

MATTHEW DARBYSHIRE

A
SELECTION
OF
OUTDOOR
&
PUBLIC REALM
ARTWORKS

2021

Introduction.

The following pages feature a selection of public realm projects I have completed over the past ten or so years. These have been commissioned by a diverse range of clients including city councils, private developers, public museums, private galleries, collectors and, in some instances, my own studio by way of our own research. Materials and formats used include bronze monuments, interactive play parks, graphic hoardings, installations, stand-alone-sculptures, functional kiosks, bespoke wearables and wayfinding and ambient lighting solutions.

One commonality between all the projects featured is that much of the process, from initial research and development right through to final conception and fabrication, has been executed by my passionate and enthusiastic studio team of digital designers, makers and innovators who conduct much of the work with me in-house whilst also working closely with the essential external services such as engineers and foundry workers on the more ambitious projects. In addition to this, we also have very good relations with a number of larger fabricators whom we can either work with or outsource anything too big or complicated to be completed in-house.

This very hands-on approach not only keeps the budgets down but protects the work from becoming too corporate and ensures conceptual and technical rigor is maintained throughout. It also enables me to tailor each project very specifically to acknowledge the unique circumstances, requirements and constraints imposed by the site, budget and client. The usual procedure is that I provide an expression of interest before going away to brainstorm possible ideas which are then put to the jury and developed collectively to ensure all parties are satisfied.

Most important to me is that public art does not get eroded by kitsch or populist sentiment and that we populate our public spaces with thought-provoking artworks that challenge preconceptions, question conventions and encourage debate. My underlying principle is that we must strive to balance the social and the aesthetic, and make sure one never outweighs the other.

Title.

11 Rue Simon-Crubellier

Date completed.

November 2019

Location.

Olympic Stadium, Amsterdam, NL

Medium.

Bronze, concrete and water fountains

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire, Anything is Possible (NL) and Bronsgieterij Stijlaart (NL)

Commissioner and budget.

Amsterdam City Council €250,000

Brief description.

11 Rue Simon-Crubellier is an interactive public sculpture that was conceived in collaboration with local residents. It takes its title from French writer George Perec's eponymously named 1978 novel that was based on the lives of the inhabitants of its fictitious Parisian apartment block, only this version adopts the exact layout and design of one of the newly built apartments overlooking the site on the North side of the Olympic square, whose architectural footprint is demarcated in a two-inch tall concrete plinth, upon which its inhabitants, the local residents, have collectively selected and arranged its furnishings, which are cast in bronze and placed accordingly.

Participants were invited via a leafleting campaign within a 5-mile radius of the site. Residents then attended various meetings where we introduced the project and described some of the thoughts underlying it. We then built an interactive website where they could vote for their favourite objects which would eventually comprise their dream home. There were 50 object categories (ie. armchair, toaster, fridge etc.) and within each category they had the choice of 5 options, each deriving from a recognised design museum within the Netherlands. They also had the opportunity to override the official choices and nominate their own High St alternatives.

Because we were not granted permission to take direct casts of the museum relics, myself and designer Bob Hobbs painstakingly modelled each of the 300 objects on the longlist for the website, and then tweaked the 50 final selections ready for CNC lathing in polystyrene. These polystyrene patterns were then coated in beeswax before being cast in bronze using the burn-out method that saves time and reduces cost as it does not require the manufacture of expensive silicone moulds.



Title.

Anagrams No.1 – No.3 (Pip, Grace and Dot)

Date.

September 2021

Location.

Frieze Art Fair, London UK

Medium.

Jesmonite 730 (Exterior Grade)

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire

Commissioner and budget.

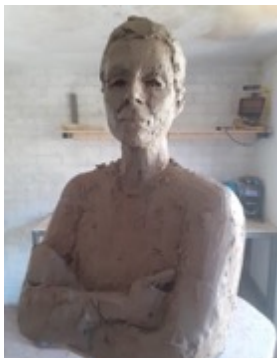
Sussudio Darbyshire £10,000

Brief description.

