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» Bill Drummond beside his graffiti under Spaghetti Junction, the location of the artist's 12-year art project. *Picture: Tracey Moberley*

All roads lead artist to Spaghetti Junction

Bill Drummond began a 12-year world tour in Birmingham last year. Here he writes about plans to return to create a 'major' public art work under Spaghetti Junction

SPAGHETTI Junction is not only the entrance to the underworld it is also the location for a "major" public work of art that is evolving between now and 2025.

Well, according to me it is.

During my three months in Birmingham last year at Eastside Projects, when I was a sort of artist-in-residence and at large across the city, I kept finding myself returning to the same spot under Spaghetti Junction.

In my first column in the *Birmingham Post* last March, I told the story of how I got dropped off at Spaghetti Junction when hitching from Liverpool to my parents' home in Corby.

This was in 1973 when I was 19 years old. It was night time and raining.

I got lost somewhere deep underneath it all and spent the night there. All very scary.

It was to this same spot that I kept returning last year. It was where I landed my raft made from my bed. It was were I left 400 bunches of daffodils in 400 jam jars that I had been collecting for a couple of years. It was where I went to do my first graffiti in Birmingham, where I fly-posted my first posters in Birmingham and where I painted the phrase "LET YOUR LONE RANGER RIDE".

This last phrase was my gut response to all the furore that seemed to explode around me painting over a UKIP poster in Digbeth.

I was obviously making a reference to the masked Texas Ranger who dressed in white and was on the telly at teatime when I was a kid.

The Lone Ranger (I don't think we ever got to know his real name) would never hesitate to right wrongs when he saw injustices being done.

I know it must sound pompous of me, but the moment I painted over the UKIP poster, dressed in my white disposable overalls, I felt just as I imagined the Lone Ranger must have felt.

Even if I only had a white Transit and not a white steed called Silver to make my getaway in.

"Let your lone ranger ride" became one of a number of phrases that I had, and together I started to think of them as my Ten Commandments of Art.

I wrote these up and I was lucky enough to have *The Observer* want to publish it. But almost as soon as they were published I began to feel constrained by the idea that I had written a Ten Commandments.

For a start I had 12 of them.

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Then last week a close friend of mine started a 12-step programme with Alcoholics Anonymous.

It was then that I began thinking of my now 12 commandments as 12 steps to get me through the 12-year world tour that I am on.

A world tour that does not finish until 2025.

This tour means I have to spend up to three months each year in a different city in a different country around the world.

This year it will be Berlin, the year after it will be Memphis in Tennessee and then Kolkata in India and on and on until I get to Damascus in Syria in 2025.

To celebrate the Twelve Steps to 2025 breakthrough in my head, I recently drove up the M1 and M6 in my white Transit to Spaghetti Junction. I then painted over my LET YOUR LONE RANGER RIDE with white masonry paint. I went off for a cheese omelette, chips and beans at a local greasy spoon while the paint dried.

On my return I then painted in black the four numerals that make up the year 2025.

It was while I was doing this with the dankness of the canal close by and HGVs roaring overhead that I was confronted with the idea that could not be resisted.

The idea went something like this: This very spot will become my very own 'major' public work of art. A work of art the nation has not asked for and the National Lottery did not pay for. But a work of art that will evolve over 12 years.

During these 12 years I will keep returning here to add another layer, be that a series of posters or a graffiti or even another 400 bunches of daffodils.

Or maybe a bonfire on which I cook a cauldron of soup. Or an illegal rave. Or in the year 2023 I might return with my sleeping bag to celebrate the 50th anniversary of my first night of being down there.

I know for certain that each year I will paint the title to one more of the Twelve Steps to 2025. This will be done on the night before beginning the journey to whatever city is next on the list of my world tour.

What each of these titles to the 12 steps refers to is another whole story, but as of now they are:

1. Lose it in the Post
2. Let your Lone Ranger ride
3. Give New Rose a rest
4. Search for The Lost Step
5. Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and Despair!
6. Burn the Bridge
7. Don't come the Rebel
8. Riot Now, Pay Later
9. Stand on the Outside looking further Out
10. Accept those Contradictions
11. Stay True to the Trail
12. Navigate the Northwest Passage

As for the overall title for this 'major' public work of art, my working one is the grid reference for where you can go to inspect its development:
52.509743 North - 1.862424 West

THE MISSION

A COUPLE of weeks ago the Guardian published a top 10 list of exhibitions of 2014. My exhibition at Eastside Projects scraped in at number 10.

Matisse was at number one, so I was with good company. But more significantly, my show was the only exhibition in this top 10 that was neither in London or one of the art capitals of the world.

Thus Birmingham was the only UK city featured other than the capital. I believe it was the interaction between the people of Birmingham and what I was doing that made this happen.

My work in Birmingham is not yet done. Over the coming 12 years of the tour, Birmingham will be its home base, Spaghetti Junction its hub. Many of the projects I began earlier this year (and not completed) will continue and evolve over this time.

And come the year 2025, I hope to have a major exhibition in the city that will bring together many of the strands and findings.

With a bit of luck and a fair wind that exhibition will find its way further up the top 10. But of course by then Birmingham will be considered one of the major art capitals of the world, thus no one will be surprised.

One thing I learnt under Spaghetti Junction at the age of 19, was that all roads do not lead to Rome, they lead to Birmingham.