

A HISTORY OF VISUAL ARTISTS AGAINST NUCLEAR ARMS (VAANA) by Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett November 2018

Visual Artists Against Nuclear Arms (VAANA) officially began in 1984. In that year the nuclear threat was escalating worldwide. The National Government under Prime Minister Robert Muldoon was poised to revoke the anti-nuclear efforts of Norman Kirk's Labour Government (1972-1974). Both the nuclear capable submarine "Pintado" in 1978, and the nuclear capable battleship "USS Texas", in 1983, had entered Auckland Harbour amidst much protest from the Peace Squadron flotilla. The French were refusing to stop nuclear testing in Polynesia on the atoll of Moruroa. Physicians had just organized themselves into International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).

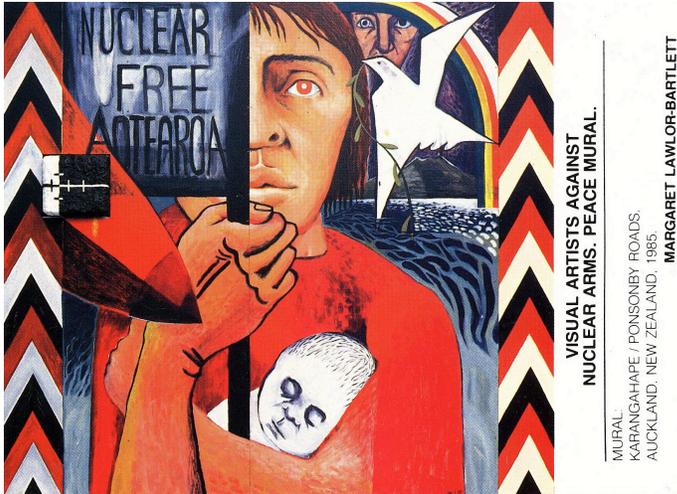
New Zealand artist Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett had been protesting against nuclear escalation since seeing the photos of Hiroshima. In 1953 she left the Elam School of Fine Arts in protest just before her final exams because she refused to change her Major Composition, which was entitled "Nuclear Holocaust with Aunt Isobel and Uncle Rupert Having a Cuppa in the Foreground" into "Adam & Eve" as demanded by the tutor.

FORMATION OF VAANA

She considered that the artists of New Zealand/Aotearoa with their particular vision, should now form a strongly organized group against nuclear arms, the goal being a nuclear arms free New Zealand, the next goal, a nuclear arms free Pacific, and finally a nuclear arms free world.

Lawlor-Bartlett put a notice in the New Zealand Society of Sculptors and Painters newsletter asking for volunteers to help organize a meeting of all artists to bring their ideas on stopping nuclear proliferation. Painter Nigel Brown and sculptor Marte Szirmay responded. The three artists had several meetings deciding on the name, 'Visual Artists Against Nuclear Arms'- VAANA, and its possible goals. Posters were put up asking all visual artists to bring their creative ideas to a meeting at Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland on 11th October 1984.

It was an incredibly successful meeting of one hundred artists including Pat and Gil Hanly, Claudia Pond-Eyley, Lawlor-Bartlett and Greer Twiss of the Peace Squadron, John Eaden and Don Soloman of Artstation, painters Annette Isbey, Nigel Brown, Vanya Lowry, Jill Carter-Hansen, Marie McMahan, John Nicol, Jacqueline Fahey, Lois McIvor, Roy Dalgarno, Ken Robinson and Juliet Batten, sculptors Marte Szirmay & Virginia King, master printer Robin Lush, master-builder Matt Stafford, ceramicist Peter Lange, poet Riemke Ensing and many other important artists.



Pat Hanly sat on a table and gave an impassioned account of the work up to now of the Peace Squadron and Auckland Artists Action groups and how we now needed VAANA as a more organized and inclusive group. Others suggested various forms of visual protest for consciousness raising: posters, calendars, sets of postcards. Lawlor Bartlett suggested a group mural on some well frequented city wall. All agreed to go ahead with this idea.

It was felt that the meeting ended in a great show of ideas, and enthusiasm for a cause and equal co-operation between both sexes unprecedented in New Zealand art history. The late seventies and early eighties had seen the first stages of the Women Artists Movement of which many of the women present were founding members. This initial VAANA meeting showed that the enthusiasm engendered could, when there was a cause of national importance, cross over and activate a strong group of female **and** male artists to co-operate with unprecedented results.