This was actually my 2020 lockdown project whereby I decided to try and teach myself traditional clay modelling by sculpting for 3 x one hour sessions per day my models/co-habitants: Dot (my daughter), Grace (my wife) and Pip (my mother). Once completed in clay I took rubber moulds which can now be used to reproduce casts in outdoor materials such as Jesmonite whilst also enabling me to make casts in wax which can then be sent to the foundry for bronze casting.

The set of 3 busts overleaf were shown at Frieze Art Fair 2021 and are now exhibited outside in a private collection but my longer-term intention is to try and use these examples to attract further figurative commissions that I would execute partly from life and partly using photographs and possibly even 3D scans as we have recently invested in the technology required to produce life-size 3D prints which I can also work from in an effort to save time.

I believe much public figurative sculpture to be severely sub-standard and wanted to use this opportunity to find out whether it was possible to make realist sculptures in the 21st century that did not look conservative or kitsch. Whilst genuinely shocked at the amount of patience required to capture true resemblance, I am satisfied with the outcome and particularly reassured by the softness and spirit that I do not believe could have been achieved via wholly digital means.



Title.

Brand Deities

Date installed.

October 2018

Location.

Selfridges London and Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Medium.

Metals, pigments and resin on stainless steel armatures

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire and Setworks, London

Commissioner and budget.

Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Selfridges £30,000

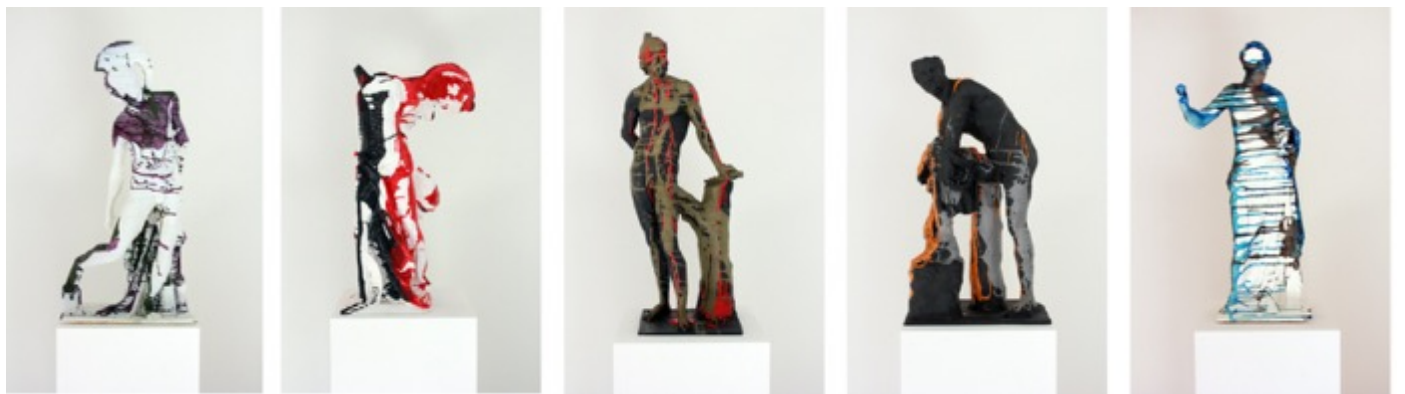
Brief description.

Brand Deities derive from a commission for Selfridges Duke St entrance. They play with, subvert and interrogate familiar classical symbols. Observing that many world-wide consumer brands derive from classical deities, we decided to reinterpret the traditional statuary of *Nike, Hermes, Mars, Trojan and Venus* using the layering method typically seen in digital printing.

