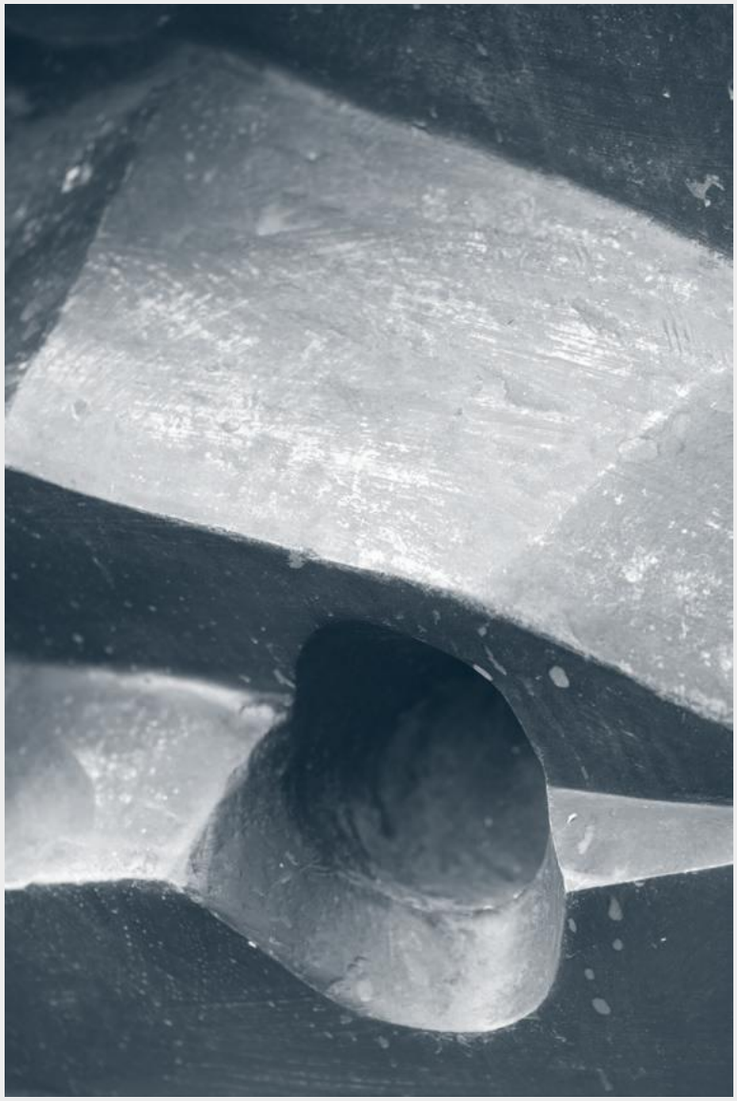
Storytelling in the Landscape: Art for Edinburgh Park

Edinburgh

Park



EDUARDO PAOLOZZI
Vulcan — 1999

Detail image of the surface texture and form.

Storytelling in the Landscape: Art for Edinburgh Park

Edinburgh

Park

“It would be no exaggeration to say that Edinburgh is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.”

EDWARD JONES
DIXON JONES

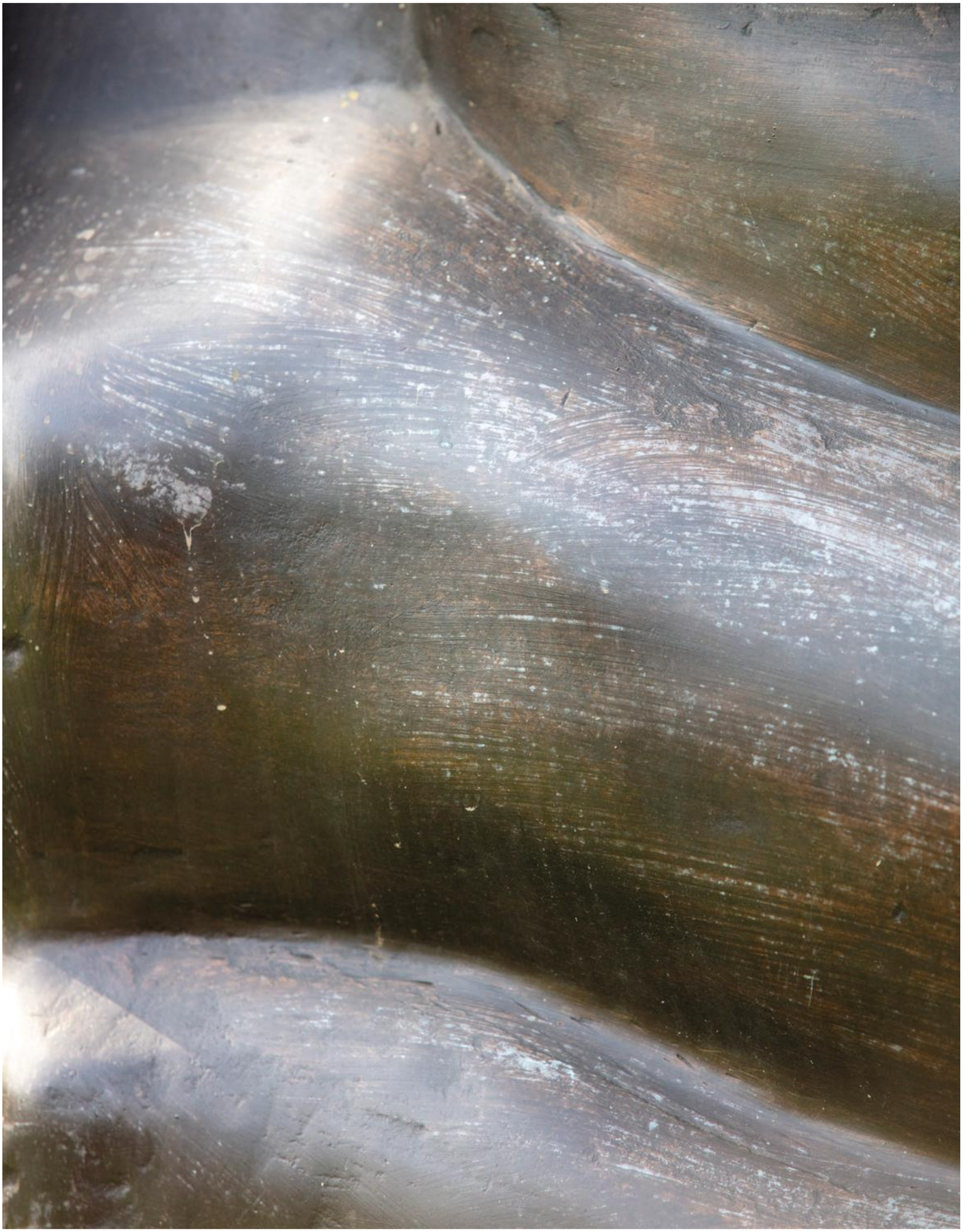
For those arriving for the first time such expectations are not diminished especially when arriving into the parkland before Waverley railway station between the historic city on one side confronting James Craig's New Town opposite. The magic of Edinburgh is in the clear identity of these two magnificent quarters, old town versus new town. The rational grid and terraces of the Classical city defined by the one sided nature of Princes Street recalls its grown up equivalent of the Great Wall of Fifth Avenue along Central Park in contrast to the rocky outcrop of Edinburgh castle opposite.