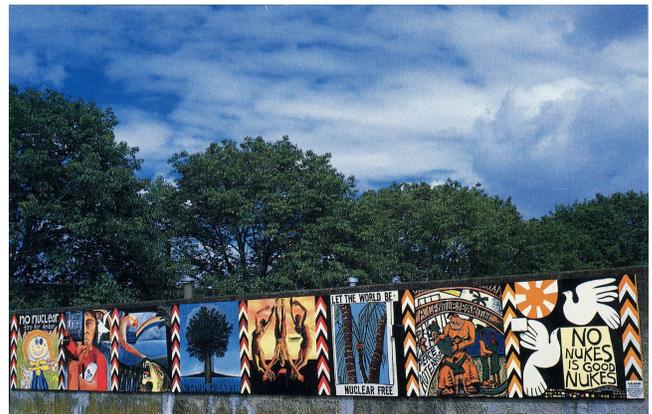
Members met on a regular basis at a community based art facility Outreach/Artstation, and were responsible for producing graphics for many peace organizations. A pool of posters, graphics and banners were held at Artstation and made available for all peace groups. A representative of the Peace Foundation attended most meetings. In March 1985, VAANA members mounted a peace exhibition at Mercury Theatre as well as preparing to create a large Peace Mural.

PEACE MURAL STAGE 1;

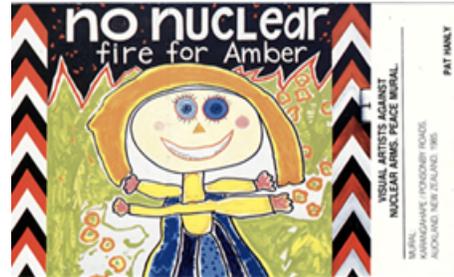
For three weeks from September 30 to October 20, 1985 Outreach /Artstation hosted in its large gallery, eight painters working on the eight large panels of the twenty one metre Peace Mural which was then fixed to the reservoir wall, corner of K Rd and Ponsonby Road.

These eight artists were: (in order of panels)

- Panel (1) Pat Hanly
- Panel (2) Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett
- Panel (3) Jill Carter-Hansen
- Panel (4) John Nicol
- Panel (5) John Eaden
- Panel (6) Claudia Pond Eyley
- Panel (7) Nigel Brown
- Panel (8) Vanya Lowry



The eight had been meeting at Outreach for several months deciding site, scale, materials and most importantly, vision. They then compared individual working drawings and discussed how to make the whole mural hold together as a strong and cohesive anti-nuclear/peace statement. After weeks of group deliberation and refining of individual concepts, they finally handed the cartoon of the proposed mural to the City Council for the go-ahead. Artist Pat Hanly's panel, based on his 'figures in light' theme was refused by a City Councilor because it portrayed nudity and some suggestion of "previous sexual encounter". Pat was determined that the project should go ahead with speed, so instead of fighting the issue, changed his panel to a work which incorporated a drawing by his six year old daughter Amber.



The "Watercare" reservoir wall was chosen as the site for the mural for several reasons:

- It is close to the center of Auckland on the corner of Ponsonby and Karangahape Road where it would have the widest opportunity of public exposure.
- The Sunday Market in the foreground made it a community focal point. In 1992 Mobil leased this land from the City Council and erected a service station, so the market ceased.
- The wall was owned by a public body, the Auckland Regional Authority (now Watercare), on land owned by the City Council. Both bodies and the Mayor Dame Catherine Tizard were supportive.
- It is located next to the Outreach Community Arts Centre, which quickly became the headquarters of VAANA thanks to the enthusiastic support of the managers Don Soloman and John Eaden, and permission of Auckland Art Gallery.

Funds for the mural were partly met by the sale of two sets of peace postcards and poster sets designed and printed by VAANA members. As it was impractical to paint directly onto the roughcast reservoir wall as first envisaged. The artists painted the works on large sheets of weather resistant Signboard using acrylic paint donated by the Resene Paint Company (who later donated graffiti-guard).

The Outreach managers engineered a three week gap in the heavily booked Gallery schedule so that the artists could work together as a team in a large studio and thus achieve a desired cohesion of ideas and form, and also to have feedback from the community while painting. The eight painters soon got used to working with and profiting from these comments. It meant that the artists stepped out of our usual studio-centred isolation and immediately shared any paint mixes, special techniques and positive criticism together.

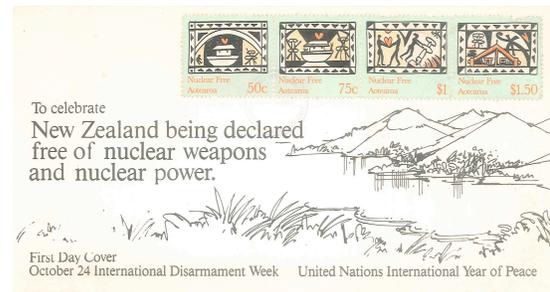
Many other VAANA members gave vital input in their own professional fields:

- Gil Hanly as official mural photographer photographed every phase of the work-in-progress.