“I had a bit of a breakthrough whilst walking around the Selfridges store and suddenly realising the similarity between shopping emporium and museum layouts. Then I thought back further and realised that Roman and Greek temples informed the cathedral which informed the museum and the museum informed the mall – so, if shopping is the new religion, then brands are the new icons that, regardless of faith, race or creed, unify us all. I then realised we’d come full circle and that the main brands today in fact derive from the classical deities first shown in ancient temples, then in cathedrals, museums, and now in the ultimate secular temple – the store!” MD

The works deliberately resemble the output of a 3D printer, however, they have been traditionally crafted using larger scales and more robust materials unfamiliar to the 3D printing industry. Retaining all the tell-tale layering and plasticity of a 3D print, the 6 sculptures remind us of their Greco-Roman forebears that used stone and alloy finishes, only this time we have developed our own versions and combined them with the colour schemes associated with each brand – for example Mars with its black wrapper, red letters and gold edging; a classic Nike sneaker with the original vivid blue, white and black branding; and Hermes with its signatory orange and silver detailing.

These sculptures extend my research into the impact of digital processes upon sculpture, the potency of the mediated form and the lingering cultural importance of the classical.



Title.

Everything Everywhere (Part 1)

Date.

May 2008

Location.

ICA, London UK

Medium.

Various lighting solutions

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire and ICA

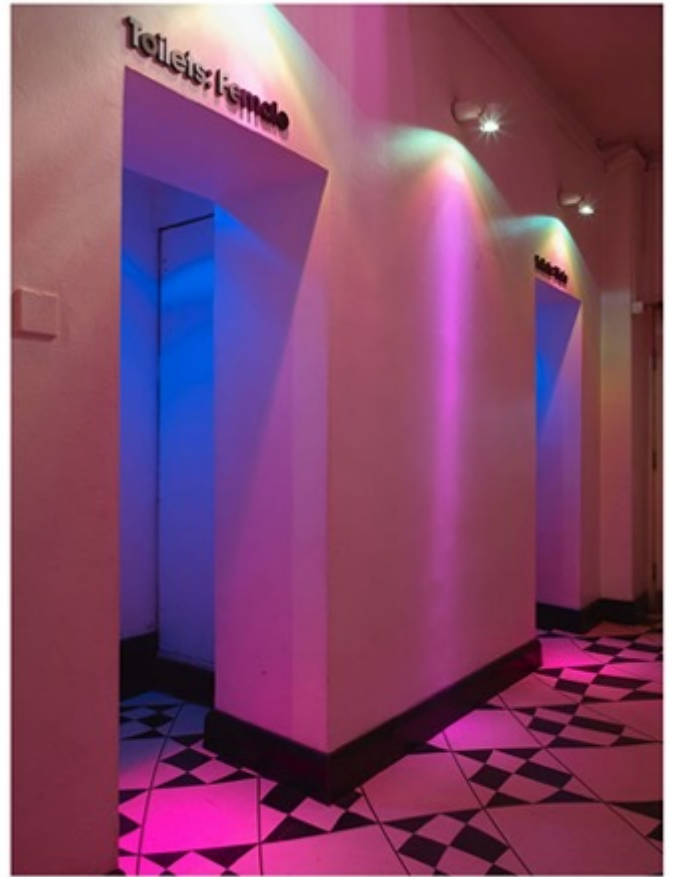
Commissioner and budget.

ICA £1,000

Brief description.

Everything Everywhere was my response to an invitation to make an exhibition for the ICA galleries. My main concerns at the time were centred around the negative impacts of economic globalisation and particularly the resultant aesthetic homogenisation that I was seeing unify all walks of life, irrespective of the nature or purpose of place. Maybe aspects of this diffusion were democratising and positive, but why were cultural institutions looking like banks; libraries like shopping malls; offices like lounges; and hotel foyers like kids play areas? This installation focussed primarily on the post-millennium palette of unifying colours such as sexy pink, salsa red, and zesty oranges that seemed intent on masking any differences between race, faith, class or gender in hope that we could all be treated/targeted as one mono-culture/consumer.