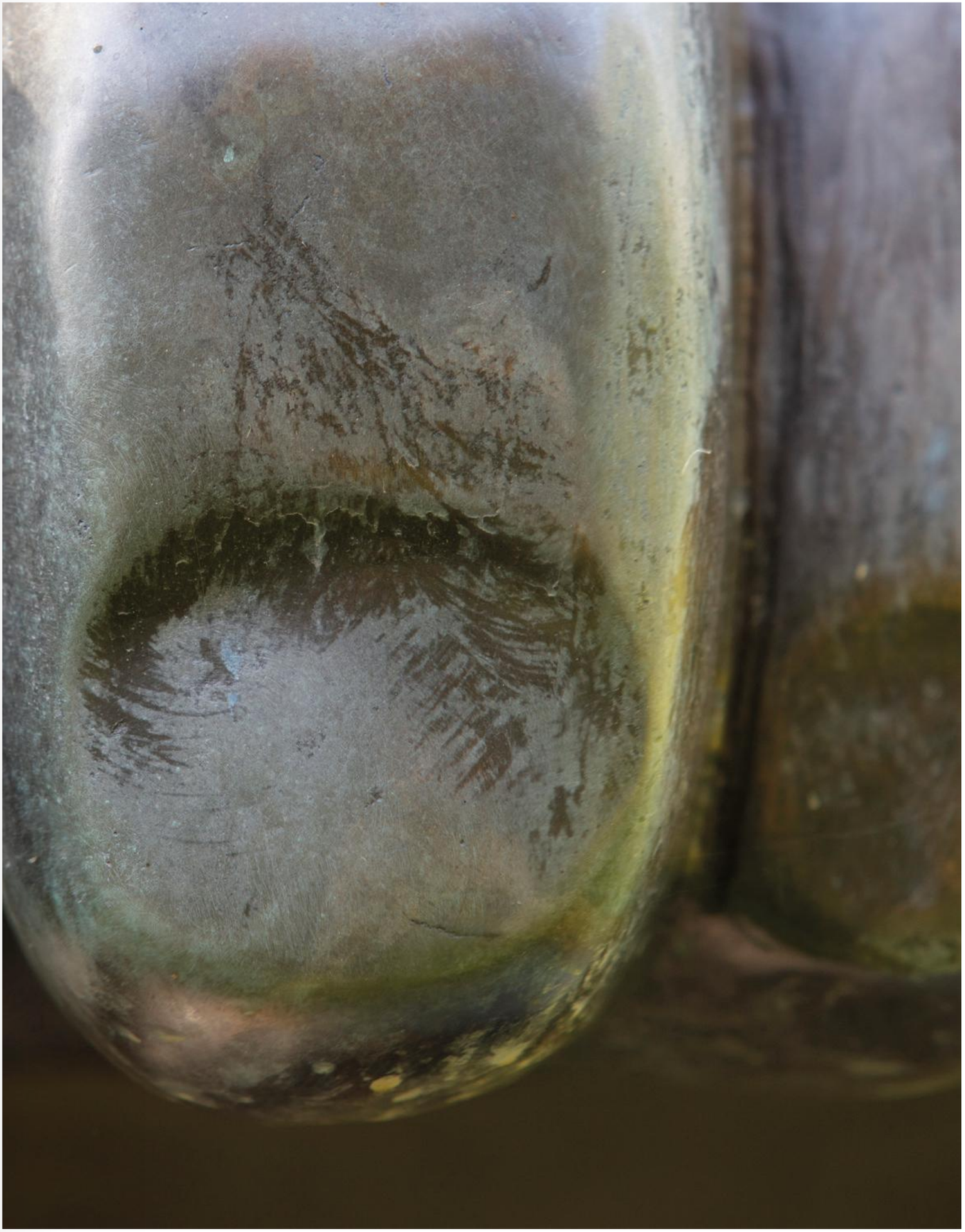
The many visitors travelling by tram from the airport have a different experience with a series of stops in the sequence. The most notable is presently the Murrayfield Stadium, soon to be rivalled by Edinburgh Park. Here the line of the tram ramps up to cross the main Glasgow to Edinburgh railway. It then turns left and this by way of coincidence gains the additional height to view the historic profile of Edinburgh and Arthur's Seat. This results in another equally dramatic sense of arrival.

In our project for Edinburgh Park and it's Masterplan we have been most fortunate in having Peter Millican of Parabola as our client. It is central to Peter's vision that the arts in all their various forms should find a place in Edinburgh Park. The role of the Arts in public places has been one of Peter's preoccupations from earlier beginnings in Newcastle, then to Kings Place in London and finally here in Edinburgh.

Historic Edinburgh sets high standards urbanistically which we trust are reflected in our Masterplan. The works of David Mach, Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, Kenneth Armitage and others find places at intersections, in squares and in the mature landscape of the Central Park.

In a secular age the opportunity to enrich people's lives at work and at home through the arts becomes increasingly diminished and so this initiative is to be cherished.





Arts Strategy

MATTHEW JARRATT
ARTS CONSULTANT

Writing the Arts Strategy for Edinburgh Park has been a process of connecting and weaving together a number of wonderful elements into a coherent narrative for this ten-year project, to inspire people and ensure that the development evolves as a creative and special place to live and work.

Firstly, there are the existing poetry 'Herms', 12 busts of eminent Scottish Poets, commissioned in 2005 as part of the first phase of Edinburgh Park, then there is Parabola's extraordinary collection of major bronzes, cast by Pangolin Editions, the UK's leading art foundry. In addition, new large-scale commissions include a major bronze by William Tucker and 'Mach1', the first building by Fife born artist David Mach, together with a year-long commission with Dovecot Studios to weave a new work inspired by a Leon Kossoff painting. My instinct was that poetry should link these major works together and encourage people to creatively interpret and explore the public spaces across the site.

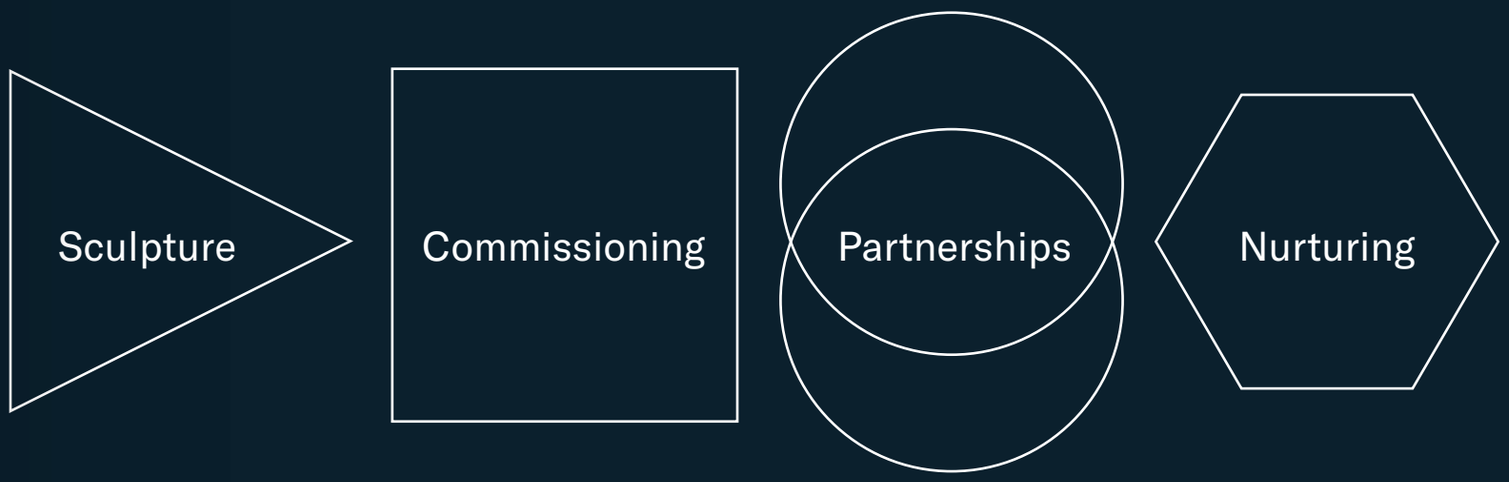
We have set the high ambition to become a new cultural destination within the extraordinary cultural ecology of Edinburgh, the world's first UNESCO City of Literature and the Art Strategy is explicit about building creative partnerships between Edinburgh's arts and education organisations and its emerging artists. It is always important for creativity to be embedded at the start of a huge capital project and, as the first excavations were being dug on site in 2019, we had already established a partnership with Scottish Poetry Library, who ran an open call for our poetry commission. Through this, Rachel Plummer was commissioned to write poems for 'Mach1' and Janette Ayachi was selected to produce a poet-led naming strategy for the new streets and spaces. We also partnered with Stills Gallery to find photography graduate Andy Mather, who is delivering a long-term photography residency which captures the building of Edinburgh Park and the people who are working on site. Our suite of major sculpture commissions together with new interventions by emerging Scottish artists and poets is unprecedented in current developments in Scotland and the commitment to the arts has been a key factor in the evolution of the design approach across the masterplan.

We are inviting artists to use this new urban landscape as a canvas, so that Edinburgh Park can become an imaginative environment with curated exhibitions and music programmes for the new audiences who will live, work and socialise within this new community.

Overleaf: Detail images of Eduardo Paolozzi's 'Vulcan' surface texture and form.

Parabola have a strong commitment to cultural engagement with Edinburgh's artists and cultural institutions which complements our major sculpture programme and provides opportunities for young and emerging Scottish-based artists. The Arts Strategy for Edinburgh Park is ambitious and provides activity for each phase of the development to incrementally build a respected cultural reputation for Edinburgh Park as a new destination within Edinburgh's world-class cultural offer.

The Art Strategy for Edinburgh Park includes:



Bringing a major collection of sculptural works to be sited within the new public spaces at Edinburgh Park, with works by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, Kenneth Armitage, Brian Kneale, Geoffrey Clarke, and Bruce Beasley.

Engaging David Mach RA to develop his first sculptural building 'Mach1' which will be the marketing suite and creative hub at the centre of Edinburgh Park. William Tucker has been commissioned to work with Pangolin Editions to produce 'Dancer after Degas II' a large-scale bronze sculpture which will be the focal point of New Park Square.