- Matt Stafford, Master Builder, presented a detailed set of working drawings to the Auckland Regional Authority and he with Don Soloman and Lawlor-Bartlett negotiated with the Distribution Engineer and Chief Water Engineer. Next came Mayor Dame Cath.Tizard's support and the final OK of the Auckland City Council.
- Peter Lange and Lex Dawson, Master Potters worked with Matt Stafford on the construction and fixing of the mural framework.
- Claudia Pond Eyley photographed and produced sets of slides and colour photocopies.
- John Nicol, drew up artwork to scale for presentation.
- David Blair, graphic artist made the graphic acknowledgements panel.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES to PRESENT;

- 1985-1986 VAANA participated in a peace video, working with Fiona Copland and Jillian Ewart of Kaleidoscope and pop group "The Herbs" to make a 50 minute programme about the Peace Mural.
- 1985 Lawlor-Bartlett gave a talk on ' VAANA and Peace Activist Rewi Alley' to the New Zealand China Friendship Society, she then went to China to draw a portrait of Rewi Alley for the Turnbull Library.
- 1985 logos were designed for Scientists Against Nuclear Arms (SANA) and for Greenpeace Pacific, a resource kit designed and printed. Banners were made for the Mt Eden Peace Picnic and the Auckland Rhythm of Life Festival.
- 1984-1988 VAANA liaised with many professional peace groups providing graphics.
- 1986 a series of postcards of works by VAANA members and of the Peace Murals were printed and sold for fundraising in New Zealand and worldwide.
- 1986 Claudia Pond Eyley produced sets of colour prints for a Peace Pack.
- 1986 VAANA worked with Terry Locke of the Foundation for Peace Studies on the Peace Diary.
- 1986 Nigel Brown designed a set of stamps for Peace Movement Aotearoa.
- July 1986 VAANA organized a Peace Exhibition of members work in His Majesty's Arcade Auckland.
- 1987 five artworks by VAANA members were sent to "The Peace Gallery" in Crete for the exhibition "Face To Face" and then for permanent exhibition in the Crete Gallery. Also in 1987, VAANA organized a Peace Exhibition at Real Pictures Gallery Auckland.
- 1987 VAANA printed a series of anti-racism posters –VAANA was now adding Conservation and Racism issues to its agenda. Later in 1987 VAANA printed a series of Peace Posters, 250 sets were sent to schools, libraries in NZ and to overseas institutions -the Commonwealth Institute London put a poster and postcard set on permanent display.



- 1987-1989 Riemke Ensing edited a Peace Anthology for which ardent VAANA supporter Rewi Alley sent several poems from China, as did other New Zealand and Pacific rim poets including C K Stead, Greg O'Brian and Michael Morrissey.
- 1988 VAANA organized the visit of two master printers, Hiroshima survivors and peace workers from Gifu Japan to give a series of lectures and organize a peace exhibition here. A reciprocal exhibition of VAANA artworks was installed permanently at Gifu Peace Gallery, Japan.
- 1988 VAANA nominated photographer founding member Gil Hanly for the Media Peace Award for her book "Peace is Not Just an Absence of War". Gil later won a special honour from the Peace Foundation.

At the October 1992 meeting, VAANA members decided to go into recess and reactivate if and when members considered there was a serious threat to nuclear arms free Pacific or planetary conservation. VAANA wished its \$864 funds to be held by the Artists Alliance on the understanding that they were kept in a named TD account and then used in conjunction with funding from Mobil, (who had since leased the land in front of the mural) for extending the mural and the upkeep of existing mural panels. Lawlor-Bartlett agreed to liaise with Artists Alliance.

In 1995 VAANA members made graphics for the Moruroa Protest Anthology *Below the Surface* edited by Ambury Hall. Riemke Ensing included some of the poems from the unpublished Peace Anthology in this anthology.

In 1997 founding VAANA member Claudia Pond-Eyley published *Protest at Moruroa*, history of the NZ based flotilla that faced the French during the nuclear testing at Moruroa 1995. The book was funded by PADET, the Peace and Disarmament Educational Trust, whose monies come from the *Rainbow Warrior* reparations from France. Claudia helped by Nora West (VAANA Project Manager, whose Master's Thesis is on banners), designed and painted the 8 metre protest banners that travelled to the Moruroa exclusion zone on the stanchions of the yachts of the Peace Flotilla.

