

Hát Xe Buýt (Singing Bus)

Saturday 19th of November 2022 @10am

[Audience gathers at Footscray Community Arts Centre and enters bus as El Extranjero- Mikey Oz plays loudly. The Tour Guide, Silvia, dances, greets people, holds a flag up and asks everyone to wear a name tag.]

Hola bienvendios, Buenos dias that song was El Extranjero/the Foreigner by Salvadoran Australian artist- Mikey Oz como estan –everyone! My name is Silvia and this is Tinh. We'll be your tour guides for today. On behalf of Neighbourhood Tours TM I'd like to welcome you all on the bus today and thank you for choosing us at *authentic* Neighbourhood tours.

We'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are driving through the areas of Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung language groups of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their Ancestors, Elders and community as custodians of this land. We acknowledge the lucha for self-determination and liberation unique to estas tierras.

The bus ride will take about 8 minutes to our first destination, we'll then have a moment to go see the archaeological ruins, stretch your legs and take photos- it'll then be another 20min to reach our next designation Collingwood Neighbourhood House where you'll be treated to a performance before jumping back on the bus down the road to our final destination, Collingwood Yards. Such a treat of day!

Right now, I'd like to take a minute to familiarise you with the area and discuss some brief safety precautions. Firstly, I ask that you remain seated until we reach our destination and that you not eat or drink while on the bus. Secondly, please realise that it is against the law to get drunk in public. We wish for you to enjoy your vacation, but do drink responsibly and do not drink and drive. Thirdly, this area used to be a relatively safe area but unfortunately the neighbourhood has changed – you can see some of those changes to your left. So we ask that you keep the windows shut where possible. The tinted windows are for your protection. We also ask that hold your backpacks to the front of you. Any visible jewellery needs to be under your clothes and not be visible.

Today we'll be making our first stop at Kensington. Kensington is four kilometres north-west of the Melbourne CBD and borders North Melbourne and Footscray. The area has some interesting shops, cafes, a range of restaurants, a big playground and scenic parks. You'll see one of those parks to the right hand side of you now.

We recommend that you do not purchase from the vendors as they are not always 100 percent reliable. They may charge you more than the average prices and from what they say. Please take my advice and allow Neighbourhood Tours™ to book all of your day trips and activities while you are here. I have some business cards available at the front.

We're heading specifically to the site of the Kensington Community Recreation Centre where you'll be one of the lucky few to visit an important archaeological site where you will see the rubble where a historic community mural once stood. SO LET'S GET MOVING. VAMONOS

[SONG 2: La Guanaquita- Los Hermanos Flores]

[Audience exists bus and stands at the site of the former mural]

A Salvadoran community mural was destroyed this year by the City of Melbourne Council as part of a \$10.2million dollar 'redevelopment' scheme and in so doing destroyed one of the only public representations of the displaced Salvadoran community in Australia.

The mural was painted on the exterior wall of the Kensington Community Recreation Centre by artist Ben Laycock and a group of young Salvadorans from the housing flats across the road in 1990.

It was a collaboration between the Salvadoran community, the Kensington Community Centre and the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation.

What was particularly significant is that the mural was painted in 1990- why is this important? Because that was before the signing of the peace accords that officially brought the Civil War to end in 1992. So this mural was painted and stood as that ragged on.

[Laminated photos of the former mural are distributed for the audience to see as Silvia describes key parts of the mural and its history]

Australia is home to the third-largest Salvadoran population outside of El Salvador (after the United States and Canada), having arrived primarily through the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program.

I mentioned earlier that young Salvadoran people from the housing flats painted the mural. In 1999, Kensington demolished one of the four high-rise flats further displacing the already displaced community. This affected two communities in particular: the Vietnamese community and the Salvadoran community.

There are two fun facts I wanted to share with you today. Who has been inside the centre before? do you remember the eel piece? Eels (2006) was one of 71 pieces created for the 2006 Commonwealth Games and was later gifted to the centre by the State Government of Victoria. Now, unlike the mural, this piece will be professionally saved, stored and reinstalled in the new complex.