Creating long-term partnerships with Edinburgh's cultural organisations including Stills Gallery, Scottish Poetry Library, Dovecot Tapestry, Edinburgh University, Festivals Edinburgh and more.

Nurturing the next generation of Scottish creative talent with commissions and residencies for emerging writers, photographers and artists, with plans for new commissions which engage a new and diverse generation of Scottish artists.

S C

NEW SCULPTURE FOR EDINBURGH PARK

U

U L

P T

R E

A creative landscape

POLLY BIELECKA
PANGOLIN LONDON

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6

POLLY BIELECKA
Pangolin London

Sculpture is a powerful art form which, when shown outdoors, can not only transform our sense of place but can be seen in public by anyone, anytime, any weather. As a result many developers err on the side of innocuous when it comes to selecting public sculpture, too scared or ill advised to challenge their viewers but not Parabola. Not only have they taken time to build their world class collection of magnificent works but they have given their artists the freedom to work with commissions that they feel will combine scale with dynamism.

The role call of sculptors is equally impressive from important twentieth century sculptors Sir Eduardo Paolozzi[1], Geoffrey Clarke[2] and Kenneth Armitage[3] who all launched their international careers at the 1952 Venice Biennale to Royal Academicians such as David Mach, William Tucker[4], Bryan Kneale[5]; with Bruce Beasley's[6] use of cutting edge technology underlining a refreshing openness to aesthetics within the Edinburgh Park collection.

With the exception of David Mach's inspiring 'Mach1', all the sculptures have been brought into existence at Pangolin Editions, Europe's largest sculpture foundry. Here the artists have worked closely with skilled craftsmen to create powerful works that are not only ambitious but also beautifully crafted. Whilst many of the works were made a number of years ago they have since had their own adventures having been enjoyed by audiences all over the UK at Gloucester Cathedral, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, The Royal Hospital Chelsea and Christchurch College, Cambridge. That they will come home to Edinburgh Park as a complete collection is not only exciting but a tremendous accolade for Edinburgh whose only close competitor for sculpture of this calibre is the collection at Canary Wharf.

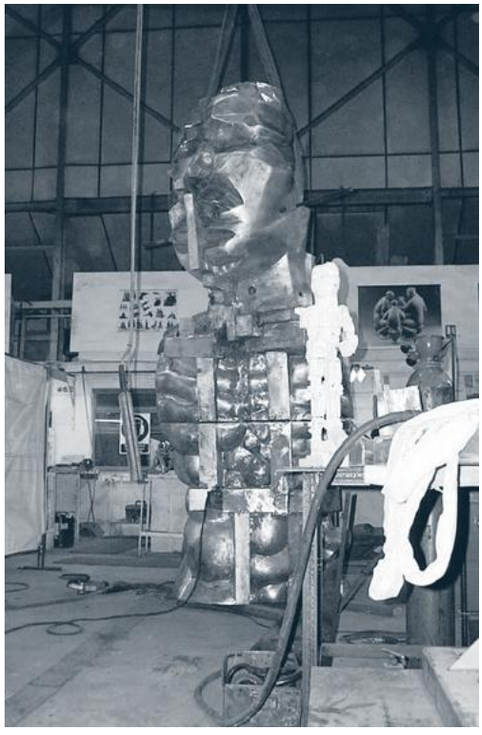
For Leith born artist Sir Eduardo Paolozzi and also Kenneth Armitage, Parabola's commissions offered these artists their last opportunity to cast monumental unique works, their swan songs one could say that would normally become important works in a museum collection. 'Mach1' gave David Mach his first opportunity to experiment with architecture with a building that was initially conceived from Bacofoil boxes. Parabola's faith in the artists they commission and the opportunities they have created with Edinburgh Park as a whole seem to echo Armitage's inspiration for his sculpture 'if you reach for the stars you might just reach the rooftops'. The sculptures in this collection are inspirational, aspirational and, most importantly, bold and fearless. They challenge and inspire and I, for one, look forward to seeing them in situ at Edinburgh Park and to seeing the collection continue to develop.

SIR EDUARDO PAOLOZZI
Vulcan — 1999

Sir Eduardo Paolozzi was born in Leith in 1924 and studied in Edinburgh, London and Paris. A number of major works by Paolozzi are sited across his home town of Edinburgh and his fascination with the industrial fusion of man and machine are expressed here in the sculptural collage of 'Vulcan' (1999). This seven-metre tall piece was originally commissioned for Central Square, Newcastle and has been exhibited across the UK before coming home to Edinburgh Park.

'Vulcan' is one of Paolozzi's last major works, it explores the mythic story and takes its name from the Roman god of fire and metalworking. 'Vulcan' is said to have built a forge under Mount Etna in Sicily and when his wife, Venus, was unfaithful he used his hammer to beat metal with such force that sparks and smoke erupted from the volcano.

An earlier version of 'Vulcan' in welded steel is situated within National Galleries of Scotland's Modern Two (formerly the Dean Gallery) along with a recreation of Paolozzi's studio including his maquettes, papers, books and objects which inspired his work.



Above: Installation of 'Vulcan' at Newcastle Central Square 1999

KENNETH ARMITAGE
Reach for the Stars — 2001

When Armitage exhibited alongside his contemporaries Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick and Bernard Meadows at the Venice Biennale in 1952, the group were championed as the 'New Bronze Age' sculptors and their work signalled a new expressionist approach to sculpture. Royal Academician Kenneth Armitage's monumental 30-foot piece 'Reach for the Stars' depicts both hand and star perfectly capturing his sense of immediacy and playfulness, "I like sculpture to look as if it happened, to express an idea as simply as possible."

BRUCE BEASLEY
Advocate — 2014

Beasley uses digital three-dimensional design software and virtual reality to investigate the sculptural form and aesthetic which he has developed over 60 years as one of the most innovative sculptors on the American West Coast, and his work typically utilises sumptuous patinas, with sculpture that combines notions of beauty, mass and geometry.

BRYAN KNEALE
Pendulum — 1963

Bryan Kneale was born on the Isle of Man and was the first abstract sculptor to be appointed a Royal Academician. He is a highly respected artist, professor and curator and this commission takes inspiration from one of Kneale's important sculptures of the 60's at a time when Britain was at the global forefront of avant-garde sculpture making.

GEOFFREY CLARKE
Past, Present, Future — 2010

One of the UKs most publicly commissioned artists of the post war decades, Geoffrey Clarke's fearless experimentation with new materials such as aluminium and polystyrene saw him create works that epitomise the vibrancy of the Modern British art scene. This dynamic commission was realised in the last few years of Clarke's life and was one of his largest aluminium works.

WILLIAM TUCKER
Dancer after Degas II — 2017

'*Dancer After Degas'* is a theme which Tucker has frequently revisited throughout his career in both his sculpture and drawings. This monumental bronze has been cast for Edinburgh Park by Pangolin and has evolved from a smaller work which he produced in silver in 2002.

William Tucker was born in Cairo in 1935 and he studied sculpture at St Martin's Schools of Art in 1958-60 under Frank Martin and Anthony Caro. His book 'The Language of Sculpture' was first published in 1974 and is based on a lecture series which he gave at University of Leeds setting out a valuable insight into the conceptual, visual and physical language of sculpture.

Tucker's innovative early sculpture presented abstract forms in painted steel or fibreglass. Typically, his works of the 1960s consist of repeated geometric elements assembled into abstract configurations, with colour used to articulate outline and volume. In 1966 Tucker's 'Meru' series was included in the seminal exhibition Primary Structures at the Jewish Museum in New York and in 1972 Tucker represented Britain at the Venice Biennale.

His sculptural practice often involves directly modelling in slow-setting plaster and then casting into bronze, with abstract forms beginning to suggest the movement of the human figure.

WILLIAM TUCKER
Dancer after Degas II – In production

This piece captures abstract figurative elements of dancers in motion and is inspired by Edgar Degas' famous studies of ballet. For Edinburgh Park, this dynamic sculpture will be enlarged to a monumental 4 metres tall and cast in bronze, encouraging viewers to respond physically to its mass and volume.

'Dancer after Degas II', Civic Square Edinburgh Park

EXPLORING THE WORK OF POETS AT EDINBURGH PARK

POETRY

THIS IS A CITY OF SHIFTING LIGHT, OF CHANGING SKIES, OF SUDDEN VISTAS

A CITY SO
BEAUTIFUL
IT BREAKS
THE
HEART
AGAIN
AND
AGAIN

Text by Alexander McCall Smith which will be commissioned as a permanent neon installation at Edinburgh Park.

Poetry

ASIF KHAN
SCOTTISH POETRY LIBRARY

Commissions

“The function of poetry in public spaces is to stimulate the viewer to look again”

ASIF KHAN
Scottish Poetry Library

Kenneth Clark wrote that a survey of civilisation cannot omit Scotland, “The Scottish character shows an extraordinary combination of realism and reckless sentiment…Where, but in Edinburgh, does a romantic landscape come right into the centre of the town?”

