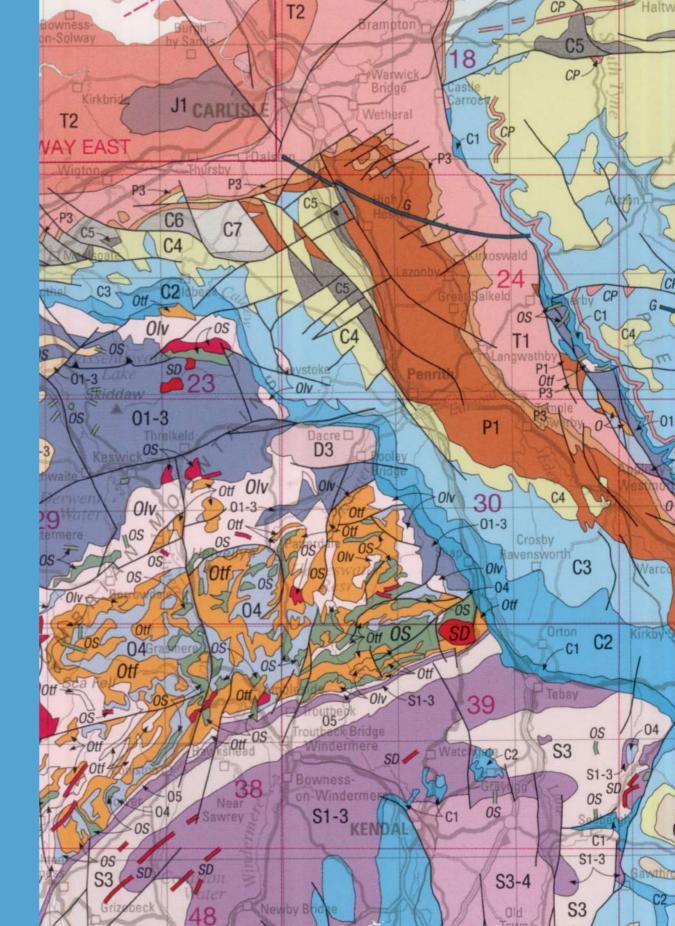
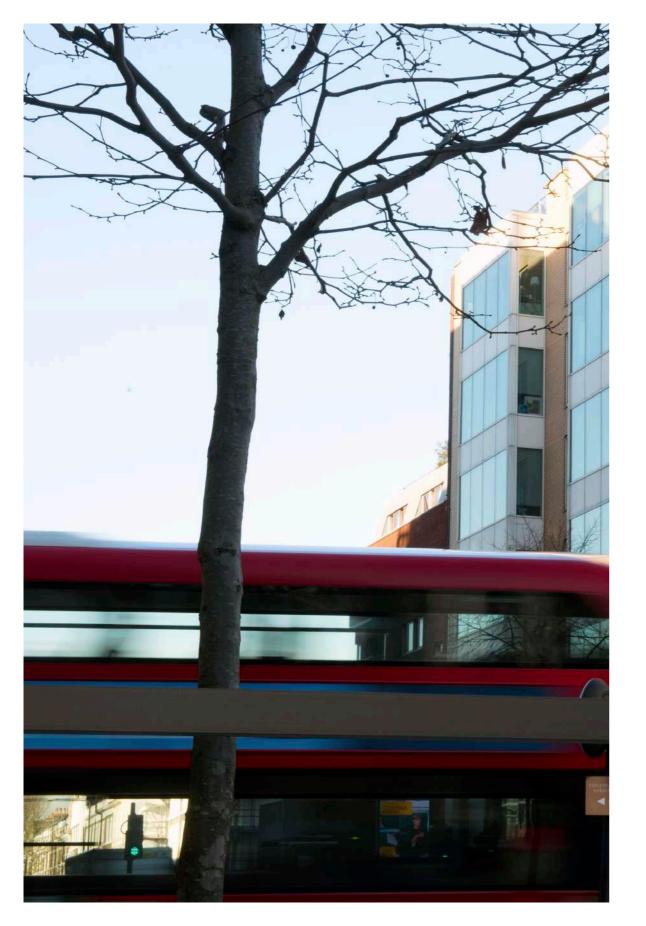
Public Sculptures

reference source for commissioning

Simon Hitchens





10 Public Sculptures

A reference source for commissioning

Simon Hitchens

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Introduction

With major sculptures and sculptural installations in public spaces from Cumbria to the Dorset coast, sculptor Simon Hitchens has made a unique career balanced between the laboratory of his studio and working to commission. His skill lies in his understanding of materials, his creative combinations of stone with metals and resins, together with a refined sense of scale and placement.

Fundamental sources of materials, human endeavour and the passage of time inform both his studio practice and his approach to creating works of art for the public realm. In stand-alone works of art or those that are part of the fabric of a development, his methodology is conceptually and aesthetically tuned to the location of the project with a sensitive respect for the specific architecture and for the wider locality. He is inventive and focused on work enriched through his studio research and development of ideas, where experiment provides him with an artistic vocabulary to the greater benefit of his clients.

In opening the hidden histories of locations and materials, through works of art that speak strongly of place, Hitchens has honed his intellectual and practical skills in bringing intelligent solutions to meet the requirements of his clients. He believes strongly that successful public art is not simply a fulfilment of local planning requirements, or the polite importing of good design, but is a powerful catalyst in building connections that grow a civic sense of pride. *Good contemporary art complements public spaces*.

Ann Elliott, 2017 Ann Elliott is an independent art curator and consultant with an international clientele 'I thank him for delivering every bit of the significant landmark sculpture he promised us two years ago, and for taking any of the worries that could present themselves in such a project, away from our daily duties making the journey an enjoyable and memorable one.'

Patrick Davis, Partner Bell Hammer Property Development

'The unveiling of Glorious Beauty is a major milestone in the development of 375 Kensington High Street.'

Paul Vallone, Executive Chairman St. Edward

Simon Hitchens 10 Public Sculptures

M&G Real Estate 'Because the development of high quality real estate is our business, we were determined to choose a sculptor who could deliver a sensitive and complementary sculpture to the striking architecture behind it - and we found that sculptor in Simon Hitchens.'