PEACE MURAL EXTENSION 1987

In 1986, the International Year of Peace, VAANA decided that 8 different artists (painters and sculptors) would make a further 8 panels. By October 1987 Marie Collins, Virginia King, Allison Thomas and Maria Rogers - with the ever present help of John Eaden - organized the second group of artists to paint their 'Signboard' panels in the "Art on the Town" workspace in K Road, (the old Singer building), liaising with organizer of that project Tom Leary. Several designs had been submitted to be considered by the group. Richard Collins and Matt Stafford organized the carpentry etc. Permission was granted by the Auckland City Council, May 1987.

The Stage Two Mural panels were funded by profits from sales of the postcard sets, poster sets, commission from the sale of work at the two VAANA art exhibitions and members subs and a grant from Queen Elizabeth 11 Arts Council of \$1,200 John Nicol liaised with Peter Webb Galleries and they included with their pay out slips a VAANA

letter suggesting a 5% payment to the Artist of the painting's resale value. The artist could then donate this to VAANA.

There were two spare panels left after the eight artists had started working in the K Rd "Art On The Town" empty shopfront spaces, so the next VAANA meeting asked any interested artists to bring ideas on A4 sheets for selection.

By the end of 1987, the ten panels were erected. The artists involved were (in the order of the panels):

- Panel (9) Marie McMahon-Collins
- Panel (10) Richard Collins
- Panel (11) Claire Mortimer
- Panel (12) Kate Millington
- Panel (13) No signature
- Panel (14) Maria Rodgers.
- Panels (15) & (16) No signatures.
- Panel (17) Miriam Cameron
- Panel (18) Delyn Williams

From 1987 to 1992, various VAANA artists kept the mural clean and washed off graffiti. During the era of the Sunday markets, Mongrel Mob members volunteered to put the mural under the protection of the Mongrel Mob and washed off the graffiti that escaped their watch, unfortunately this period was all too short.

MURAL REFURBISHMENT

In 1992, the Mobil Oil Company leased the land immediately in front of the mural and proposed to erect a petrol station. In the appeal against this decision the judge stipulated:

- (a) A 5 metre strip easement could be used but not built on.
- (b) Mobil remove the large potted trees in front of the mural and use this money to "enhance and extend the mural."
- (c) Mobil must design a 'Pegasus' type of service station (as in Parnell) so that the mural would not be obscured but "nicely framed" by the superstructure.

Discussion with Mobil Project Manager Richard Wallace and Mobil Lawyer Mark Christianson (for Russell McVeagh Law Firm), revealed that Mobil was eager to spend this money (several thousand dollars according to Wallace) on mural extension and upkeep: room for at least three more panels.

At a meeting between VAANA, Artists Alliance and Mobil at Outreach in June 1993, it was agreed that there was a need for greater public awareness of the nuclear threat and, as the mural needed upkeep - VAANA would organize a complete restoration and cleaning of the mural by all the panel artists on a specific day with as much media coverage as possible. Resene Paint Company kindly donated paint again. Mobil agreed to add funds to the VAANA \$800 already held by Artists Alliance.

On Saturday 21 August 1993, thirteen artists climbed their ladders and started cleaning and painting – some added to and strengthened their original concepts: Pat Hanly instructed his daughter Amber, now a creative teenager, to repaint some parts of his panel under his supervision. Gil Hanly photographed the whole project.



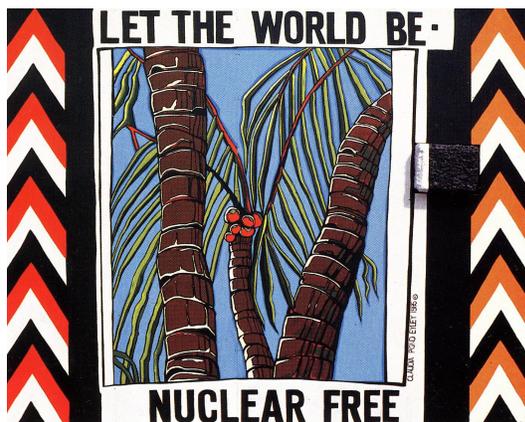
In December 1993, Lawlor-Bartlett liaised with Helen Shamroth of Artists Alliance and Richard Wallis of Mobil to have A.D. Kelly Decorating apply two full coats of Resene F 10 Acrylic Glaze as graffiti guard on all 18 panels plus the two new panels. It was agreed that Helen Shamroth approach the Auckland City Council regarding insurance of the mural.

ADDITIONAL MURAL PIECES 1993

VAANA decided that in keeping with their concept of a living, ongoing peace statement mural, three more panels by a new generation of peace and conservation orientated artists must be added to the mural. Lawlor-Bartlett negotiated with Mobil Oil Company for funds to be deposited with the Artists Alliance for awards to be given to the successful artists for this purpose.