The Scottish Poetry Library (SPL) embodies this duality. The official biography published for the SPL’s 25th anniversary reflected on its rapid journey to institutional status from the germ of an idea articulated by founding director Tessa Ransford in 1981. Ransford’s vision led to the establishment of the SPL Association of 300 members launched in January 1983 with Naomi Mitchison, Sorley MacLean and Norman MacCaig as Honorary Presidents. These three esteemed poets feature in the original *Twelve Poets* sculpture commissions at Edinburgh Park.

Some cultural theorists, such as Jose Oretga Y Gasset, philosophise that society must be wary of associating art with pleasure as, according to Gasset, this was a source of “confusion” in Ancient Rome where pleasure represented “an excess, an extravagance of commodities.”

Leap forward two millennia to 1960’s Scotland and you find poet Ian Hamilton Finlay musing that, “people are very scared of charm, they do not care to be delighted.” At the time Finlay believed that audiences struggled with poetry made visual off the page, finding the experience somewhat less authentic and challenging.

Today, we are more accustomed to seeing verse presented in public spaces; for example the writing of Sir Walter Scott posted around Edinburgh’s Waverley station. John Berger asserted in ‘About Looking’ that a city is a construct of a series of images and “a circuit of messages that teaches and conditions.” If this is the case, one might ask: What added value does poetry provide to the built environment?

Johanna Drucker theorised in ‘Figuring the Word’ that writing provides “leverage” through being the only element in the landscape that challenges us to re-evaluate what we see according to ideas not indicated by the physical setting. The function of poetry in public spaces is to stimulate the viewer to look again and I trust that the poets commissioned for the project will find expression in Scotland’s extraordinary combination of realism and sentiment.

Twelve

IAN WALL
TWELVE POETS OF EDINBURGH PARK — 2005

Poets

IAN WALL
Twelve Poets of Edinburgh Park — 2005

The principle behind the design of the Edinburgh Park original masterplan and landscape (respectively by Bob Gatje, Richard Meier's partner, and Ian White, IWA) was to provide a location that would be a pleasure to be in and to look out at. Thus the brief required that all the landscape should provide socially usable spaces and not be merely decorative, as many similar schemes were (and are), and that all the built elements within them, even the most functional, should be individually designed as a part of the whole.

As part of the design process, once a year, the design team would visit other buildings and landscapes in the USA and Europe, not to copy but as a stimulus for inspiration. One of these trips included Ljubljana (then Yugoslavia now Slovenia) to see the work of Jože Plečnik and especially his exceptional urban designs. Within his implemented designs is a series of Herms (a sculptural head above a simple lower plinth, symbolic of the body), of Slovene musicians lining a street. This experience prompted me to think if and how such objects could strengthen and enliven the landscape in Edinburgh Park.

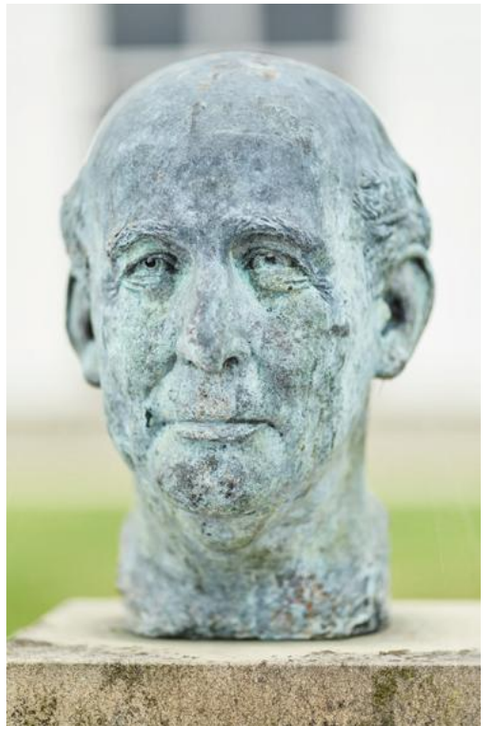
One of the great strengths of Scottish culture in the twentieth century is its poetry and a celebration of some of its poets became our theme. I chose twelve poets, living and dead, four a year for three years and sculptors to match; Ian White designed the herms depicting the busts of twentieth-century Scottish poets; Robyn Marsack, then Director of the Scottish Poetry Library, selected a poem, or extract, and wrote a short biography of each poet.

To complement the Herms, three 'Poetic' Bus Shelters were commissioned, two by Reiach and Hall and one by Linda Tolmie, each provided with glazed cases for displaying a monthly changing series of poems. The first shelter was awarded a Jeux d'Esprit award by the UK Royal Fine Art Commission.

Finally, we commissioned an additional set of the sculptures that were gifted to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. They mounted an exhibition of them for which copies of the catalogue entitled 'Twelve Poets at Edinburgh Park' are available.