Forbury Place, Reading M&G Real Estate

The Space Between (granite)

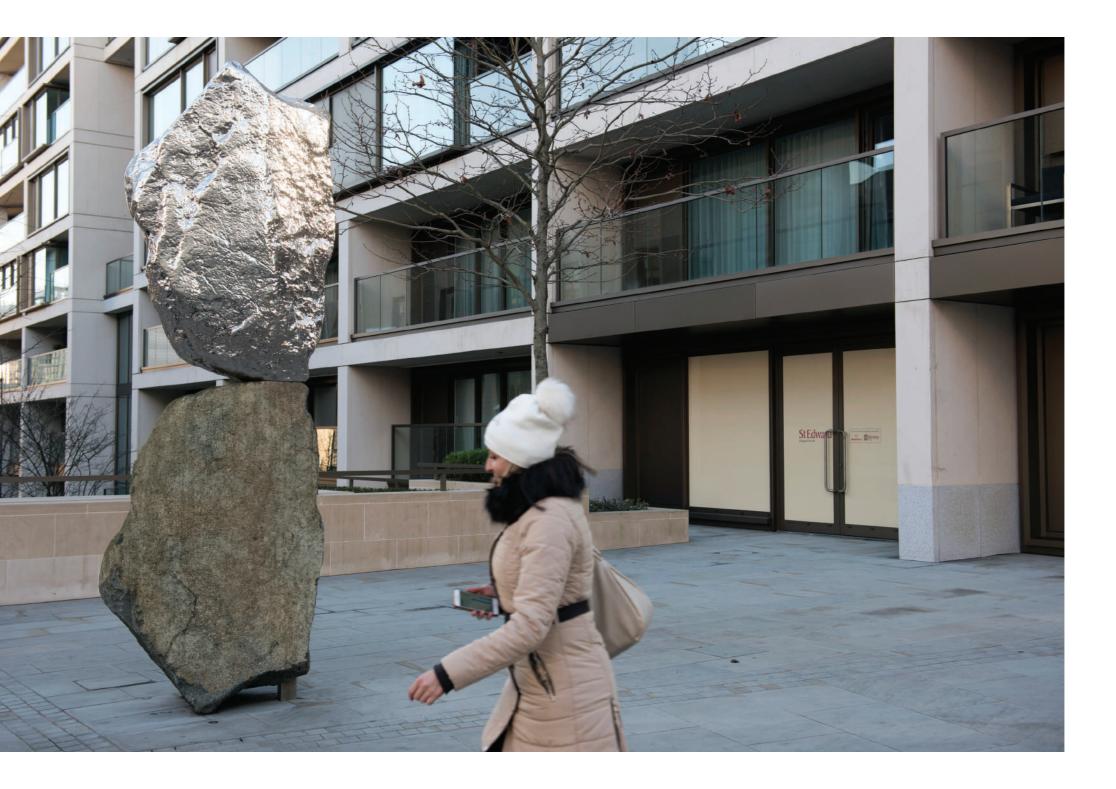
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Kensington High Street, London / St. Edwards

'In brokering the relationship between Simon Hitchens and St Edward, we have set the standard very high. It has been a pleasure to work with professionals who achieve high standards in both building and in the visual arts.'

Glorious Beauty (granite glacial boulder, stainless steel)





21 | The Leys / Commission Projects

3 The Leys, Cambrid

The Leys, Cambridge / Commission Projects

'I see this as an enhancement of every aspect of school life, which will become an iconic image in the minds of Leysians as they move through school and then on through life.'

Transition Point (granite, stainless steel)







4

Boscombe Pier, Bournemouth / Bournemouth BC

'Simon has successfully transformed the approach to the pier and seafront, responding to both the challenging nature of the site and its harsh environment.'

From Dawn Until Dusk (granite)







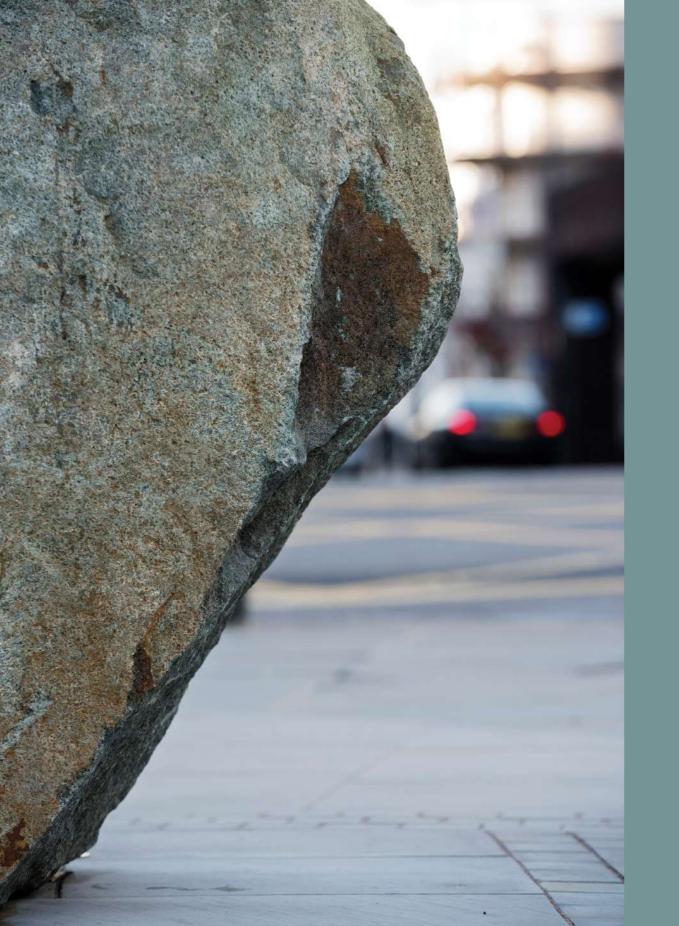
5 Radius Court, Bracknell / Frogmore

'Simon is articulate in a range of contrasting materials and processes and he has shown himself able to absorb the peculiarities of place whilst retaining the integrity of his own sculptural voice.'

Rubus 5, (stainless steel, Kilkenny limestone, York sandstone)







People, Place and Practice: the Sculpture of Simon Hitchens by Tom Flynn

People, Place and Practice: The Sculpture of Simon Hitchens

Simon Hitchens is a highly successful practitioner of public art and a master of its many technical and creative disciplines. His public works are celebrated by those who commission them and those who live with them and they can be seen in a wide variety of locations across the UK. Each of them reflects his sensitivity to place and space, to volume and scale and to a fascination with the subterranean mysteries of the natural world. Such a facility derives from a long experience of manipulating materials, of coaxing a visual poetry from the most stubborn of stones. for Hitchens is a skilled craftsman; he is entirely at home with the drill and the angle grinder and just as happy when hunkering down in the guarry selecting stones as in his studio carving and polishing the finished object.

