (NSW); North Sydney Council, *Leaflet 8: Luna Park*, accessed July 12, 2016, http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/Library_Databases/Heritage_Centre/Leaflets_Walks_Publications/Heritage_Leaflets.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* Ford, "The Heritage of Public Space," 94.

⁹² Genia McCaffery, "The Friends of Luna Park Explain!" *Turkey Trot* 1, no. 3, December 1992, 1. Davison, "Brief History," 24.

⁹³ "Wet Blankets of Lavender Bay", 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Morgan, *Martin Sharp*, 243.

⁹⁵ Tarling, *Sharper*, 99.

⁹⁶ North Sydney Council, *Luna Park*.

⁹⁷ "National Trust Reclassifying Luna Park," *Turkey Trot* 13, October 1995, 3.

⁹⁸ Australian Heritage Database, *Luna Park Precinct*.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ North Sydney Council, *Luna Park*.

¹⁰¹ Peter Kingston, "Party Time Recalls Fun of the Fair," *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney) News Features, September 12, 2010, 6. Steve, Meacham, "Old Moon Face Shining on Through Joy and Tragedy," *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 4, 2010, 3.

rides'.¹⁰² Since its reopening, Luna Park has continued to be a contested site between residents, developers and the State. Yet, without the dedication of Sharp and the artists working at the Park from the 1970s, and individuals who later joined them to form FOLP, this site of popular culture would not have the legal protections, nor recognition of its cultural value to Sydney.¹⁰³

Martin Sharp and the artists who worked on the restoration of Luna Park in the 1970s recognised how it's unique fantasy art and architecture connected with their own pop-art aesthetic. These artists' experiences of advocacy for political and social change in the counterculture movements of the 1960s and 1970s provided them with the tools and knowledge of effective tactics and protest to increase awareness and bring about change. Concurrent with their work at Luna Park, the growth of heritage awareness and implementation of legislation gave the artists the language and knowledge of processes to protect places of cultural significance. In establishing FOLP, Sharp and fellow Luna Park artists effectively used advocacy strategies that increased community awareness and support through two phases of crises for the site. The action group repeated forms of protest and tactics in both phases: education through media, broadening support base through student magazines, and the utilisation of the arts industry to promote the artistic and cultural value of the Park through the curation of exhibitions. The action group's tactics of advocacy evolved in response to an understanding that commercial success was essential in maintaining the heritage features of the Park. While the artists' initial aims of keeping the Park in its original fantasy amusement park form did not fully eventuate, it was Sharp's personal advocacy and establishment of an effective action group that ensured Luna Park and its remaining intact art-deco fantasy buildings, amusements and rides remain as an iconic symbol in Sydney Harbour's landscape.

¹⁰² Meacham, "Old Moon Face," 3.

¹⁰³ Meacham, "Old Moon Face," 3. Ford, "The Heritage of Public Space," 92-95.

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