My aim feeling was that we ought to celebrate difference and not mask it, and in this instance my focus was on the coloured hues that were almost subliminally introduced in to public access buildings via discrete lighting schemes, in order to achieve that allegedly upbeat, fun, unifying look that made everywhere feel exactly the same as everywhere else. My lighting interventions infiltrated the existing lighting systems of the ICA and replaced them all with solutions I'd appropriated from disparate contexts across the UK's capital. For example, the glowing green reception desk from London's BP Headquarters; the pink architectural wall washers from Christs Church in Spitalfields; the James Turrell style Orange wall coffers from the mobile phone store in Balham; a blue UV hue in the loo's from Vauxhall Bridge's underpass; and jazzy purple fluorescents zigzagging across the foyer ceiling from Hackney Community college.



Title.

Open Air Sculpture

Date installed.

July 2018

Location.

Sarvisalo, Finland

Medium.

Bronze, stainless steel and enamel paint

Fabricator.

Sussudio darbyshire and Bronsgieterij Stijlaart, Amsterdam

Commissioner and budget.

Zabludowicz Collection £35,000

Brief Description.

Many of my installations and sculptures explore contemporary values and their relationship to art history and aesthetics. In this permanent commission for the Hermans Estate (on the island of Sarvisalo in Finland) we created these interactive bronze 'copies' of iconic sculptures from the western modernist tradition.

These playable artworks directly reference objects by American and British sculptors Alexander Calder (USA 1898-1976), Barbara Hepworth (UK 1903-1975) and Henry Moore (UK 1898-1986). For this commission, I reproduced versions of each of their signature works and repurposed them as children's play equipment.

The play elements have been selected to enhance the formal properties of the sculptures - Moore's *Large Arch*, 1971 becomes a nest swing, Hepworth's 1948-9 *Biolith* with comedy lips is a working megaphone and a facsimile of Calder's *Upstanding T*, 1944 now has brightly coloured musical gongs.



Title.

Radiographs No.1 – No.4 (Aeron chair, Samsonite suitcase, BMW wheel and Nike Airmax trainers)

Date.

June 2018

Location.

Galerie Entrepris Jousse, Paris

Medium.

Cast polyester resin

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire

Commissioner and budget.

Galerie Jousse £4,000

Brief description.

This ongoing *Radiograph Series* encompasses 4 lifestyle objects chosen for their iconic and fetishized status – an Aeron chair; a Samsonite suitcase; a BMW alloy wheel; and a pair of Nike Airmax '95 trainers. They are cast in clear polyester resin and sand-blasted to reveal, on closer inspection, multiple greasy hand-prints etched across their surfaces.

The clear resin gives these solid objects a feeling of weightlessness and immateriality similar to that of a radiograph, whilst their partially etched surface conjures an almost lifelike glow and perspiration that is intended to humanise these otherwise inanimate consumer objects.

By making visible the caressing of these generic forms it is hoped that they are activated, brought to life and enabled to transcend their otherwise overlooked and mundane materiality.



Title.

Xerox Series No. 1 – 10

Date.

January 2017

Location.

Nottingham Castle Galleries, UK and Fulmer Sculpture UK

Medium.

Extruded concrete and stainless-steel armature

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire with Loughborough University 3D Print Department

Commissioner and budget

Nottingham Castle Museum and Gallery £5,000

Brief description.

This project aimed to explore two areas – the possibility of large-scale 3D printing using concrete and the bringing out of various exhibits from the Nottingham Castle Museum stores.

The 10 objects I chose to respond to from the collection were chosen by myself, the chief curator and the registrar. We each had our own inclinations and agenda's but eventually managed to negotiate a selection that we felt did justice to the collection, our own areas of interest and the expectations of the visitors.

These sculptures are quite literally 3D prints. They were created using a crude concrete extruder that I designed with the 3D print department at Loughborough University, along with a particular concrete recipe using various admixes and fibres to ensure correct flow, firmness, adhesion and cure. This is then fed through a gun, not dissimilar to a cake icing piping bag, and built up in coils until it reaches the desired shape and form.