Left: Naomi Mitchison by Archie Frost

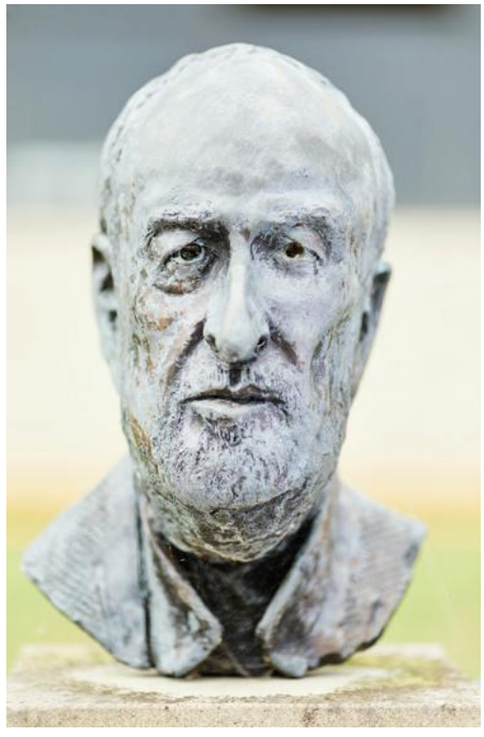
NORMAN MACCAIG
by David Annand



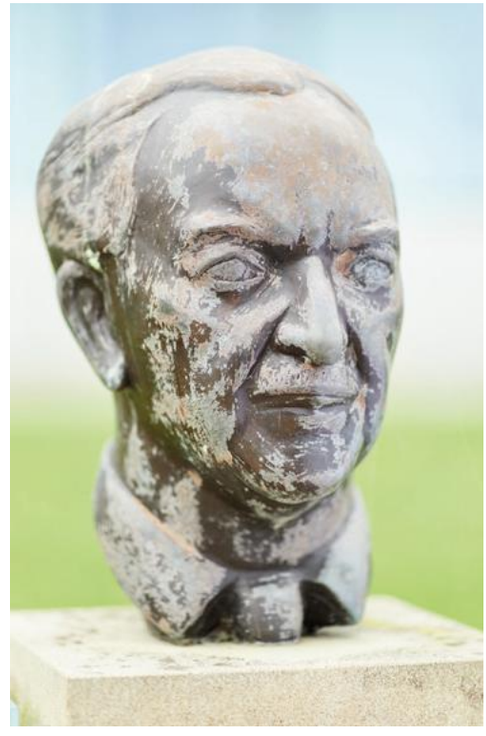
IAIN CRICHTON SMITH
by Michael Snowdon

EDWIN MORGAN
by David Annand

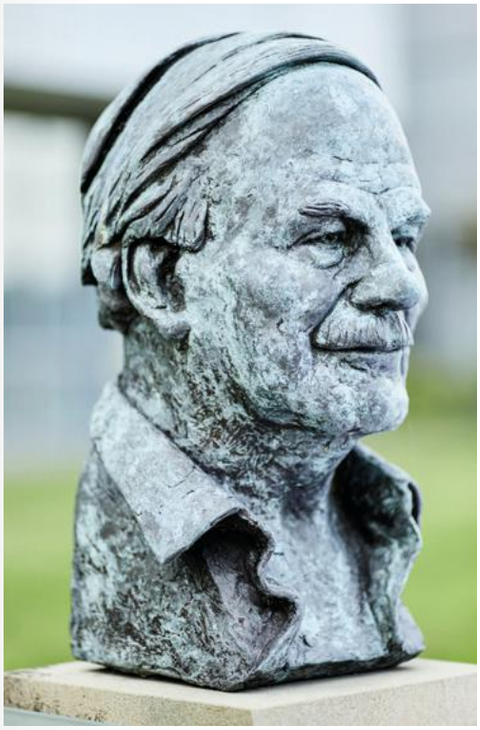
LIZ LOCHHEAD
by Vincent Butler



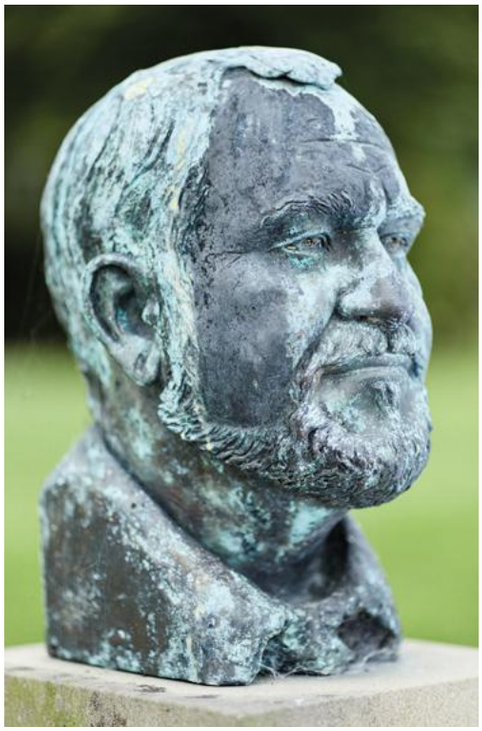
TOM LEONARD
by Alex Main



SORLEY MACLEAN
by Bill Scott



HAMISH HENDERSON
by Anthony Morrow



DOUGLAS DUNN
by Michael Snowdon

JACKIE KAY
by Michael Snowdon

NAOMI MITCHISON
by Archie Frost

HUGH MACDIARMID
by Anthony Morrow

W. S. GRAHAM
by Anthony Morrow

A sense

JANETTE AYACHI
NAMING STRATEGY

# of place

JANETTE AYACHI
Naming Strategy

Art adds flavour to a place, it enlightens us as a society, reflects and creates culture, it educates us and awakens all our senses, as a human condition, there is nothing more potent than engaging with a visual aesthetic that speaks to our inner sense of self and how we see ourselves in the world. Art soothes us and assists in our survival.

Whether we as artists use ourselves as subjects; as writers who channel autobiographically, as designers who think outside the box from inside the smaller box, as photographers who capture something of the moment that others' missed, or as architects who work climate change into their vision; it is the consultants and curators who are the ones that are creative with space, they open up a civilization of sharing and generate new paradigms, new ways of looking, new ways of holding.

The creatives commissioned for this site have been encouraged to sharpen their craft and decide what to contribute in the style they have been selected for, that way they have worked with a passion, not competition, and this combination undoubtedly proves for a cultural revolution, especially at a time of such shift and transformation. After years of confinement to the road of our predecessors, taking order, it's important to make positive change, to take risks and do things differently. Edinburgh Park is a prototype for how to make the best of art in a working environment. A new mix of work, home, leisure and art developed at Scotland's capital quarter heart of the city.

There is art in the streets, art in the atriums, art in the architecture and art in the construction itself as Andy Mather, the resident photographer, seizes night shots of the train lines and close-ups of towering cranes making the construction space seem otherworldly; the metals become stars, the concrete as craters on planets, capturing both the vastness and stillness of what it's like to build foundations. The A-grade architects, forward-thinking enough to forge ideas from undulating glass that is curved to collect heat and light, holding ergonomic designs and artistic interpretations of the environment. So much of its vibrancy comes from the displaced traditional boundary between the office environment and public amenity.

It is a special curation that maximises space and works with locals in collaboration, inviting in a network and counsel of artist cooperatives, including The Scottish Poetry Library. This development not only opens up employment sectors but residencies for artists; a hub that has suffered many setbacks during the pandemic of this year with the temporary closure of venues, as well as, a steadied halt on creative publishing and trade.

As a poet, at no time did I dream that I would one-day name streets or buildings for a large part of the city, (or appear on TV chat shows) yet it is happening because people are asking for more poetry in their every-day, it helps us feel alive again after being stilled, shook and shoved sideways by all the desensitizing media of our year, never has our readership felt it more deeply. But of course, poets are wordsmiths, poets are memory keepers, and we abbreviate meaning from a reduction of wide emotion, history, culture and landscape, so indeed, it seems fitting for a poet to play with that language of giving name and title to things.

These things are meant to last, these things are what we leave behind as evidence of how we lived, and we are seeing, time after time, the need for art in our environment to keep our teachings fresh. The Romans wanted their art to be useful, to tell the future generations something of the past. And I think, similarly, Edinburgh Park carries that circumference, there is storytelling in the environment, each curated creative has depicted something that has a deeper or wider tale to tell and variant symbiosis to share. We are not just looking, we are engaging, we are thinking. What felt impossible has now become thinkable.

Ten Street Names

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by Janette Ayachi

COMET KISS STREET
Edwin Morgan (1920–2010)

The galaxies slipped into kaleidoscope once more
comet kisses melting against sun, at seventy.

CARRADALE GARDENS
Naomi Mitchison (1897–1999)

High over the harbour of Carradale; ghost quatrains
written, clams cooking, washing blowing in the wind.

BEAT STREET
Douglas Dunn (1942–)

Voyages of navy fleets attack the broken heart
Blood keeps the undaunted beat from the end to the start.

HAAR STREET
W.S Graham (1918–1986)

Gregorian thunder, haar, sunsets change colour,
the sea's spherical miracle sings us back to shore.

GENIE AVENUE
Hugh MacDiarmid (1892–1978)

Summer is a genie promising to offer us
whatever we wish from the triage after Earth's crash.

BOTHY WYND
Hamish Henderson (1919–2002)

To pipers, drummers, border shepherds, bothy songs,
ballads of soldiers, poems as anthems, I belong.

MOONSHINE WYND
Sorley MacLean (1911–1996)

You let the birch tree decide its moonshine bardic cry
as the long dead walked the empty forest of Raasay.

JIGSAW MEWS
Tom Leonard (1944–2018)

I saw thi wurd jig through the sound like my heart bypass
an open dictionary in my chest, jigsaw fast.

AIRBORNE PLACE
Liz Lochhead (1947–)

My tales won't speak abstract art, they fall apart in paint;
I want them to live in air, the streets that they were born.

HOMER LANE
Iain Crichton Smith (1928–1998)

Raised in plain Highland mud, cities glittered for you;
Homer in hand, heart undone, fast trains, a well-stocked mind.

EXPLORING DESIGN AT EDINBURGH PARK

DESIGN

Imagine

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN PETER MILLICAN OBE
AND POET JANETTE AYACHI

Change

A conversation between Peter Millican OBE and poet Janette Ayachi via Zoom.

J: So, Peter, you have this pioneering sensibility to amalgamate commerce with the arts in the complexes that you envision, how did that become so important to you, what inspired you, or has it always been part of the masterplan? Or was there something that prompted you to start commissioning artists within your commercial development projects?

P: I've always been interested in the arts and I like music very much. I learned to play the viola with my daughter a long time ago, I don't play it very much anymore, but I love music. In Central Square, our first office building in Newcastle, we used to have chamber music concerts in the atrium, people could come in and have lunch and just enjoy, the arts add to life and form an important part of it. I've always felt that when you're creating buildings, it's like a sculpture which people live in which is very exciting, you're creating something artistic which is going to be there for a very long time, creating a place where people interact with other people to form memorable experiences.

In Newcastle we started in a small way with both music and sculpture, including commissioning 'Vulcan' from Sir Eduardo Paolozzi. After that I went to London to build Kings Place, a much larger building which was able to support more arts. In London, buildings were getting bigger and bigger and excluding the population from large parts of the city and I wanted to create something which invited people in, so it worked as an office space but also gives something back to the community. Kings Place has grand public spaces with many paintings and sculptures, and the concert halls which I still run, make a significant contribution to London's musical life. If you're an office tenant, it makes the office a much more interesting place to be.

We see a very wide cross-section of people in the atrium, from mothers and babies in the mornings, journalists, artists and musicians are there all day, and many people go to London on the train for a quick meeting and arrange to meet in Kings Place. We also have the "Last of the Summer Wine" group who buy a bottle of wine and reminisce, we see children doing their homework, we often have ten or twelve teenagers

“It’s an astonishing intellectual challenge and responsibility to create something that people will want to be part of for the next hundred years.”

who come in and spread themselves out to do their homework together. We have an adult group that come in to speak French together and of course we have the concert goers on their way to hear jazz, folk or classical music downstairs in the auditorium. It’s interesting that art can create value as well as being valuable in itself. Art makes an office a more attractive place to spend time in, the tenants tend to stay for longer as their employees enjoy working there so your income is more secure, so in terms of a business strategy it’s not a crackers idea either! Whilst all businesses need to make profits to grow and prosper, I’m in this because I want to do something worthwhile and something interesting.

Now, I am tremendously excited about Edinburgh Park, which will form a new urban district. It’s an astonishing intellectual challenge and responsibility to create something that people will want to be part of for the next hundred years, which will form a new hub for West Edinburgh. Things will form around it, it will be very influential and I feel that people will come to see it as an example of what can be done.