A competition was advertised by the Artists Alliance in September calling for entries, with proposals due by October 12, 1993. Two panels were selected by Kura Te Waru Rewiri & John Eaden, and installed by November 30 1993. Panel (19) was painted by successful artist Jim Vивиare. Panel (20) was painted by successful artist Lydia Eyley.

In this stage of the mural, both panels were painted on plywood (more weather resistant than the previously used Signboard) in the artist's own studios. From 1993 to 2004 various VAANA artists went up their ladders and cleaned and restored their works as the need arose. Claudia Pond Eyley repainted her panel in plywood.



VISUAL ARTISTS AGAINST NUCLEAR ARMS. PEACE MURAL.

MURAL KARANGAHAPE / PONSOMBY ROADS, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND, 1985.

CLAUDIA POND EYLEY

By 2004, after 20 years open to the elements, the mural was starting to disintegrate. Claudia Pond Eyley, John Eaden, Nigel Brown and Lawlor-Bartlett decided on action. The nuclear threat was greater than ever before with USA trying to change the interpretation of the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty, this causing various smaller

countries to escalate their efforts to become nuclear capable. Our own anti-nuclear stance was again under attack by the National Party Leader Don Brash wishing to change it, in his “gone by lunchtime” statement. With the elections due in 2005, Lawlor-Bartlett considered a rebirth of the mural with younger artists making four new panels as an invigorating peace initiative. In mid 2004, tragically, the revered painter and indefatigable peace activist Pat Hanly died. At Pat and Gil’s home, after the funeral, Lawlor-Bartlett outlined the project to extend the mural to Prime Minister Helen Clark. She was enthusiastic about the scheme, saying that she was, sadly, being put under great pressure to change the anti nuclear stance, and determined not to do so. She asked VAANA to tell Councillors Penny Sefuiva, Bruce Hucker and Richard Northey that VAANA had her strong support in the mural rebirth and extension.

After much consultation with Councillor Penny Sefuiva, Mark Mclaughlan of Watercare, Catherine Hawley of Western Bays Community Board & Peter Thornbury of Mobil, VAANA decided to start by calling a meeting of all the mural artists to establish a consensus and shared goals. VAANA then decided to approach Nora West, Arts Manager K.Rd Business Association and experienced Peace Foundation Events Organiser whose Master’s Thesis explored Protest Banners in N.Z. to see if she would become Project Manager. Nora accepted, conditional to funding applications being successful.

PROPOSAL FOR DIGITAL REPRODUCTION OF THE MURAL: AND AUCTION OF FRAGMENT MURAL PIECES

At this meeting on 10th May 2005 at Artstation, Lawlor-Bartlett proposed digitally reproducing the mural. Artist Nigel Brown said in a letter sent from Southland, that he “dreams of a peace wall in front of the reservoir with the strip of land put aside for peace forever.” He suggested that panels could be cut up under artists’ supervision and the pieces polyurethaned, labeled on the back as ‘fragments of VAANA mural’ and auctioned with proceeds going to the Peace Foundation. The majority agreed with this but considered that we should get the mural digitally reproduced and up *before* we had the auction. Matt Stafford agreed to research the costs of mounting & lighting. John Eaden agreed to explore the best methods of digital reproduction & get quotes and assess these with Nora West.

Jill Carter-Hanson wrote from her studio in Australia in enthusiastic support for the digital reproduction, and anxious that New Zealand keeps this proud piece of her history: “Without our history we have no identity, and New Zealand has the respect of people worldwide because of our anti-nuclear stance... It is said – those who forget are condemned to repeat their mistakes, make sure no-one forgets!”

Miriam Cameron suggested a permanent plaque telling the history of VAANA be installed while Kate Millington suggested a maintenance plan be always parked there. Jim Viviani wished that the wall space be retained for new works. He was happy with the idea of cutting up his work himself, for the Peace Foundation auction. Claudia Pond-Eyley said that the wall was iconic and must stay. John Nicol advised an assessment of costs. Amber, for Pat Hanly, said the mural must stay, she liked the idea of a mix of old

and new works. At the meetings conclusion it was unanimously decided to investigate digitally reproducing all the mural artwork.

Project Manager Nora West then called for an informal meeting with all the representatives of the public bodies as well as VAANA representatives, at Artstation on May 26, 2005. Present were: Mark McLauchlan (Watercare) Peter Thornbury (Mobil) Barbara Holloway (Manager Karangahape Road Business Association) Warren Pringle (Auckland City Council Arts Planner) Diane Percy (Western Community Board) Daniel Friedlander (Samson Properties) Claudia Pond-Eyley (Artist) John Eaden (CEO Artstation & Artist) Miriam Cameron (Artist) John Nicol (Artist) Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett (Project Initiator & Artist).