Hitchens's innate feeling for sculptural form also has a deeper and more unexpected source. It can be found in his lifelong love of mountain climbing, which has endowed him with an intuitive understanding of how the vulnerable human body relates to the natural world and to geological time. This enables him to bring to his public projects a highly nuanced sense of how humans interact with objects that share their space. Conversation with

This enables him to bring to his public projects a highly nuanced sense of how humans interact with objects that share their space.

him is as likely to settle on the subject of the anthropocene and the influence of human activity on climate and the environment as it is on what makes one piece of public sculpture more successful than another. That intellectual curiosity is reflected in his work. He is known for his ability to interpret the specific requirements of a site and how sculpture can creatively mediate between the existing architecture and the people that move within and around it. The project entitled Coastline in the redeveloped town square in Workington,

Such an approach has the capacity to transform our sense of the role public art can fulfil when wider social and geographical considerations are brought into focus.

Cumbria, for example, illustrates his concern with the specifics of the town's coastal location and how sculptural elements can be used to subtly reference the broader regional geography. The innovative combination of granite and polyurethane in the main standing form and in the surrounding benches mirrors the natural elements of earth and water. Their spatial arrangement also encourages social engagement, integrating the various elements into a more expansive sculptural work. Such an approach has the capacity to transform our sense of the role public art can fulfil when wider social and geographical considerations are brought into focus.

One might assume that Hitchens spends most of his time wrestling with lumps of stone, carving harmonic abstraction out of obdurate matter. In fact, his practice involves a balance between small-scale studio-based experimentation and the orchestration of the multiple operations required in fabricating large-scale public commissions. These activities are not mutually exclusive but intimately interconnected.

The studio is where the ideas are incubated. The smaller, gallery-orientated work that emerges from

33 | The Sculpture of Simon Hitchens, by Tom Flynn

that environment may surprise those more familiar with his public projects. A seamless continuity unites these two strands of his practice: it is often the things he makes in his studio that nourish the creative imagination he applies to larger projects. Take, for example, the relatively recent studio work entitled Fallen Cairn. A series of rock-like elements have been arranged on the ground to hint at a prior event that has rendered a previously vertical stack of stones into scattered pieces. As one approaches, however, the pinkish colour and pitted surface of the elements declare a different materiality, bespeaking flesh rather than stone, or perhaps some kind of fleshy stone. One is invited to meditate on the nature and substance of these objects. The suggestion of an interior that resists easy negotiation is a subtext in much of Hitchens's work.

He has recently been experimenting with resin combined with small-scale crystal geodes, geological structures that originate in sedimentary and volcanic rocks. In Hitchens's hands they become magical miniature caves. The results are clearly an extension of his interest in geology, but they also conjure on a small, hand-held scale, a sense of the vastness of the universe, of imaginary journeys into deep space and time or into the subterranean realm. To some of these geodes Hitchens has applied successive coats of fleshycoloured resin that lend them the appearance of hurtling meteorites. The juxtaposition of a substance visually approximating flesh or skin with a glittering, crystalline interior offers in microcosm a sense of Hitchens's broader interest in the contrast between human time and geological time, between body and earth.

These small-scale experiments have invited a certain rawness into his work, embracing the accidental and unexpected. They enable him to engage more freely with his enduring preoccupation with internal spaces. He still savours the moment of exposing the interior of a mass of rock, at being the first living thing in millions of years to see into the rock's inner essence. That physical act seems to trigger some primal awareness of what he likes to call "deep time".

These discoveries also reveal a good deal about Hitchens's approach to his public sculpture and are surely a key to why his work meets with universal approval from commissioning clients. His bodily interaction with the world around him and his deep knowledge of the natural and man-made materials with which he works have enabled

These discoveries also reveal a good deal about Hitchens's approach to his public sculpture and are surely a key to why his work meets with universal approval from commissioning clients.

him to forge a highly personal sculptural grammar that is perhaps best understood by those experiencing his work in situ. Sculpture is among the most collaborative of art practices, uniting a broad range of professionals and craft-based practitioners in a common endeavour. Hitchens is respected not only for his creative expertise but also for his flexibility and pragmatic, problemsolving skill-sets, for he revels as much in the hardware of tripods and trucks as in the nuanced fashioning and finishing that every work demands.

Hitchens's public commissions continue to deploy subtle allusions to the earth and the mountains he still climbs in his free time, but harmoniously adapted to the urban environment. They also confirm the significant changes that public art has undergone over the past forty years.

In 1972, the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation's City Sculpture Project was launched with a view to revitalising British public sculpture. This was a period in which various forms of abstraction were beginning to challenge the previously dominant tradition of commemorative monuments. The ubiquitous statues of great men and fallen heroes confirmed the extent to which public art in the 1960s remained largely in thrall to figurative imagery. The City Sculpture Project illustrated the determination of a more progressive strain of practitioners to shift the emphasis towards a different aesthetic. Regrettably this occasionally resulted in objects that were visually noisy, physically intrusive or - equally problematic wilfully obscure. As often as not, a pre-existing work had merely been re-located in a public space to which it bore little or no relation. Moreover. many of the supporting statements issued by the artists participating in the City Sculpture Project seemed to confirm their detachment from the civic realm and their insensitivity to the public space. As the critic Lawrence Alloway noted at the time, it takes more than an outdoor site to make sculpture public: "In all these statements, very simple views of the autonomy of the artist and the work are maintained which, as far as public sculpture is concerned, is like talking Welsh on prime time."

Hitchens has fully absorbed these evolutionary developments and is at home with the now mature tradition of public sculpture to which he has made a major contribution. He seems able, through careful research, to tune his creative instincts to suit the intended destination of the finished work. One of his most recent and successful projects in this regard is the piece entitled Glorious Beauty

Hitchens has fully absorbed these evolutionary developments and is at home with the now mature tradition of public sculpture to which he has made a major contribution. located at the intersection of Warwick Avenue and Kensington High Street in West London. It comprises a glacial erratic boulder sourced from a gravel quarry in North Wales, erected vertically in order to support its mirror image in polished stainless steel. The juxtaposition of natural and fabricated elements is a recurring feature of Hitchens's practice and in this instance sets up a pleasing visual counterpoint to the architectural geometry of the background development.