J: I completely agree. Especially with all of the traffic that leads from the city centre. As a retail entrepreneur and an arts philanthropist, you have erected office buildings in Newcastle, created properties at London’s King’s Cross, strategised whole civic squares, conference facilities, all alongside specially enlisted works of art. You have created residencies and curated programmes, and in a prophetic manner you seem to give people exactly what they want, an all-inclusive, progressive place of work and play, which may become the model for others. What do you like about Edinburgh, and how does it compare with working in Newcastle and London?

P: I like the architecture, I like that you can walk everywhere, I like the fact it has good restaurants, that it has culture, I like the fact that it’s near the mountains, that it’s by the sea!

J: You’re singing our praises now!

P: I think it’s a great city. It’s a capital city, it’s a city to live in, to work in, and to visit.

J: Where do you live?

P: We live about 20 miles west of Newcastle in the Tyne valley in the country.

J: Sounds idyllic!

P: In this crisis, the first three or four months were amazing; we walked every day, we cycled, we watched the spring plants come out, the bulbs come out, the magnolias come out, we experienced nature in a way I’ve never done before because we were there for the day by day changing. The weather was also amazing, so it’s been an appalling time but that was a silver lining for us.

J: It’s been a great time to connect with nature. Let’s talk about the part-architectural, part-sculptural, tumbling crab-pink shipping containers turned gallery space and building – which to me looks like a set of coffins in a sepulchre, a design envied by even the Ancient Egyptians – it shows us how we can shape shelter from the stuff that is thrown away; reusing resources, reclaiming what has been lost in the expanse, I think it’s such a gorgeous piece of architecture, what has it been like working with David Mach on his first building?

P: David is very exciting to work with. When we started off, we knew we wanted a building to do the sorts of things you’ve described, and we thought it would be fun to do it with containers of some sort. We had a very pedestrian idea of what we might

“David Mach bought a quantity of Bacofoil packets, cut them up and made them into a model! We were just blown away by it, it was just astonishing. The model was pretty close to what we’re actually going to build.”

create and we thought it would be great to have an artist involved, so we approached David and had no idea what he would come back with. He bought a quantity of Bacofoil packets, cut them up and made them into a model! We were just blown away by it, it was just astonishing. The model was pretty close to what we're actually going to build.

J: So he had the vision and was able to make it on a microscale, I think that's great!

P: David had the artistic concept and then our team put together the practicalities of it. It's a very complicated building to build, to make watertight, we want it to last a long time so the practicalities of it took a lot of work but we have now hammered all of that out and it feels like we've cracked most of the issues.

J: Construction and building energy-use usually account for a lot of energy-related carbon-dioxide emissions (the operational carbon emissions and the embodied carbon of a building) so that this entire endeavour is capable of operating a net-zero carbon footprint is something quite incredible, and with the sense of urgency centred around climate change right now, it sets a standard role model for future building. By using recycled materials, we are paying homage to our ancestors and respecting the ambitious drives of our children. How important is an eco-friendly strategy to you and how easy is it to operate carbon neutral?

P: I think carbon neutral construction is nigh on impossible. It's very difficult, you can do offsetting, you can plant trees to offset it, but apart from offsetting, it's almost impossible. Zero carbon operation is absolutely possible however, and that's what we will be doing. You want to reduce the embodied carbon as much as you can however, and we've done a number of things to help that, but the really big achievement is to make the operation zero carbon.

I think it's important for all sorts of reasons, it's important for the planet, clearly climate change is happening and we have to do something about it and it's within our power to do something about it. In my first office building, 25 years ago we put in a system that used only sixty percent of the electricity that most office buildings use and I've kept that ethos. At the time nobody was interested in issues like that, they just weren't, but now I think individuals care and that's making the corporations care. It's important for corporations to say in their accounts that they're thinking about the environment, so to offer them a building which is zero carbon in operation is a big thing for them.

J: It's huge and spectacular. You were talking earlier about Eduardo Paolozzi's 'Vulcan', one of the series from his Vulcans, and you were saying that it was in Newcastle before it was moved to Edinburgh Park?

P: It was originally commissioned to be in Central Square in Newcastle. We met Eduardo and asked him to create a piece for us 25 years ago. Since then we've had a number of different sculptures on that site and 'Vulcan' has been to several locations. When we met Eduardo in London, and said we'd like him to make a piece for us, he showed us various maquettes that he had, we chose the piece, chose the foundry that was going to make it and the rest is history.

J: 'Vulcan' fits in so well with the assemblage of work that you've created because, not only does it speak to the future, it also embodied this aesthetic of myth, of the past. You manage to create a modern aesthetic that also speaks about the history.

P: I hadn't thought of that, it's interesting. I do think it's one of

Paolozzi's best pieces. At the moment it's in the Yorkshire Sculpture Park on loan, I was there the other day and it's just such a dramatic piece when you stand next to it, it's astonishing.

J: Not only do the commissions speak of both past and future, they also move away from the monolithic utter sameness that we often see spread globally; Edinburgh Park has also created a rare visual aesthetic within the urban space. Do you like to subvert the viewer by offering a programme of art, architecture and artefacts that both blend in and show-off and stick out in the environment - something at once fabulous and striking, yet it still restores our relationship to the natural world and reflects our culture?

P: I'm not a curator. All of the works that I've chosen, I like. There's a wide range of sculptors who we have pieces coming from; as well as the big pieces, there's also quite a few small pieces which will be in the buildings and we will create an art trail so people will be able to walk around with a guide to all of the pieces that are there. We also plan to have changeable pieces, we will have the pieces that are part of the main collection, but there will also be rotating works as well. It's about creating a place for the people who are there but also we aim to attract people to come and have a look, to walk through the park and enjoy it.

J: I like that some pieces will change, that it's not concrete and as society shifts its perspectives, you can accommodate that. I'm noticing the amount of freedom that you allow artists the trust to take sculptural risks or work with their intuition so what we end up with, is a landscape entirely maximised by a relaxed state of being. Visitors and residents will feel this too; they will dip into the dream-like development park that is both beautifully restrained, minimalist and modernist yet simultaneously ancient or archaic, almost as if it embraces the binaries of time and duality of essence; these are qualities that make a location deep, layered, and idiosyncratic. The art here at Edinburgh Park is not only tied to place and culture but also to the passion of the artist responding to the scene. Was this your intention?

P: It's a mix, sometimes we've chosen works that are already made and other times we've asked for a piece to be made specially. With David, that was completely what happened: we asked him to make a piece. So, there is a mix which seems to work quite well. Another thing that I'm really keen to do is to get children involved in coming to look at the art. With 'Vulcan', we constantly had groups of children sitting around drawing it, from small children up to art school students, there were always people drawing it and I think that is wonderful. Matthew Jarratt will help a lot with making that programme work and engaging with young people.

J: I was particularly moved by one of your earlier projects; the spiritual stumble over a five-hundred-year-old Bavarian forest oak tree that was used in the construction of your concert halls in London. I imagine the moonshine adding to its natural polish, the veneer shivering above a rustling practising quartet. There is poetry in the surroundings, in the anatomy of the building and the way it holds and accentuates the acoustics of music; of sound and story. Is there one stand-out detail in one of your projects that inspired you along the way?

P: You're right about the tree, it's true. We went to Bavaria to see a veneer specialist near the forest, they had a range, and said that the concert hall was a special project and they had a very special tree called Contessa – very Mozart. They said we had to take the whole tree, we couldn't just take bits of it, the tree was cut down under the light of the full moon, they let it lie for two weeks for the sap to drain then they boiled it in a water bath of 80 degrees then they slice it 0.6mm thin. Out of Contessa we took home an acre of veneer! Every surface in the hall, other than the floor, is made out of that one tree and you can still smell it when you walk in, it's lovely.

J: I think that would bring such a deeper element to an environment that will speak to people, especially at the moment when we've become so desensitised, we need deeper connection.

P: Dovecot are weaving a tapestry for us which is based on an original Rubens painting, which is in the National Gallery. Leon Kossoff did many drawings based on major paintings that are in the National Gallery in London, and he made one which was based on a Rubens painting, 'Minerva protects Pax from Mars', which was given to Charles I as an anti-war offering from the Spanish Crown. Kossoff did a semi-abstract version of the painting and the studio are weaving a tapestry inspired by Kossoff's painting. The tapestry will be four meters by three meters and it will hang in the reception of our first office building. It's a wonderful statement.

Thinking about the oak tree, I wondered what was particular about Edinburgh Park and I think the tapestry is it; it's Dovecot, it's Edinburgh, and it's a very strong statement. It will be a very fine work when it's finished. They are now weaving it, you can actually go and have a look at it being woven, three people will work on it for a year to weave it.

J: The best things are worth the wait! Can you tell us a bit about the Big Noise Youth Orchestra?

