

## WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE PUBLIC ART PROJECT, VICTORIA

I propose a freestanding sculpture of a **bronze ribbon/band** that spirals upward and outward with **figurative elements** that symbolise women's struggle to gain the right to vote, leading to eventual freedom. The bronze ribbon and figurative elements will be similar to those in the images supplied.

The free-flowing band or ribbon represents not only a liberated spirit but also the Victorian Women's Suffrage Petition of 1891 – the '**Monster Petition**' signed by 30,000 women.

A bronze rendition of this 260-metre-long petition on its spool will provide a firm base for the free flowing ribbon of signatures that spirals upward. The sculpture will be further strengthened and stabilized at its base by an unwound length of ribbon emerging from the outside of the 'Monster Petition', which will meander across the horizontal surface of the platform or plinth. This extension will support and counterbalance the direction and weight of the upward spiralling ribbon. Names of some of the suffragists and signatories on the original petition will be inscribed on the bronze ribbon. Members of the **public and communities** will be consulted in the collaborative choice of names to be inscribed, including key figures and names of forebears on the original petition; this will increase awareness of the project and generate active community involvement and ongoing interest.

The **figurative elements** on the ascending ribbon will be a head (with several views of faces in the one head), a hand at the top end of the band/ribbon, a hand in a buttoned elbow-length glove from the period, a naked free foot, and a buttoned-up boot from the period on the other foot, which will be positioned on the spool of the wound petition at the base. The hand at the top of the ribbon will hold a broad-brimmed 'Edwardian' sun-hat blowing in the wind (an ageless style still seen at The Melbourne Cup today). The platform or plinth could be of concrete or dimension stone such as granite.

The character of the sculpture makes it **site-versatile**, suited to most locations where it can be viewed from all sides, as well as from above and below, such as city squares, river esplanades, plazas, malls, parkland, etc. The proximity of buildings can be an advantage because the curving forms of the sculpture will contrast with the geometric lines of buildings and create dynamic, moving shadow effects on walls and pavements. The shapes of the wide arcing spaces of the sculpture, rather than solid heavy forms, will give a feeling of lightness and liberation; this will contrast with the massive buildings and angularity of urban structures.

Bronze is the most **durable medium** for outdoor sculpture and its **maintenance** is negligible. For extra strength the band (ribbon) would be reinforced internally with steel; this will also make the sculpture **safe**. It is anticipated that the size of the hands, head and feet will be at least three-times life-size and that the overall height of the sculpture will be about 6 metres. The height of the plinth will be determined by the location.

Women's rights are a prominent theme in my art. I draw inspiration from the strength of women and their struggle for equality, which I express through imaginative application of the human form.

Susan Dorothea White, June 2006  
(c/- Josef Lebovic Gallery)