There is also a deeper symbolism at work here which, although not immediately apparent to the passerby, is nevertheless enriching on discovery. Hitchens explains it best: "Having been tumbled around by glaciers during the last ice age, this boulder had the soft weathered appearance I was after: not a sharp edged, man-made form fresh from a quarry, but an overtly organic, almost prehistoric standing stone type of form. The

One might be forgiven for asking what a somewhat arcane knowledge of glacial geology has to do with public sculpture. In Hitchens's mind it is a wellspring that is critical not only to the concept of the work but also to its very specific public location.

rock itself is actually a metamorphic mudstone called Garnet Amphibolite which was formed in Anglesey." One might be forgiven for asking what a somewhat arcane knowledge of glacial geology has to do with public sculpture. In Hitchens's mind it is a wellspring that is critical not only to the concept of the work but also to its very specific public location. As he explains, "If the last ice age had been more vigorous, pushing the ice sheet further south, then the glacial moraine which was deposited to become a North Wales gravel quarry may well have transported this very boulder to the heart of Kensington, where between the early seventeenth century and the mid-nineteenth century there were gravel pits supplying the building of London's West End." Importing an awareness of the primordial into the public realm in the form of sculpture might almost be seen as a sub-branch of psychogeography, the preoccupation that seeks new ways to apprehend the urban environment.

This approach also suggests an affinity between Hitchens's attitude towards his public commissions and the philosophy underpinning the work of the great Japanese-American artist

When executed with consideration for the site and its human purpose, public sculpture can foster connectivity between people and locate us more creatively in space and time.

Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), who believed that the deeper meaning of sculpture had to be sought in the working of hard stone, to reveal "the evidence of geologic time." In Hitchens's work, this can be seen in the significance he attaches to introducing the fundamentally immeasurable quality of ancient stones (whether worked or unworked) and related forms into the civic realm. When executed with consideration for the site and its human purpose, public sculpture can foster connectivity between people and locate us more creatively in space and time. Hitchens believes that public enjoyment is vital to the very meaning of sculpture. As Noguchi once wrote:

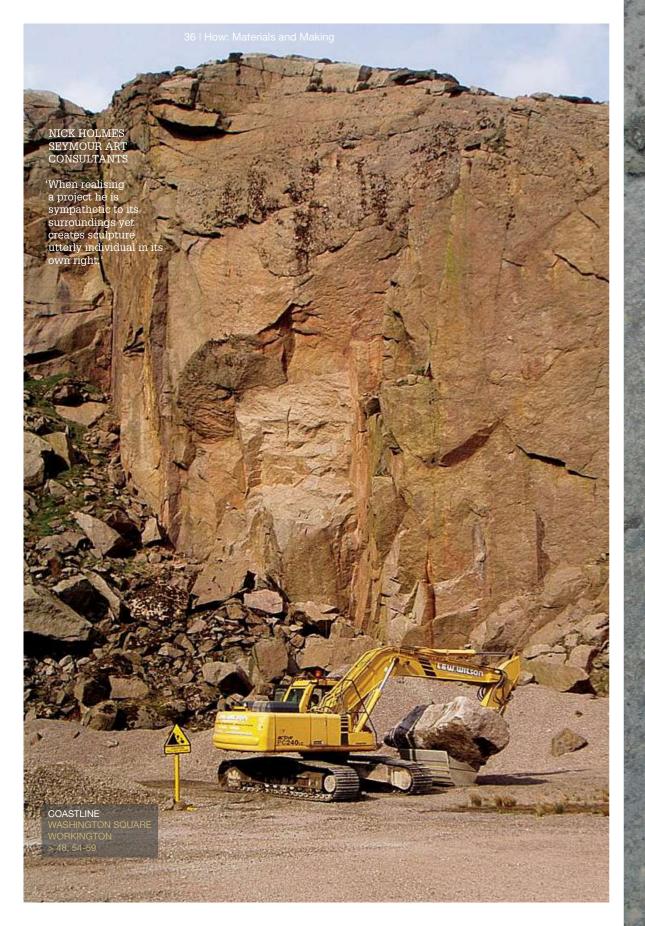
Our reaction to the physical environment may be represented as a series of hazy but continuous

aesthetic judgments. Such judgments affect even the control of our emotions, bringing order out of chaos, myth out of the world, a sense of belonging out of loneliness.

To achieve this takes time and commitment. For Hitchens it is time spent in his studio where his aesthetic judgments can be nurtured and given substance. The results are some of the finest public sculpture projects in Britain today.

Tom Flynn, 2017

Dr. Tom Flynn is a freelance art market and culture industry professional for the academic, publishing and management sectors of the art world.



37 | How: Materials and Making

MATERIALS AND MAKING

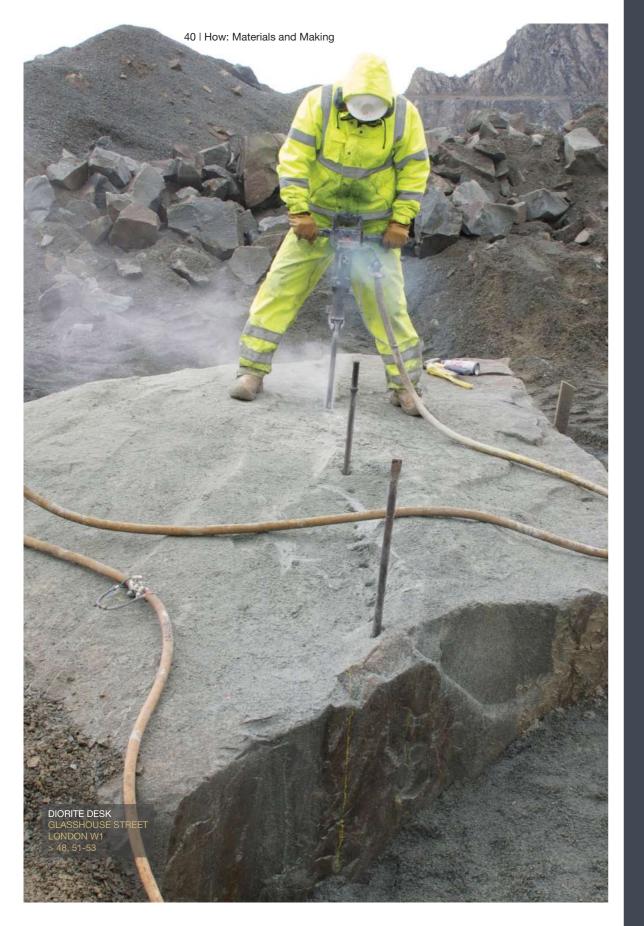
'I have a hands-on approach to making sculpture, born out of a fascination with materials and processes, exploring and pushing boundaries. This enables me to deliver unique and often ground breaking sculpture, creating relationships between art, architecture and the public.'