This Xerox Series continues my investigation in to the role of sculpture in today's digital era. What is sculpture's purpose amidst the plethora of mediated imagery and why bother making anything when everything is now digitally reproducible? Where does the emotional trigger lie within an object (i.e. its material, scale, symbol etc.) and what advantages does the analogue have over the digital, if any?



Title.

Elis

Date.

January 2011

Location.

Herald St Gallery, London UK

Medium.

Digital print on aluminium

Fabricator.

MJCP Hoardings

Commissioner and budget.

Herald St Gallery £15,000

Brief description.

Elis was my first exhibition in a commercial gallery and wanting to continue the site-specific approach I'd developed to exhibitions since leaving art school, I decided that rather than compromise the critical in the name of the commercial via the display of saleable sculptures, I would instead try and reflect on both the commercial system I was gravitating towards and the rampant regeneration project that was pushing my generation of artists out of East London where we lived and worked. To do this I decided to shut down the gallery for the 6 week duration of the show and depict a hypothetical development across the 100m of hoarding we'd wrapped around the gallery, as though the mass developers had taken over this ex-industrial space, much as they had in all those that surrounded it, and were about to replace it with another inaccessible, sterile, mixed-use monstrosity that promised every amenity possible to its wealthy residents whilst entirely erasing the vital intimacy, soul and patina of the existing dynamic local community.



Title.

3D Printed Portrait No.1 (M Darbyshire)

Date.

October 2018

Location.

Argosy, Margate UK

Medium.

Eco PLA filament and foam core

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire

Commissioner and budget.

Sussudio Darbyshire £2,500

Brief description.

This is the first in a series of experiments we are conducting to see how possible it is to produce outdoor public sculpture entirely digitally, and if so, whether the outcome is not only engaging from an aesthetic and conceptual perspective, but also whether it is viable both in terms of cost and durability.

To do this we have invested in cutting edge 3D scanners that are more commonly used in the areas of film and animation, as well as all the necessary software and printers to process these scans and turn them in to full-size reality.

This research has proved positive. I am very excited by the detail and physical presence of these digital renditions and we have managed to develop some printing techniques that use materials suitable for outside and which can be filled inside with resins and concretes to protect against theft, weathering and vandalism. The speed of scanning and ease of printing these figures reduce the time and cost implications considerably in comparison to the more labour-intensive traditional techniques of modelling, mould-making and casting.

My hope is that we can use this technique in future outdoor commissions as it's speedy scanning would enable exciting collaborations with local protagonists and the end product would open up an interesting debate with regards to culture, technology and the future of outdoor figurative sculpture per se.



Title.

Hygieia – Goddess of Health, Cleanliness and Sanitation

2018 Building fragment and **Helios** Stress Relief Pillules, **Zeus** Beard Shampoo, **Mars** Protein Powder, **Venus** Razors, **Trojan** Condoms, **Apollo** Shower Gel, **Siren** Logo Cup, **Aphrodite** Hair Dryer and Soap, **Nike** Shower Sandals, **Samsonite** Toilet Kit, **Olympus** Bathroom Scale, **Athena** Poster, **Olympus** Camera, **Selene** Red Wine, **Victoria** Lagers, **Apollo** Noodles, **Aurora** Coffee, **Eros** Paprika Paste, **Gaia** Detox Tea, **Ajax** Cleaner, **Apollo** Scouring Pads, **Pegasus** Rice and **Arion** Cat Food.

Date.

October 2019

Location.

Frieze Art Fair

Medium.

Various readymade consumer products upon architectural section of new apartment

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire

Commissioner and budget.

Herald St Gallery £5,000

Brief Description.

This sculpture was intended as an outdoor proposition whereby it's fragile and perishable contents would be safely protected by the sealed glass vitrine within which they are housed. My hope was that this tableau of everyday consumables would operate as a sort of time-capsule, illustrating not only our contemporary design and lifestyle tendencies but also our ongoing obsession with the Classics.