Lawlor-Bartlett explained that VAANA proposed an 'Ongoing Peace Mural' consisting of 20 panels: The first twelve comprising 8 'Stage 1' panels by founding VAANA artists plus four panels by 'Stage 2' artists (all of these 12 panels are disintegrating with age and with panels holed by Watercare): The possible deletion of the next four anonymous panels and the last four panels possibly restored by the artists. There would now be room for 4 new panels to be painted by four upcoming peace artists.

Claudia Pond-Eyley suggested possible funding for project from PADET (Peace & Disarmament Educational Trust). Mark Mclauchlan reassured that Watercare is supportive of renovation, he considered that in engineering terms it is practicable to bolt panels to the wall. Watercare will pay for fabricating custom-made fitments for hanging panels. Daniel Friedlander said he was committed to conserving the panels in principal and Samson Properties will consider sponsorship proposal. Peter Thornbury advised that the service station redevelopment plans are currently before Council and likely to proceed. This will open up the site, giving better sight lines to the mural. He then showed the plans to the meeting. He added that the art budget was spent, but as a local landmark, the panels could qualify for a small contribution from neighbourhood budget. Barbara Holloway said that the mural is a significant gateway to K Rd. It is to be featured on the K'Rd Art Map now in preparation. She suggested that the panels be digitally printed on canvas, behind Perspex, and back lit, so that they light up at night. Nora West said she was happy to be Project Manager if funding applications succeed. Warren Pringle said that the Auckland City Council is keen to see the work re-presented. He added that he was pleased to note that the new Mobil plans propose a larger area of greenery.

Mobil agreed to prune the greenery which was obstructing the first two panels and later Mobil moved the container which had been obstructing the first three panels from sight. This historic meeting closed with much goodwill all round, and optimism for the future of the Peace Mural. Nora West completed the K Rd Art map in which VAANA figures, and received quotes for the mural digital reproduction printing on the reverse of the Perspex with 2 fluorescent tubes. She applied for funding for the mural project from various sources. VAANA artists participated in the K Rd CROSSING celebration where there was much public interest in the light box models of the revamp.

With Nicky Omer of TV3, VAANA participated in a documentary on the mural revamp on the Nightline program. Sitting Member of Parliament Judith Tizard is enthusiastic about the revamp and VAANA is liaising with her. There has been much public support from NZ people nationwide, passionate that the mural stay and continue. Letters received include one from Tony Watkins, Auckland architect and founding member of AANA (Architects Against Nuclear Arms), in which he states that VAANA in 1984 had inspired architects and planners to form AANA. Lawlor-Bartlett recalled how they had actually at the time contacted VAANA and asked VAANA to give them a blueprint of how to go about setting it up.

This New Zealand architects' movement had then become part of International Architects Designers and Planners for the Prevention of Nuclear War. Several members of IADPPNW including Tony, had left NZ for an Architects for World Peace meeting in Prague in November 1989, in which there were 1500 architects, mainly Russian. They all took part in the mass protest meetings of the Prague 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 in which the artists were the 'front line' who photocopied and distributed the news sheets. This "Little Peoples Revolution", which ended up with Gorbachev refusing to send in the Russian tanks to clean up the insurgents, was one of the many small catalysts that helped end the Cold War in 1989.

AUCTION OF MURAL FRAGMENTS

On 23rd Dec 2005, the 20 panels of the original mural were pulled down by the remaining original artists. Saddened onlookers were reassured by the VAANA team that the fragments were to be auctioned, proceeds going to the Peace Foundation, and the whole ongoing mural would then be digitally reproduced to the same size and on the same wall. Again, the remaining seven founding artists, Amber Simpson (Pat Hanly's daughter who had painted the image used by Pat in 1985), Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett, John Nicol, John Eaden, Claudia Pond Eyley, Nigel Brown and Vanya Lowry, were side by side in the large studio at Artstation restoring and varnishing their carefully cut fragments. Again the public came and gave comments. Jan 31 2006, the digital reproductions of the eight First Stage panels were unveiled and the Hon Judith Tizard, MP, Member for Auckland and the Associate Minister for Arts and Culture launched the "VAANA Fragments Exhibition and On-Line Auction" at the Artstation Gallery.

On 23rd Feb 2006, at a celebration event at Artstation, proceeds from sales of work and the on-line auction were formally handed to the Peace Foundation. Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett, on behalf of VAANA, thanked Project Manager Nora West and Barbara Holloway, of KBA, who organized the on-line auction.