CARVED using a 40mm quarry rock drilling rig in Aberdeen 18 TONNES of African granite, shaped into a 4 tonne sculpture MAKING the silicone master mould for resin in Somerset INSTALLED using hidden stainless steel holding down bolts







How Project Management and Installation

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100

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND INSTALLATION

State Man 11 an 10

THE SPACE BETWEEN

FORBURY PLACE RERADING > 13-14, 47 SPALE

100

'I focus acutely upon every aspect of a public sculpture project: from the early design stages where engineers mitigat possible forces, through continuous quality control of production and the meticulous planning aspects needed for successful installation, to delivering projects with successful outcomes.' 43 | How: Project Management and Installation

NICK HOLMES SEYMOUR ART CONSULTANTS

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'He has the ability to realise monumental sculpture on time and on budget, and personally oversees the installation and future care of the work.'



35 TONNES of quarried rock from Fuzhou in China MATHEMATICALLY challenging helical twist designed by hand and CAD 11,5000 MILES to Reading by crane, truck, rail and sea ENGINEERED to withstand extreme wind loading INSTALLED using a 50 tonne mobile crane

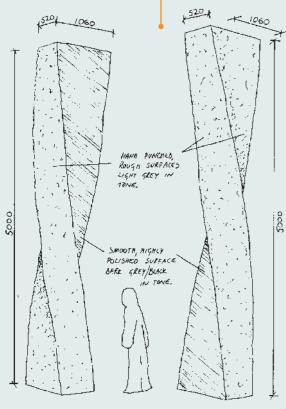


















Projects

L

Forbury Place, Reading M&G Real Estate, 2015

The Space Between granite Property Developer Bell Hammer Architect Aukett Swanke

Commissioned by M&G Real Estate on behalf of The Prudential Assurance Company Ltd. and working in partnership with Bell Hammer Property Development. This site-specific landmark sculpture marks the entrance to Reading's newest grade A specified business premises. Echoing design aspects of the building's façade, this pair of twisting helical forms act as sentinels, marking the busy entrance to Forbury Place.

Patrick Davis, Partner at Bell Hammer:

"We decided to place a significant landmark sculpture in front of the two buildings marking the main entrance for pedestrians - easily visible from either end of Forbury Road. Because the development of high quality real estate is our business, we were determined to choose a sculptor who could deliver a sensitive and complementary sculpture to the striking architecture behind it - we found that sculptor in Simon.

From the initial engagement with him, working through a variety of ideas and finally the installation itself, he has been every bit the professional we originally hoped for. His capability in managing the intricacies of such a large project working alongside builders, designers and project managers alike, was without fault. I thank him for delivering every bit of the significant landmark sculpture he promised us two years ago, and for taking any of the worries that could present themselves in such a project, away from our daily duties making the journey enjoyable and memorable. I'm convinced that Reading will grow to love this sculpture as much as we do.'

2

Boscombe Pier , Bournemouth Bournemouth Borough Council, 2008

From Dawn Until Dusk granite Consultant Helen Middleton-Stewart Engineer AKS Ward Ltd

A site-responsive commission for Bournemouth Borough Council as part of its Sea Road Regeneration Scheme. The design brief was for a landmark sculpture to sit on the pier road roundabout and also to re-landscape the existing Wessex Water Pumping Station, incorporating seating for a bus stop. Drilled and split from one block, the granite slabs stand as quiet sentinels overseeing the comings and goings at the sea front and contrast the bold design of the adjacent Grade II listed Boscombe Pier entrance building. The terraced landscape design of both islands creates a unity across this small but busy site, complementing the white horizontal roofline of the listed pier entrance and the distant horizon.

Helen Middleton-Stewart, Landscape Architect, Dorset County Council:

'At Boscombe the sculptural elements conceived and realised by Simon have transformed the approach to the pier and seafront, responding to the challenging nature of the site and harsh environment, to create a unique, distinct and practical piece of urban design.'

3

The Leys, Cambridge Commission Projects, 2014

Transition Point granite, stainless steel Architect Bland, Brown + Cole

Commissioned by The Leys to celebrate the opening of Great Hall, a new performing arts and science building and inspired by the scientific concept of states of change: Transition Point - a moment in time when an entity changes from one state to another. It references the school's pupils, their transition physically from class to class, place to place, and their transition from childhood to adulthood when ready to leave their time at The Leys.

The Headmaster Martin Priestley:

'I see this as an enhancement of every aspect of school life – academic, artistic, scientific, and pastoral, and as a piece of art which will, in due course, become an iconic image in the minds of Leysians as they move through school and on through life.'

4

375 Kensington High Street, London St Edward – (Berkeley Group), 2014

Glorious Beauty granite glacial boulder, stainless steel Art Consultant Ann Elliott

Commissioned by St Edward for the completion of Trinity House, under the guidance of art consultant Ann Elliott. Worn through the passage of time, the natural beauty of this glacial boulder contrasts with the busy urban environment. Balancing above the boulder is its digitally created counterpart, mirroring the prehistoric form and also the changing activity around it. The sculpture manifests both continuity and change.

Paul Vallone, Executive Chairman of St Edward

'The unveiling of Glorious Beauty is a major milestone in the development of 375 Kensington High Street. We have worked tirelessly to deliver the highest levels of design and detail, selecting the best materials to create the finest finishes, and we have carried this through to our choice of public art, ensuring it is appropriate to one of London's most sought after new addresses.'

Ann Elliott, Exhibitions and Visual Art Projects

'In brokering the relationship between Simon Hitchens and St Edward for this prestigious commission at the western entrance to Kensington High Street and the head of the development that will continue along Warwick Road, we have set the standard very high. It has been a pleasure to work with professionals who achieve high standards in both building and in the visual arts. The work draws on the history of the locality as well as being a sculpture of balance and contemporary vision.'

5

Radius Court, Eastern Road, Bracknell Frogmore Real Estate, 2000

Rubus Five stainless steel, Kilkenny limestone, York sandstone

Commissioned by Frogmore Real Estate for the completion of Radius Court. A site-specific sculpture responding to the materials, colours and forms of the building's façade.

6

Glasshouse Street, London The Crown Estate, 2015

Diorite Desk diorite granite Architect/Designer Barr Gazetas

Commissioned by The Crown Estate in conjunction with design architects Barr Gazetas. A bespoke reception desk made from a single diorite boulder with a final weight of 3 tonnes. The functionality was highly specified as was the colour and form of the original boulder - no easy task.

Tim Webb, Retail Business Development Manager, The Crown Estate:

"We set Simon a challenging brief - to produce a functional stone reception desk that fused the rawness of the stone's original state and the elegance of artistic ingenuity. The vision we had was to create something that looked as if someone had reached up to the roof of a cave and plucked out a piece of stone and fashioned it into furniture. Simon's work achieved this 100%.