Observing that many consumer brands derive from Greek and Roman deities, *Hygieia* reinterprets traditional statuary via contemporary consumer products. In this instance, we see the architectural intersection between an imagined protagonist's kitchen, bedroom and bathroom, as though it has been cut out and removed for analysis and posterity, and upon which is littered with over 25 consumables, appliances and cosmetics, all purchased from online retailer Amazon in 2019 to epitomise the shared tendencies of our times.

If shopping is our new religion then brands seem to be our new idols. *Hygieia* is a segment of this reality - a shrine to our universal faith; a contemporary cabinet of curiosity; and a snapshot of not only how we live today but also the objects with which we choose to surround ourselves.



Title.

Hercules Meets Galatea

Date.

October 2022

Location.

Frieze Sculpture (selected by Clare Lilley of Yorkshire Sculpture Park)

Medium.

Bronze and stainless steel

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire and Spacer, UK

Commissioner and budget.

Sussudio Darbyshire and Herald St Gallery £45,000

Brief Description.

This is a bronze rendition of an artwork I made nearly ten years ago with Hercules hand-cut in layers of polystyrene and Galatea machine-milled in a motorcar prototyping workshop. By juxtaposing male and female protagonists; Greek and Roman references; large and small scales; high and low materials; and analogue and digital means of production, *Hercules Meets Galatea* hopes to prompt a questioning of what it is to make sculpture today and what its function, if any, might now be?



Title.

CAPTCHA No. 6 – Doryphoros

Date.

July 2015

Location.

Royal Academy of Art, London, UK

Medium.

Multiwall polycarbonate sheet, candy coat car lacquers, silicone and stainless-steel fixings

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire

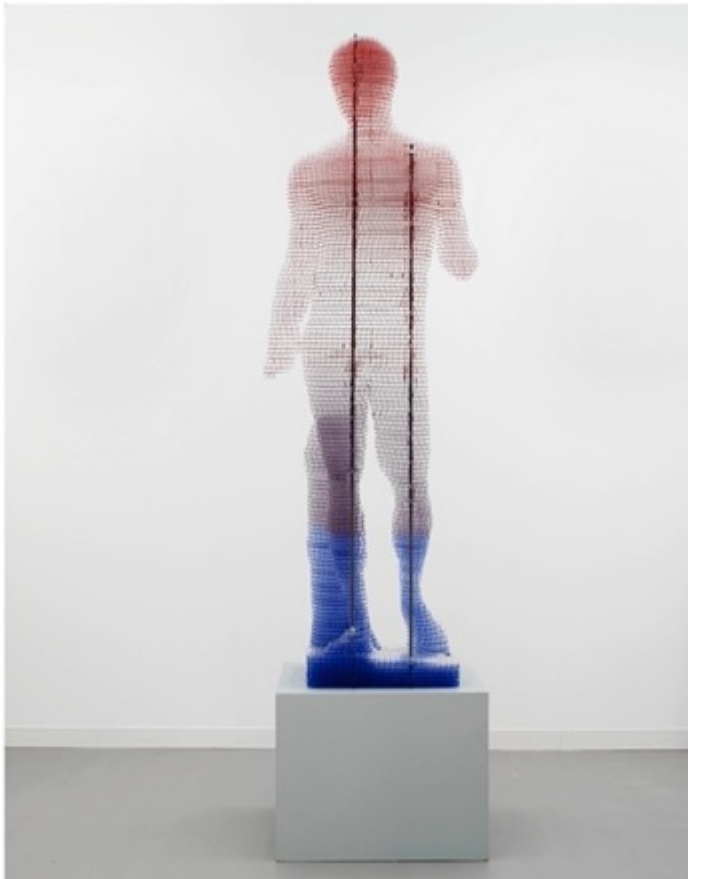
Commissioner and budget.