P: The Big Noise Youth Orchestra takes young people, teaches them to play music, gives them intensive tuition which children don't get in schools anymore

“Its about creating a place for the people who are there but also we aim to attract people to come and have a look, to walk through the park and enjoy it.”

and they change children’s lives. I believe that music and sport can change people’s lives in terms of physically taking people out of where they are. The Big Noise work in very deprived districts, they’re working on getting some support from Edinburgh Council and once they get that, we’ve said that we would support them for the next five years in some way.

J: The spring of 2020 is suggestive of how much, and how suddenly, we can change as a civilization. I believe that you are the first in Scotland to mix commercial space and arts like this in an unrivalled setting within the public realm, to give life to a spacious, contemporary new quarter of the city, that is geared towards the community and will have a wonderful way of reuniting us as a people again after all the sanctions on the collective, more than ever, the individual wants to work or sleep or play in a new-build district that has a strong sense of inclusivity and society around them. It is a tough time for office spaces and developments as the economy slips through a series of dislocations, so, absolute kudos for pushing through and still persevering with this plan – do you think quality wins through in the end? (You know. You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf!)

P: I think you need a generosity of spirit and it usually works out okay. I’m not saying that in some instances you couldn’t make more money by not doing things that are worthwhile… We don’t want to lose money, we’d like to make *some* money, but it’s about more than money.

J: I’ve lived in Edinburgh for over a decade and I’m excited about this, I don’t think it’s been done before, I think it’s what we need, especially right now as the new world is emerging. When they opened up the brewery outside Edinburgh Park, I remember thinking about how getting on a tram felt outside of the city, but once I was there I was amazed by how much was outside of the confined space of the city centre that we’ve limited ourselves to.

P: Edinburgh has a grand history of culture and I’m happy to be a part of that in a small way.

J: They say the eye of the beholder is the collector – Are you always happy with the final symphony when your developments open their curtains, does everything usually go to plan as curated?

P: Things constantly change. Very often, it’s an iterative process; you put something down and then you see something, and then you see something else and then you modify. It’s a long process of developing and maturing the plans.

J: What inspired you to choose the name Parabola?

P: I like the shape of the curve

J: I think the meaning of Parabola reflects the way you select works that you want so showcase.

P: That’s very interesting that you would see it like that. I think there’s some truth in that!

J: I think with any construction in a place there needs to be a deconstruction of the environment’s history, it’s important to uncover and resurface stories, to excavate the meanings behind street names, to unearth figures lost to obscurity, and to rediscover various styles and interpretations. This way, we can reconstruct and repair the present. The art is embodied in the landscape and the landscape then embodies the people. The issues we face are global, as our current pandemic has reminded us, specific local character and innovative impact will inspire

on the other side of the world – will developments like this become fashionable do you think, catch a trend?

P: One would hope that it would influence people as we're influenced by the places we visit. Certainly, Kings Place has changed what it means to be a city building and a lot of people have been to look at it for inspiration. I think that you want to stand on the shoulders of giants and learn from them!

J: And how do you think art reflects that especially when so much of it is open to definition, review and reverie? If symbols are fluid, and not fixed, their meanings alter from one time period to the next do you think that as time shifts we deviate more and more away from the plan, the original intended message, that somehow separate societies depict things differently and that something that was once intended to be devotional can now become offensive or insulting for example? Or does this just add to the metamorphic qualities of a piece of art, or a poem, or a building? Do you think it is fair to say that art only represents what the viewer imagines and then verifies in a reflection of the time, that we need not worry too much about projections at all, but more on the very natural core humanism involved here, that art makes us feel things; it improves our brain functions and thinking patterns, our entire physical wellbeing is given a boost – everywhere, every era, someone gets some of this good medicine?

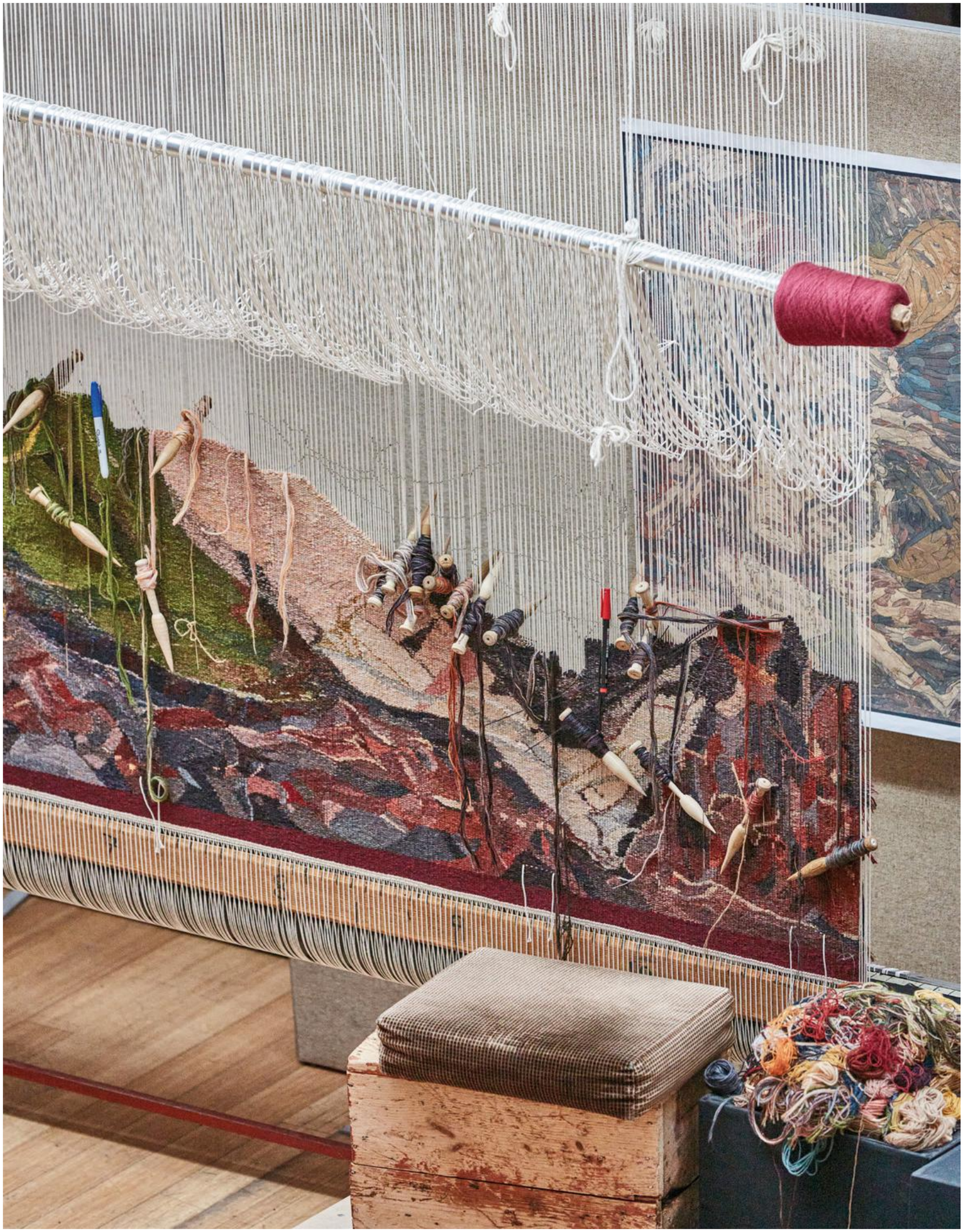
P: People spend three years at university studying that question! I'm not sure how I can answer concisely but art is different in different generations, and a lot of it reappears and is used again and reinterpreted. It's like the tapestry; the original Reubens painting was made into a work by Kossoff and it's now being made into a tapestry. These things do sort of waterfall down, really good works do. Hopefully, in a small way, we will have an influence.

"Edinburgh has a grand history of culture and I'm happy to be a part of that in a small way."