It was a true pleasure to have worked with him from the moment that I awarded him the commission and Simon's passion and enthusiasm has been infectious throughout the project. He was inspired to explore the four corners of the Crown's ownerships to source the right piece of stone for the desk commission, and from the moment that 30 tonne piece of Diorite was discovered in North Wales he carefully held its hand on its journey around the UK, from extraction, to cutting, to its final shaping and then delivery to its new home in central London tending its metamorphosis to a beautiful conclusion.

I am compelled to look through the doorway every time I walk past the office reception where it now resides. Ancient history and modern expression presented in solid form. Even the receptionist, unprompted, will proudly tell anyone arriving in the building the life story of his new desk.'

7

Washington Square, Workington Allerdale Borough Council, 2006

Coastline granite, polyurethane resin, LED & fibre optic lighting, steel Agent Working pArts

Commissioned by Allerdale Borough Council, working in partnership with North West Development Agency and public art consultant Working pArts. The double award winning regeneration scheme placed this new town square as its prominent gateway. Using the concept of 'Coastline', the border between land and sea, this commission included landmark sculpture, a site specific paving map, bespoke seating using local Shap granite and innovative lighting for night-time users, providing shoppers with places to meet, chat and rest.

Geoff Wood, Director, Working pArts:

'The great value of bringing artists into the regeneration process is that they have the confidence and the vocabulary to react creatively to what they find. Simon is articulate in a range of contrasting materials and processes; granite and resin, casting and carving, using light and line; and he has shown himself able to absorb the peculiarities of place whilst retaining the integrity of his own sculptural voice.'

8

Limeharbour, London Ability Group, 2007

Parallel Presence granite Art Consultant Seymour Art Consultants

Commissioned by Seymour Art Consultants on behalf of Ability Group. This pair of granite slabs, split from one mother block, is a robust yet subtle response to a new property building: echoing the red colour used in the surrounding architecture and surface materials, it completes the jig-saw cutout 'missing' corner of the building.

Nick Holmes, Seymour Art Consultants:

'As an art consultancy we look for a number of aspects from an artist and his work before asking them to create a sculptural proposal for a client. The project was for a sculpture within a large public space outside a prestigious development near Canary Wharf. Simon Hitchens realised all these requirements faultlessly. First and foremost he is an artist of true originality creating a broad scope of thought provoking work. When realising a project he is sympathetic to its surroundings yet creates sculpture utterly individual in its own right. He has the ability to realise monumental sculpture on time and on budget, personally overseeing installation and future care of the work. Simon is an artist who I have admired for many years, who is constantly developing and questioning his craft and who I can whole heartedly recommend for any major public project.'

9

Alpha Place, London Native Land, 2015

Evidence of the Unseen Mountain granite, bronze Art Consultant Art Projects Ltd. Architect John Robertson Architects

Located between Kings Road and Cheyne Walk, this sculpture was commissioned by Native Land to celebrate the opening of Alpha House, a prime residential scheme

in the heart of London. Managed by Art Projects Ltd and signed off by The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the sculpture positively contributes to the public space for those who live and work around it by accentuating the human scale of its surroundings and by using fine bronze to complement the rough-hewn qualities of the granite half.

10

King's Cross, London Urbanest, 2013

Unity granite, polyurethane resin Art Consultant Art Contact Architect Glen Howells

Commissioned by Art Contact on behalf of Urbanest for their student accommodation building at King's Cross Central. The redevelopment of the former King's Cross Goods Yard, now known as King's Cross Central, owes much of its appeal to the proud industrial heritage that formed it. This graphic sculpture references the heavy engineering and robust materials used in the area's industrial past, but also the aspirational state of the art future being built at King's Cross Central.

Virginia Grub, Director, Art Contact:

'A regeneration and evolution of a public space is a celebration of its future and an appreciation of its past. Simon flawlessly incorporated these qualities in a triumphant piece of sculpture, commissioned on behalf of Urbanest at KCC. Art Contact worked closely with Simon through all stages of the development, from the initial concept to installation. He is a master of his craft and a true expert. Simon's knowledge and his execution of our brief made the project run seamlessly. His knowledge of Public Art Sculpture and materials used for 'Unity' in granite and resin demonstrated the intrinsic understanding and the genuine passion he has for his art, while his professionalism made him a joy to work with. Our client was delighted with the end result.'

'It was a true pleasure to have worked with him. From the moment that I awarded him the commission Simon's passion and enthusiasm has been infectious throughout the project.'

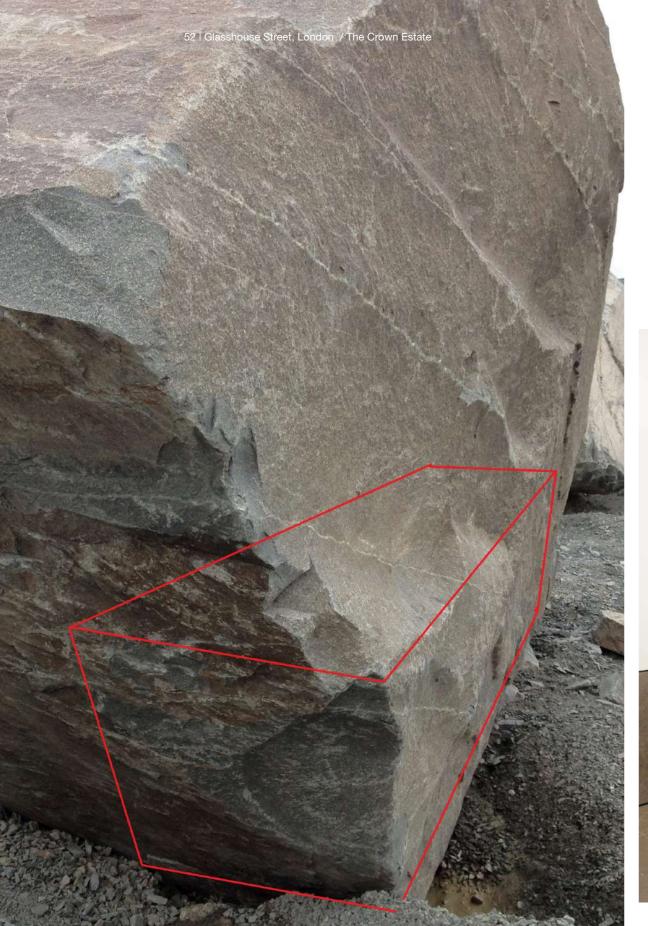
Tim Webb, Retail Business Development Manager The Crown Estate

6

Glasshouse St. London W1 / The Crown Estate

'We set Simon a challenging brief - to produce a functional stone reception desk that fused the rawness of the stone's original state and the elegance of artistic ingenuity. Simon's work achieved this one hundred percent.'