Private sponsor £5,000

Brief description.

CAPTCHA No. 6 – Doryphoros derives from a body of works based on the Renaissance City exhibition room in London's V&A. Recognising the continued relevance, beauty and command of Classical sculpture, I wanted to devise a medium that would enhance their formal properties but reflect also on our digital age and the possibilities afforded by it. By CNC machine-cutting and stacking hundreds of layers of fluted polycarbonate I was able to mimic the classical forms whilst also achieving a pixilated effect that whilst solid and opaque from one viewpoint, would almost dissolve in to thin air from another as the spectator's eye travelled around the object and through the fluted channels of the material.

Almost like physical holograms that drift in and out of visibility as the viewer encircles them, these CAPTCHA works further extend my inquiry in to the sculptural possibilities afforded by our digital era.



Title.

Sculpture Garden

Date.

January 2018

Location.

Battersea Park, London UK

Medium.

Cold cast bronze

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire and Setworks (UK)

Commissioner and budget.

UP Projects / Berkeley Homes £100,000

Brief description.

Sculpture Garden is an interactive artwork aimed primarily at toddlers from 0 to 5 years of age to facilitate creative and imaginative play. It also strives to create a new environment that operates on a sculptural level and appeals visually and critically to a broader audience.

Sculpture Garden takes its cue from the 1951 'International Open-Air Exhibition at Battersea Park of Sculpture' and aims to commemorate and revive its optimism and forward-thinking attitude. It is also made in homage to the cultural celebrations of the Festival of Britain that saw the permanent transformation and improvement of not just Battersea park and nearby Southbank, but arguably the nation and its arts and cultural landscape at large.

Sculpture Garden wants to facilitate, connect and navigate the local community, commemorate its cultural history and enhance the local development in a sophisticated, fun and engaging way. *Sculpture Garden* combines two languages – the 'sculptural' aspects adopting the more traditional bronze patina, and the 'play' aspects inviting interactivity and providing lots of fun for its younger visitors.



Title.

Everything Everywhere (Part 2)

Date.

October 2012

Location.

Frieze Projects, Frieze Art Fair, London UK

Medium.

Lighting, furniture, film, music and costume interventions within the functioning ticket office

Fabricator.

MDM (UK)

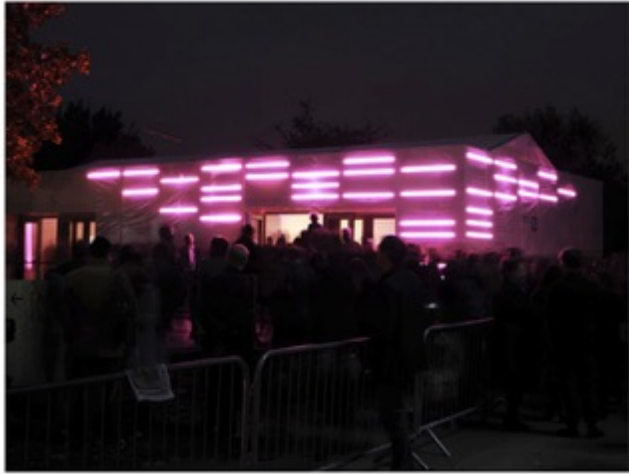
Commissioner and budget.

Frieze London £25,000

Brief description.

Invited by the art fair to undertake one of their prestigious commissions I decided that, rather than plonk a predictable 'lump out front' to woo the wealthy collectors, we'd instead try and examine the proximity between art and commerce, and the increasing similarity between the design aesthetics employed by trade fairs, museums, malls, soffices, tores, hotels and even learning environments.

This project encompassed architectural, lighting, interior, costume and furniture design, all of which we adopted directly from T Mobile's kit-of-parts concept store that could be found everywhere across the western world, and the underlying comment was that this perfectly fitting design for Frieze Art Fair reflected the increasing homogeneity, uniformity and lack of difference across the public realm. Magenta was the new grey and this artwork aimed to encourage us all to rethink the connotations of these supposedly upbeat environments – did they meet their promise of fun and liberation or were they in fact unimaginative, bland and infantilising?