MURAL EXTENSION; THE NEXT GENERATION 2006

VAANA representative John Nicol selected six new works for the mural by Miriam Cameron and Kate Millington, both artists of VAANA mural 1986, Marte Szirmay's Art Department at Auckland Girls' Grammar School Maori Unit, Media Design School, Disruptiv Artists and Samoan artist Andy Leleisi'uao. "The Next Generation", was an



Miriam Cameron *The Garsmen*
A painter and muralist who has worked on many protest and community projects. A 1998 VAANA panelist (who) with this work continues the idea that "... we're all in this together."

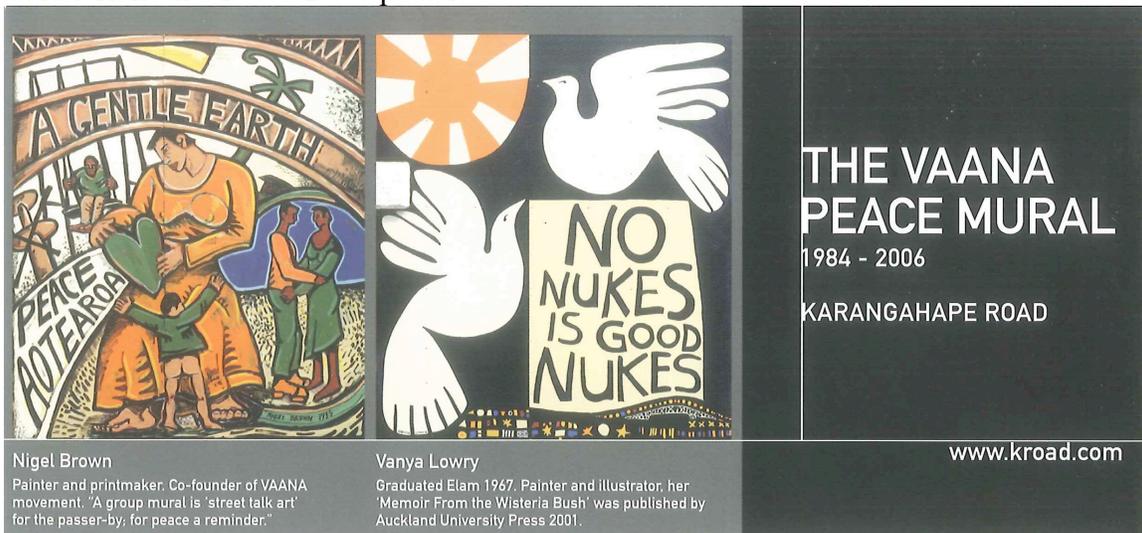
Jonny Wartmann *Nuclear-Free Aotearoa*
Jonny (a.k.a. Pele) is an artist on the Disruptiv team. Working primarily in aerosol Jonny's work can be seen on walls around Aotearoa and the globe.
Courtesy of Disruptiv, Karangahape Road

Andy Leleisi'uao *Love, Faith and Hope*
As a New Zealand born Samoan his work is full of peace – his place, his parents, his children. It speaks of a universal concern for a growing multi-cultural nation.
Courtesy of Wh'esspace, Drummer Road

exhibition of selected works that ran from 30th August-19th September 2006 at Disrupt Galleries, K Rd. On Saturday 7th October 2006, this part of the Peace Mural was unveiled and formally blessed by Rev. Mua Strickson-Pua. Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett formally thanked Rev Mua, Nora West, John Nicol VAANA representative, VAANA artists and student artists at the site.

AUCKLAND PEACE CITY

Marion Hancock of the Peace Foundation and Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett approached the Auckland City Council, proposing that Auckland celebrate the 20th Anniversary of New Zealand becoming nuclear free by law, by holding a citywide function. This function reinforced Aotearoa's nuclear stance and announced that Auckland had just voted to be a Peace City. At the function Councillor Northey outlined his proposed Peace Walk and VAANA launched its next stage of the Peace Mural. The peace function successfully occurred on June 8th 2007. Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett also announced that VAANA's new mural project manager was Hamish Keith and a number of prominent artists had agreed to participate. The Peace Foundation gave the Mayor a framed print of Jill Carter-Hansen's Peace Dove poster.



Nigel Brown
Painter and printmaker. Co-founder of VAANA movement. "A group mural is 'street talk art' for the passer-by; for peace a reminder."

Vanya Lowry
Graduated Elam 1967. Painter and illustrator, her 'Memoir From the Wisteria Bush' was published by Auckland University Press 2001.

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After this function at the city's Town Hall, some alert VAANA and Peace Foundation members gathered all the uneaten food and prepared to deliver it to Devonport for an exhibition celebrating the 25th anniversary of Devonport being the first Borough in Auckland to be declared nuclear free. VAANA and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom had jointly organized this art event. A couple of "down and outs" on the park bench beneath the Mayor's office saw the van being loaded with food.