Diorite Desk (diorite granite





Washington Square Workington / Allerdale BC

'The great value of bringing artists into the regeneration process is that they have the confidence and the vocabulary to react creatively to what they find.'

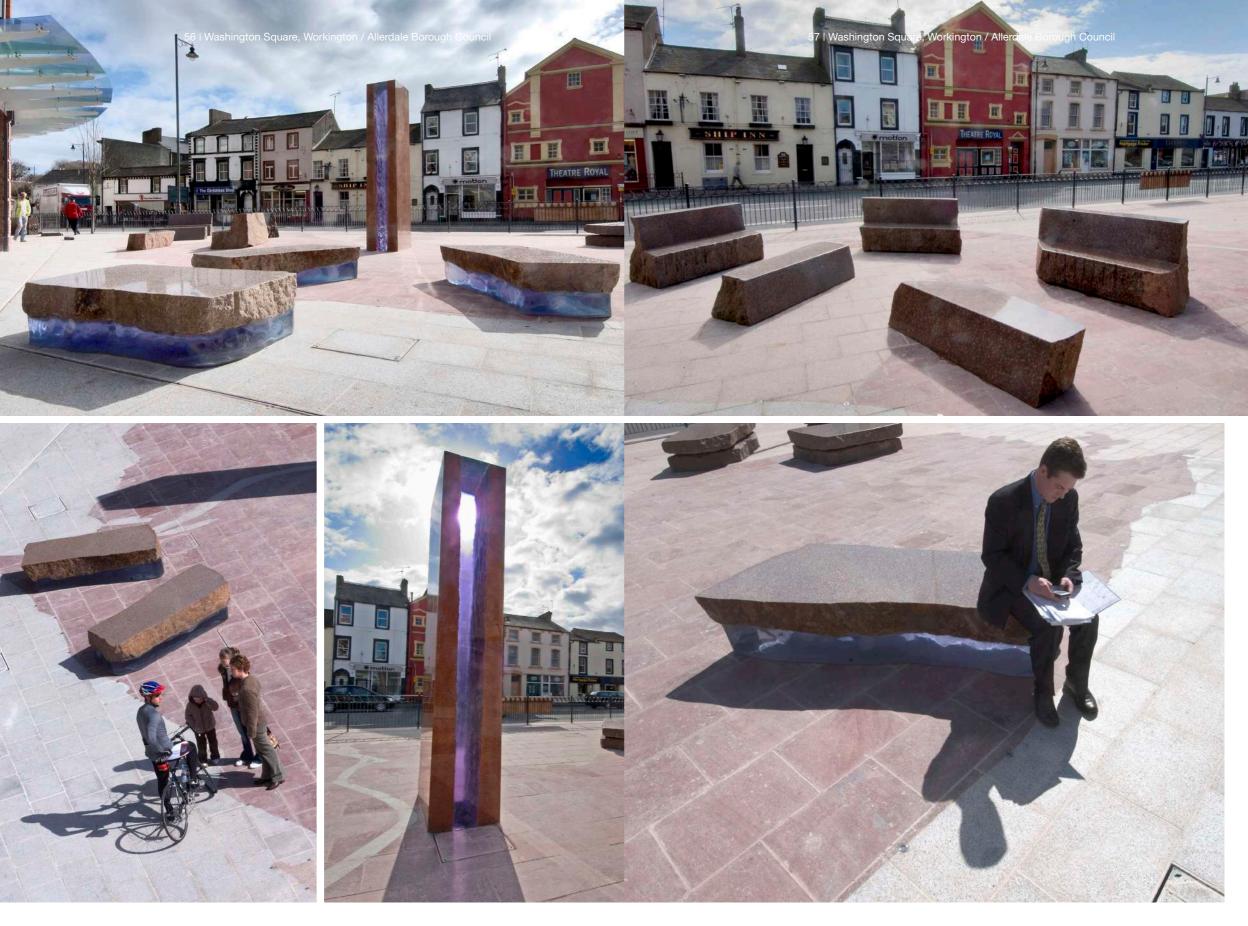
Coastline (granite, polyurethane resin, LED fibre optic lighting, steel)

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61 | Limeharbour, London E14 / Ability Group

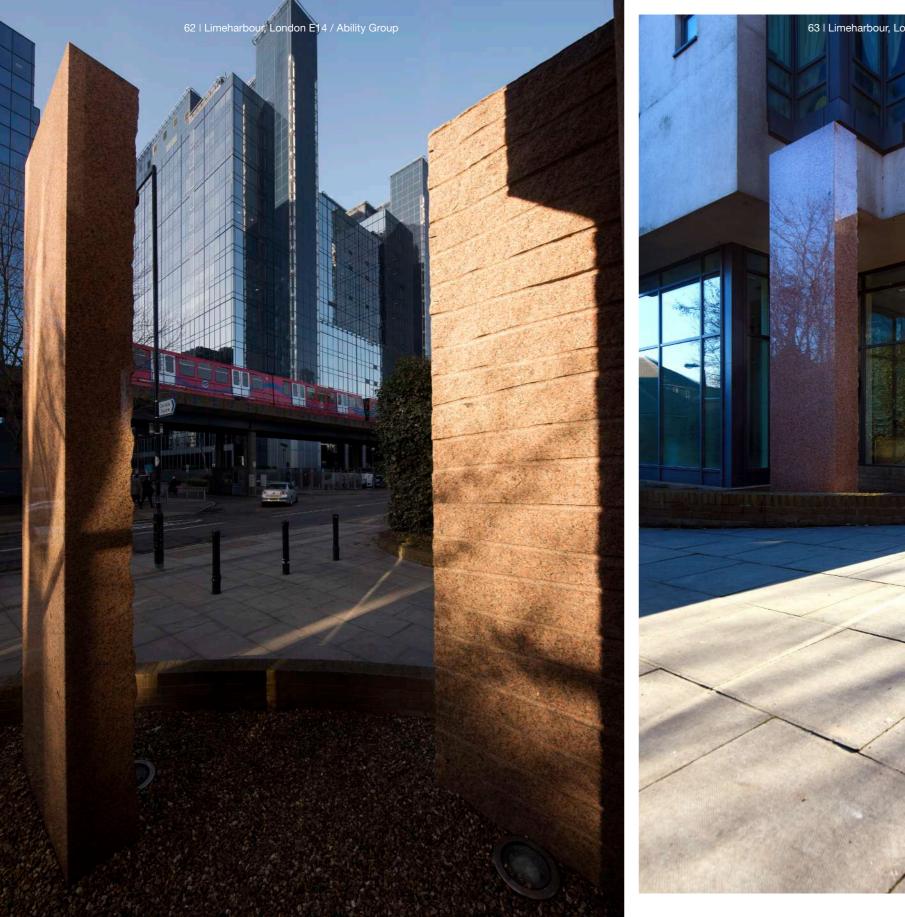
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Limeharbour London E14 / Ability Group

'The project was for a sculpture within a large public space outside a prestigious development near Canary Wharf. Simon Hitchens realised all these requirements without fault.'