Title.

Passive Sensor Series 1 to 4

Date.

January 2016

Location.

Herald St, London

Medium.

Resin, clay pigment and steel

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire and Setworks (UK)

Commissioner and budget.

Herald Street £20,000

Brief description.

Upon noticing the similarity between the much lauded 3D printer (that will allegedly soon be building everything from our prosthetic limbs to our synthetic houses) and the long-forgotten coil pots of prehistoric times, I decided to try and combine the principles of both in hope of achieving something more personal and expressive than a print but more complex and intricate than a pot.

The outcome of this were these 3 female figures - all adopting Rodin's formerly male poses, they are intended to take the viewer on a journey from the primal to the prevailing technological and encourage us all to rethink sculptural potentials from a formal, physical, material and manufacturing perspective.

Neither human nor inhuman, these hybrid figures want to spark this urgent debate by sitting somewhere uncomfortably in between.



Title.

Hercules Meets Galatea

Date.

July 2021

Location.

Cambridge North Railway Station, UK

Medium.

Cast aluminium and concrete

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire and Spacer (UK)

Commissioner and budget.

Commissions East & Brookgate £100,000

Brief description.

Hercules Meets Galatea is a bold, striking and playful place-making solution for the station forecourt. It was commissioned by local developer Brookgate as part of a Section 106 Planning Agreement and now successfully attracts passers-by as they meet and congregate; take a selfie while sitting aside Galatea; or just sit and contemplate while they wait for their train.

A re-examination of public monuments and the Greco-Roman histories that inform them, *Hercules Meets Galatea* reimagines Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum's Roman version of the Farnese Hercules glancing nervously at a super-sleek, digital interpretation of Pygmalion's Galatea, the Greek statue that allegedly rose to life to become the ideal wife, only, in this revised scenario for Cambridge North Station, she no longer blushes without voice or opinion but instead is seen confidently asserting herself, cool, composed and fearless against the rugged superhero, and implementing a welcome reversal of outmoded stereotypes.



Title.

IP

Date.

May 2015

Location.

Hoog Catharijne Mall, Utrecht NL

Medium.

Mixed

Fabricator.

Sussudio Darbyshire

Commissioner and budget.

Utrecht City Council €10,000

Brief description.

A play on the corporate abbreviation for 'intellectual property', *IP* is an arrangement of nine objects I discovered with in the mall that best epitomised both the immediate site and the social trends occurring elsewhere.

Quickly realising that all the necessary ingredients for a public sculpture within the mall were already there, I soon decided that all I needed to do was rearrange them in such a way that engaged the viewer and highlighted what might otherwise have been overlooked.

Straddled and activated by a SWAT team of Yoga mannequins copied from a Wellness store in the mall, each object had its own story to tell. For example, the ice-cream cone, originally found in a rather undersubscribed café run by an old couple that had been there since the Seventies laments the lost simplicity of the days gone by when we didn't need to detail our dietary intolerances each time we ordered a snack; the giant plant pot in the middle of the installation, co-opted from the many dotted around the mall, speaks of the Disneyfication of public architecture that dwarfs even its adult audiences with the pretence of fun, and that in fact only infantilises and demeans; the Rubbermaid cleaning trolley that speaks of our obsession with sterility, both health-wise and aesthetically; the iconic Egg Chair that used to be a symbol of Modernism and Socialist conviction but now decorates the malls McDonalds, Estate Agents and Web Café in its eye-popping leatherette hues; the Singer sewing machines found in their droves in one of the branded boutique window displays encouraging us to celebrate their tailoring whilst really only serving to remind us of their farming out to faraway sweatshops; and the infinity swirl mirrored sculpture that whilst pleasing to the eye deliberately stands for nothing in an era where sculpture dares not risk offence or bias.



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