

Cultural Mapping Project: Entrances fact sheet

Haven

Humberstone Gate Roundabout, Leicester

Installation: March 2003

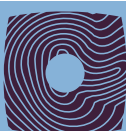


Artist

Simon Watkinson

Biography

After working as an artist in Holland for a number of years, **Simon Watkinson** returned to the UK specialising and focusing on public realm commissioned artworks, both as a lead artist and as a member of multidisciplinary teams. His other recent work includes: lead artist for Barnstaple Town Centre, creative team consultant art@thecentre Slough Borough Council, artworks for Sustrans Art and the Travelling Landscape, Heat & Work, Trinity Way, Salford City Council/CITE, amongst others.



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Statement

“Haven is a project about the private and public nature of homes and buildings. They stand at the heart of the built environment, on the threshold of the public realm and our everyday private lives. A community is built through this relationship of what is shared and what is individual. The houses within Haven have attributes or qualities that make them special to different groups and individuals ranging from high/low-rise apartment, to terraced house.”

Simon Watkinson

Project Brief

Entrances can be defined as the areas that citizens perceive to be the main entry and exit points to the city. Leicester’s Eastern Gateway presents an interesting challenge. The brief was to create a site-specific artwork which interprets and brings together the aspirations of the area’s various and diverse communities and the qualities of the locality, at the same time highlighting the area’s unique characteristics, particularly cultural, environmental and architectural. The aim was to contribute to a sense of orientation, arrival and anticipation. Artists were asked to demonstrate a commitment to community engagement.

Community Involvement

Integral to the **Cultural Mapping** projects is appropriate community involvement in a variety of ways and degrees, and at different stages of each individual commission. The Eastern Gateway Entrances project presented numerous challenges and opportunities to accommodate and bring together the diverse communities, environments and aspirations for the St George’s and St Matthews areas. To create an artwork that would meet the whole community’s expectations, local residents, cultural and wider service providers and businesses, were involved in numerous artist-led consultative presentations and practical design and sculpture workshops. Different themes and ideas based on light, colour, pattern, the concept of home(s) and housing, and architectural shapes were explored. This research provided the artist with a sense of community priorities which in turn informed the development of **Haven**. As the artist stated, ‘the essential “forms” in the artwork are based on the local architectural buildings, in particular residential housing; a symbolic haven of the individual family and one of the (literal) building blocks of the community’.

Purpose/Function

Haven functions as a distinctive ‘gateway’ to the east side of the city and into the designated Cultural Quarter (St George’s South). It assists pedestrians and vehicular users to the city, aiding their orientation. It provides a focal point, and through the forms of the sculptures celebrates the architectural heritage and cultural richness of the area, hopefully enhancing both residents’ and visitors’ experiences. The Haven artwork also reveals and promotes the unique characteristics of the local area through the sculptural forms and use of LED lighting that changes in colour.



Special Features/Points of Interest

- **Haven** is a series of nine sculptures.
- Each of the individual works in the series has a steel mesh building form (ranging in size from 1.5m to 2.5m x 2.0m) derived from and resembling the nearby domestic, industrial and community buildings, positioned on the top of a linear column plinth that is between 7m and 9m in height.
- Contained within the individual **Haven** building forms are a number of LED lights that are programmed to subtly change through different colours and hues.
- These lights in **Haven** represent a beautiful realisation of the benefits of the integration of new technology, science and art.
- Several of these programmed lighting sequences were inspired by and are reflective of different communities' use of colour and of change with the seasons.
- **Haven** is sited and integrated within the trees and planting scheme on the roundabout and so visual aspects of the artwork are concealed and revealed at various times of the year.
- The artist worked with a wide range of specialists to translate his ideas and drawings into reality. These included a structural engineer (Ove Arup), steel fabricators (Form Fabricators, Birmingham), lighting specialists and Street Lighting (Leicester City Council) on-site construction (Rouco, Leicester), and a Planning Supervisor (Leicester City Council).
- The sculpture needed and gained full planning permission.

Possible Focus or Point of Engagement for Learning

- When you first saw the **Haven** sculptures what did the shapes resemble or remind you of? Try making your own miniature **Haven** sculpture using different types of materials, or make a **Haven** sculpture as a group of artists or a 'multidisciplinary' team.
- How many similar and different building shapes can you see? Can you spot any of these in the area adjacent to the roundabout? Try to draw the main shapes and patterns from memory or from photographs you have taken.
- You are a member of a project team, designing a city for the future and having to take into account the building needs of different groups (business, schools, cultural, residents) and the communities that populate a city. What do you think the differences/similarities of need might be? Using these as a starting point try to create a city of the imagination or a city for the future.
- If you were the artist or the commissioner, what actions would you take to engage different communities, their aspirations and needs in the design, development and after-care of a work like **Haven**?



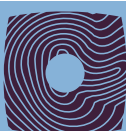
Possible Focus or Point of Engagement for Learning continued

- The artwork is located on a roundabout. What access and health & safety issues do you think were taken into consideration when designing and constructing a project like this?
- The design team included a structural and lighting engineer, who translated the artist's drawings & ideas into construction and fabrication drawings. How important do you think it is to have this expertise involved in making an artwork of this type?
- What skills and knowledge do you think the project artist needs to have to realise this type of artwork?
- How many different types of building forms are there in your area? What building materials have they been constructed from? What do they tell you about your area and its history?
- Look at the building shapes and materials used in different countries. What are the similarities and differences?
- Why and how do the climate, environment and economics of a place affect the architectural shapes and materials used?
- What do the changing colours and hues represent? What is the difference between 'colour' and 'hue'? How does **Haven** change the hue?
- What possible symbolic meanings do the different colours have and how do these vary in different cultures?
- The **Haven** lights are powered through electricity. What forms of natural power are there? When is the best time to see **Haven** and why?

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.



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