Parallel Presence (granite)





9

Alpha Place London SW3 / Native Land

Evidence of Unseen Mod

'Simon's knowledge and execution of our brief made the project run composite while

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on / Native Land

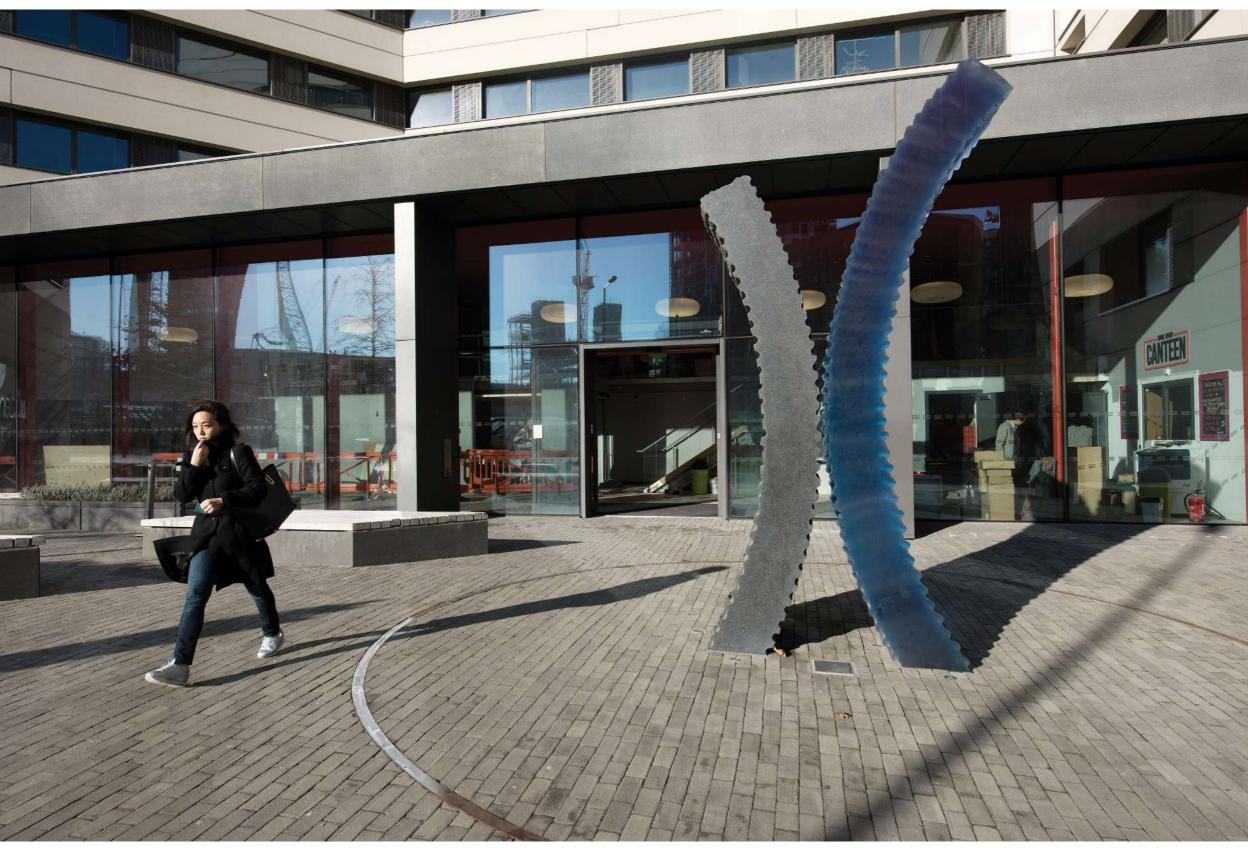


A regeneration and evolution of a public space is a celebration of its future and an appreciation of its past. Simon flawles ly incorporated these qualities in a triumphant piece of urban sculpture.

Unity, (granite, polyurethane res.n)



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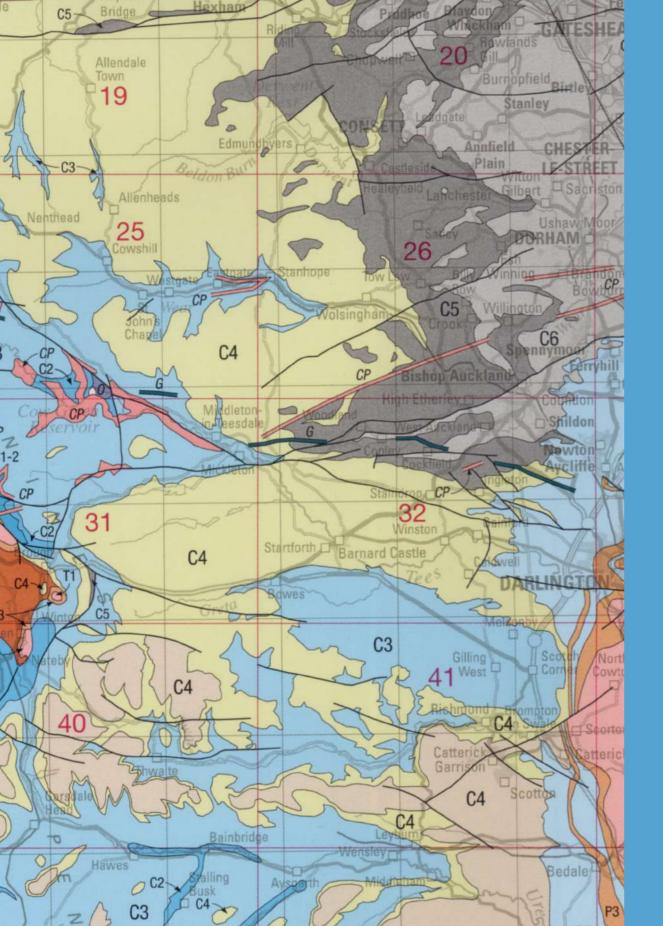
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