Another fun fact is that most recently, in 2021 the Metro Tunnel Creative Program commissioned artist Stephen Banham to create a 300m long piece flood wall mural/ piece titled One day in the Park.

[SONG 3: El Salvador – Human Condition]

[SONG 4: El Sombrero Azul- Salsa Clave]

In order to contextualise the mural I'd like to read an excerpt from 'Constructing absence: Enforced temporariness in the destruction of a Salvadoran mural' published in the Avery Review

After a Kafkaesque series of calls and emails in an attempt to make contact with the City of Melbourne, the council finally let me know the mural was "always meant to be temporary... a moment in time... an expression of its time"; "something that we cannot preserve." ...In the city council's explanation I heard the enforced temporalities prescribed by the colonial project. Like the mural, the Salvadoran community was *always meant to be temporary*.

The City of Melbourne did offer to take a professional photograph of the work; however, the council stated that the intellectual property of the images would be with the council-assigned photographer and the City of Melbourne.

And this is how Archiving the Present came to be [*Adlibs about the project and talks the audience through accessing and navigating the website*] Now, I'd like to take a moment to read one of those works.

'Mato tunco tu tata' is a word game that children play in El Salvador. The rules are: one person asks 'did your dad kill a pig?' (mato tunco tu tata?), to which the other person is always expected to respond yes. The first person then asks, 'were you afraid?' (le tuviste miedo?), to which the other person is always expected to reply no. The first person then blows air in the other's eyes to see if they blink. If they blink, they lose and they are mocked because they were

scared. In the author's opinion, this game says so much about Salvadorians: making fun of brutal subjects, setting themselves impossible tasks, submitting themselves to playful violence, and acknowledging the age-old Mesoamerican theme of death being a part of life.

my country is a name that's been erased from a wall
a fractured memory
a fragment of a broken clay pot
a smashed piggy bank
half-full of dreams

my country is a mistake in your geography.
frequently asked questions for Salvadorians:
is El Salvador in Brazil?
was Julian Assange in your embassy?
in what part of the U.S. is Central America?

my country is an outdated map.
my mum and I drink coffee
with the ghost of war
together we take stock of things we lost
and from afar we make plans to go back to find them
every day the lines on our map fade away a bit
details that were once clear are now smudged
we recount addresses and routes
to places that might not exist anymore
so we don't get lost in a place we haven't been to in decades.

my country doesn't know who it's fighting anymore.
peace has become rebellious
she has tattoos, drinks and smokes
carries a knife just in case.
with her I review other lists:
who else left after the earthquake
which of my friends was swallowed up by the country
who made it out alive.

my country and I made an agreement
with vague, unwritten rules
a game of chicken
¿mató tunco tu tata?
in which I always blink.

when I left I gave El Salvador one of my lungs
and in exchange I took its tongue

an untranslatable palate
full of rhymes, tongue-twisters and riddles
an amulet I wear to keep my memory alive

because my country is a name that's been erased from a wall.

I'll give you five minute to play on the website.

[SONG 5: Latinoamérica ft. Totó la Momposina, Susana Baca, Maria Rita-
Calle 13]

[Audience arrives at their second location: Collingwood Neighbourhood House and listen to a musical performance from the Bridge Gap Choir. After the performance the audience jumps back on the bus]

On behalf of Mark and I, we'd like to thank you for choosing Neighbourhood Tours TM, it's been a pleasure to take this journey with you! This is the final song before we reach our destination. We thought it would be relevant. We've provided English translations *[Silvia hands out English translation of song]* You'll notice there is one particular line in English.

[SONG 6: El Costo de la Vida- Juan Luis Guerra]

[Bus arrives at Collingwood Yards, Audience exits to El Costo de La Vida and high-five's Silvia on the way out of the bus]