

Cultural Mapping Project: City Centre fact sheet

Butterfly Pavement

New Walk Museum & Art Gallery forecourt, New Walk, Leicester

Installation: December 2003

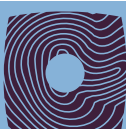


Artist

Linda Schwab

Biography

Linda Schwab is a visual artist who translates many of her ideas through digital and computer-generated imaging. Her interest is in using history and archived material and re-presenting these in a contemporary visual form. Her work has its beginning in stories and recollection, fiction and non-fiction. Content and form are mutually dependent.



Public Art Leicester

cm cultural mapping



Leicester
City Council



Statement

“The idea for this proposal originally came about through researching Henry Walter Bates who was born just around the corner from New Walk Museum. Bates spent eleven years in Amazonia and brought back 14,712 specimens, 8,000 species unknown to man. He became a luminary in the field of entomology and advanced the theory of mimicry, an essential contribution to Darwin's Origin of Species.”

Linda Schwab

Project Brief

To commission site-specific contemporary artworks as an integral dimension of the refurbishment of New Walk, an outstanding and unique heritage site and conservation area in Leicester. To enhance New Walk from Welford Place (City centre entrance) to Granville Road (Victoria Park entrance) through a number of distinctive interpretative artworks located and integrated at strategic points along the New Walk pedestrian route. The artworks should contribute to the pedestrians' interpretation and enjoyment of New Walk, visually enhance the area and help promote the Walk's identity. Artists could seek out a preferred site or sites from those previously identified by the commissioners and create a proposal for an artwork that offers the viewer 'an exciting and original experience'. Artists were invited to put forward an initial response to their selected site/s together with an outline plan to demonstrate their commitment to community engagement an integral dimension within the Cultural Mapping project.

Community Involvement

The artist was involved in and contributed to the awareness raising, community consultation and participation programme that included: a changing on-site display in the New Walk Museum & Art Gallery entrance foyer, explaining the **Cultural Mapping** project and all the commissioned artist's works as they developed over time; exhibitions, in the gallery Upstairs at the City Gallery and community venues around the city, of the artist's work created in community workshops, in tandem with visual presentations and artist's talks. During a short artist-placement in the New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, Linda led practical workshops both open sessions for the general public and targeted sessions for youth groups and children, developing participants' personal 'imaginary' butterfly designs, and those based on specimens held in the New Walk Museum collection, using traditional collage techniques and computer based technology. A number of these community-generated images were selected by members of the public, 'transferred enamelled' into circular glass blocks ('roundels') and embedded into the terrazzo of the **Butterfly Pavement**.



Purpose/Function

The artist devised and developed the concept. 'to take the Museum for a walk' to take the New Walk Museum & Art Gallery collection, particularly Henry Walter Bates's work which inspired the **Butterfly Pavement**, from the inside – outside. The artist's designs inspired by the extraordinary butterfly collection stored inside translated into a unique terrazzo floor piece for the main entrance outside. The work simultaneously 'reveals' the work of Bates and his spectacular collection as one of the 'hidden histories' of New Walk and provides a welcoming and visually interesting entrance to what some perceive to be imposing and a barrier.

Site / Location

Located along New Walk, New Walk Museum & Art Gallery opened in 1849. It was originally built in 1836 as a school for the non-conformists, designed by Joseph Hansom, also designer of the Hansom cab and the Pork Pie Chapel in Belvoir Street, Leicester. The New Walk Museum & Art Gallery has a distinctive entrance portico with classical columns, perceived by some as forbidding, and a large paved area to its frontage. The paved frontage was due to be replaced as part of the New Walk refurbishment programme. This presented a window of opportunity to commission an artist to make a contribution to create an integrated and interpretative artwork.

Special Features/Points of Interest

- Terrazzo (colour concrete with marble chippings) forms the main material of the **Butterfly Pavement**, which comprises a large expanse of square terrazzo slabs in blue through to white background, in which the detailed terrazzo butterfly designs are inlaid.
- The butterfly designs have been derived from the Museum's nationally acclaimed collection. The collection has species from the world's continents.
- The artist worked with specialised fabricators (Pallam Precast Ltd.) to translate her drawings into the larger than life 'scaled up' terrazzo butterfly designs.
- There are 27 digitally printed images derived of real and imaginary butterflies 'transferred enamelled' (Cube Glass Design) in protective circular glass blocks and embedded within the terrazzo pavement.
- A number of these images were designed by participants in artist led design and technology workshop sessions, and were chosen for inclusion in the **Butterfly Pavement** by members of the general public.
- The terrazzo measures 117 sq m, with 27 circular glass blocks inserted in the pavement area.
- The butterfly pavement provides a focus and point of interest at the entrance to the New Walk Museum & Art Gallery



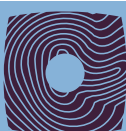
Possible Focus or Point of Engagement for Learning

- Henry Walter Bates was a very important explorer, which continent did he explore and when?
- Can you tell which of the moths and butterflies in the collection inspired the artist in the design of the pavement?
- What is the difference in form, colour, pattern and shape between a butterfly and a moth? Do they have different life cycles?
- How many colours and patterns are there in each butterfly?
- Try to draw a butterfly from memory.
- Henry Walter Bates was a very important explorer. Which continent did he explore and when? What contribution did he make to the natural sciences?
- Charles Darwin was his contemporary, what was his theory?
- Which crucial theory regarding nature did Henry Walter Bates independently contribute to?
- Henry Walter Bates lived and worked near New Walk. Do you know where? What occupation did he pursue prior to becoming an explorer and how did he pay for his research adventures?
- Imagine yourself to be an artist accompanying an explorer in the 21st century. What type of materials would you take along with you to record findings? What might the differences / similarities be between the materials you would use now and those used in Bates's time? What might you need if you went into space or the ocean?
- Which other types of museum collections might be a source of inspiration for an artwork?
- Which other artists have been inspired by the natural sciences and how did they use this in their work?
- Which mathematical and technical processes were used to translate the artist's designs into terrazzo?
- Are there any special health & safety and maintenance requirements? List what these might be and the steps you would take to manage these. Who would you consult with?
- How has the artist represented culturally diverse communities in the designs?
- Richard Long is described as a 'Land Artist', his works have been created through 'walks' and other interventions in the landscape which the artist has recorded. How is this different? Which other contemporary artist's use nature as a source of inspiration?
- Family history, journeys and walks have been a starting point and source of inspiration for many artists, use this theme as a starting point, to reveal and create an artwork.



For More Information:
www.leicester.gov.uk/publicart

Toolkit author Jasia McArdle with input from Steve Cooke. Image © Steve Cooke 2005
for Public Art Leicester **Cultural Mapping** project.



Public Art Leicester
cm cultural mapping



Leicester
City Council