Within 5 minutes lunch was fed to a gathering crowd of the hungry and homeless, and still there was enough to take to Devonport celebration!

Much negotiating with Watercare followed as to the future of the wall, the infrastructure and how long the mural should be. Watercare stated that the reservoir would be shifted at some point, but they had no plans to do so in the foreseeable future, so they wished to continue to support the mural, but did not wish to give any more funding. Hamish Keith regrettably resigned this phase of the mural extension because of workload. There had been much public support and letters from NZ people nationwide. Prime Minister Helen Clark again gave her personal support and wise advice on strategies for VAANA to continue a further stage of the Peace Mural.

Margaret Lawlor Bartlett approached VAANA artists Claudia Pond Eyley, John Eaden and Alexis Hunter to get support for a further stage of the peace mural, now with the enlarged themes of world peace, social justice and global sustainability in this era of global warming. Watercare finally gave legal consent and subsequently, in 2009, VAANA completed this stage of the ongoing mural.

MURAL EXTENSION 2009

Eight of Aotearoa's prominent artists, Julian Hooper, John Reynolds, Alexis Hunter, Emily Karaka, Seraphine Pick, Charlotte Graham, John Pule and Dick Frizzell (in the mural's sequence) painted eight art works on the enlarged themes of peace, abolition of nuclear weapons, global sustainability and social justice topics. These works were then digitally reproduced to form a further eight panels of the 22 panel ongoing Peace Mural. The eight original designs of the artworks were to be sold at the John Leech Gallery to pay for the mural infrastructure (underwritten by Lawlor-Bartlett) and the surplus monies donated to the Peace Foundation.

The public unveiling and blessing of this Mural Stage Three, was followed by the handing to the Mayor of Auckland the "Deed of Gift" signed by the 22 artists of the 60 meter digitally reproduced mural and infrastructure, "gifted" to the City of Auckland by the VAANA artists. This function was held at the mural site on March 3rd 2009 before a large crowd of onlookers including Waitakere Mayor Bob Harvey, Chris Saines Director of Auckland City Art Gallery, Ron Brownson senior curator of NZ Art of Auckland City Art Gallery, Hamish Keith former mural project manager and artists.

This was followed by speeches by the then Mayor John Banks, Dame Cath Tizard, former Governor General, Anne Ackerman National Director of the Peace Foundation and Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett, Director of VAANA Mural Stage Three. The work by John Reynolds was purchased by the Whanganui Sargent Gallery. Emily Karaka's panel was purchased by Auckland Museum and the remaining four original art works VAANA sold for public display to relevant institutions here and overseas in order to get the message to the widest possible public. VAANA received generous help in achieving this from Helen Clark, Administrator of the UN Development Program. Helen Clark has given invaluable advice and help and support to VAANA since its inception.

ONGOING CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Because Mayor John Banks did not sign the Deed of Gift that he had publicly accepted, VAANA has worked with Mayor Phil Goff, who has generously agreed to assist in having the mural Deed of Gift signed, and safely deposited in the Auckland Art Gallery VAANA archive. The project is now safe, secure and maintained within the ownership of the Auckland City Council as part of the history and future of Aotearoa.

In April 2018 mural artist Claudia Pond Eyley rang Margaret Lawlor Bartlett with the news that the VAANA mural had fallen off its support in a severe storm, she had gone immediately and photographed the destruction. The mural was in a bad state, letters were being written to the NZ Herald newspaper by citizens distraught at the loss of this proud national icon.

Margaret Lawlor Bartlett immediately contacted Peter Tilley, Collections Manager in charge of the Public Art Collection at the Auckland City Council. His team leapt into action and the entire mural was digitally renewed and installed in place with improved stronger supports.

This was followed by the news that the mural is now officially an “accession artwork”, accepted into the Auckland Council Art Collection and therefore to be re-erected in perpetuity. Through this mural, VAANA asks that NZ become even more proud of our “peoples’ peace movements” which formed VAANA, IPPNW, AANA, SANA in 1984. We must affirm that small nations, and small protest groups can actually make big things happen. The VAANA Peace Mural in Karangahape Road is a tangible proud monument to the continuing anti-nuclear movement and now the eco sustainability stance of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: indeed it is the only thing that ever has.’

Margaret Mead

THIS IS OUR PEOPLE’S PEACE WALL WHICH MUST REMAIN, CONTINUE TO BE LOOKED AT, THOUGHT ABOUT, and above all, BE ADDED TO BY FUTURE GENERATIONS OF ARTISTS,

Margaret Lawlor-Bartlett, November 2018