The fabric

CELIA JOICEY
DOVECOT STUDIOS

# of a city



CELIA JOICEY
Dovecot Studios

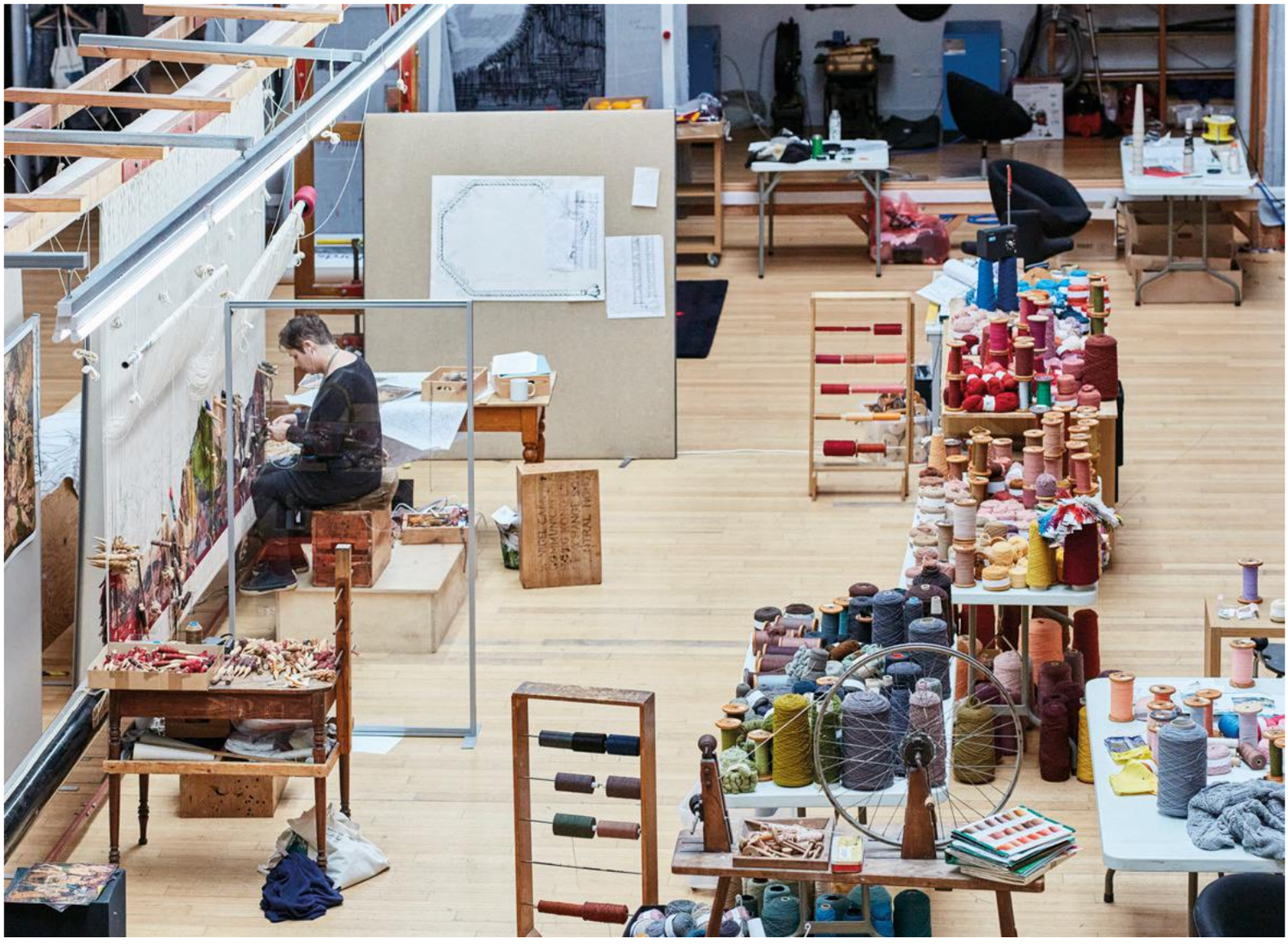
Dovecot is a leading contemporary tapestry studio and a centre for contemporary art, craft and design in the heart of Edinburgh's old town. Founded in 1912, Dovecot has created tapestries with some of the UK's leading artists and architects. From Graham Sutherland and David Hockney, to Barbara Rae and Chris Ofili, each new tapestry creates an opportunity for aesthetic discussion, experimentation and collaboration.

The commission from Edinburgh Park to create an artwork inspired by Leon Kossoff's painting 'Minerva Protects Pax from Mars' is significant. This is the first time a work by the expressionist artist has been translated into tapestry. It will also be the first new public artwork for Edinburgh by Dovecot in a decade.

Leon Kossoff (1926-2019) is considered one of the most important figurative painters of post-war Britain. Known for his portraits and urban landscapes, Kossoff made multiple studies of the work of Old Masters, including Constable, Poussin and Rembrandt. The subject for the tapestry is a highly charged anti-war painting by Kossoff that was, in turn, inspired by the work of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). He was captivated by Rubens' 1630 composition, in which Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, helps to drive away Mars, the god of war. Kossoff observed Rubens' work closely over a period of years and made many drawings before creating his own study in 1981.

The time and skill required by the Dovecot team to interpret Kossoff's painting will be even greater than the artist's intense observation of Rubens. This is a demanding commission that will be woven over a period of 16 months by three weavers. Kossoff's vigorous, viscous application of paint to the canvas and the depth of his palette is an opportunity to exercise Dovecot's expressive skills. Moreover, the size of the original painting requires the weavers to explore Kossoff's mark-making, texture and colour on a huge scale.

At a time when leading artists worldwide are making work in textile, this commission has the power to connect a new audience to Leon Kossoff's legacy. We hope it will also engage everyone living and working in Edinburgh Park with the opportunities to create art in the city.



Reception area at 1 New Park Square with the tapestry on display – with its beautiful high ceilings, large scale glazing for natural light and sensitive use of concrete and soft furnishing, it should provide a welcoming and inspirational start to every day

Architecture

CHRIS MILAN AND EDWARD JONES
MASTERPLANNING ARCHITECTS

The creation of a Masterplan involves the combination of what already exists with the prospect of what might be. Where there is a strong existing context, as in Covent Garden, Somerset House and Exhibition Road, our experience was to thoroughly understand the nature of the place but not intervene too much. However in the mild vacuum of Edinburgh Park a policy of city building was required. Richard Meier's earlier Business Park Masterplan of the 1990s took lessons from the nature, pattern and scale of Edinburgh New Town, and this is something we broadly wished to emulate.

The new line of the tram is the single most consistent ingredient and forms a central axis to the development as a whole. Passing from the now mature landscape of Richard Meier's Business Park the tram enters a flat and otherwise featureless terrain, soon be transformed by Parabola's Masterplan. At this point the tram tracks ramp up to clear the main line between Glasgow and Edinburgh and turns left to view the profile of the historic city in the distance. Finally the tram and train lines converge in a single station providing a principal entrance to Edinburgh Park, a new 'piece of city'.

The Masterplan is organised around a central landscaped cross, either beside the tram or on an avenue perpendicular to it. This results in four quadrants for housing and offices focused on their respective shared gardens and squares. The four quadrants have relative independence allowing for a variety of building types. As opposed to the urban indifference of the suburban family house with its almost total dependence on the motor car, here the proximity of public transport and a height restriction of seven stories based on flight paths into Edinburgh Airport, has resulted in greater urban density.

The urban block, street frontage with their fronts and backs, the mews and shared gardens of the interior have been maintained as the familiar conventions of the New Town. As a counterpoint to the proposal of streets and squares an ambitious landscape and public art policy has been introduced.

1 New Park Square by AHMM Architects, adjacent to Edinburgh Park Central tram stop, overlooking the Lochan.

Edinburgh Park Masterplan
by Dixon Jones Architects

Landscape

EELCO HOOFTMAN
GROSS. MAX.

The city of Edinburgh is defined by its awe-inspiring juxtaposition of the Old Town and the New Town. The Old Town manifests itself as organically grown, with its sense of intrigue and suspense, whilst the enlightenment New Town is envisaged as a planned neo-classical model city of composed vistas and refined, understated finesse. Both are remarkably expressive of topography as their build fabric is sculpted by valleys, ridgelines and steep inclined escarpments. The Old Town and the New Town have proven a hard act to follow. One can argue that both the Old Town and New Town have been succeeded by several generations of undefined and non-descriptive No-Town areas. For this very reason, we admire the early attempt by American architect Richard Meier and Scottish landscape architect Ian White, the designers of the original Edinburgh Park, to turn the tide and reinterpret both the classical urban and the romantic landscape as composite whole. The design of Edinburgh Park can be regarded as the long overdue next instalment and a new chapter to redefine Edinburgh urban fringe.

The public realm, supported by public transport, lies at the heart of the aspiration to create place for people at Edinburgh Park. The treatment of landscape and public realm plays an important role in contributing towards a distinct sense of place. The landscape and public realm will create an integrated network of open spaces which will provide a vibrant place for a spectrum of public activities and allow for a creative synergy of living, working and culture. The public realm will promote opportunities for both active and passive recreation, productive landscape, bio-diversity and cultural entertainment framed by an iconic skyline.

Edinburgh Park will also provide a new experience of nature in the city in times of climate change. The project will install a new soft dynamic infrastructure and is based upon fluid and adaptive spatial strategies. It connects urban hydrological functions with vegetation and forms a green infrastructure which is part of the urban system. This new urban quarter will be based upon a restorative design strategy to transform the site into a living system which includes water management and treatment, habitat creation, food production. It will express and articulate the entwinement of the biological and the cultural and celebrate both bio-diversity and cultural diversity.

Moving

PETRA ERIKSSON
ILLUSTRATION

Images

PETRA ERIKSSON
Illustration

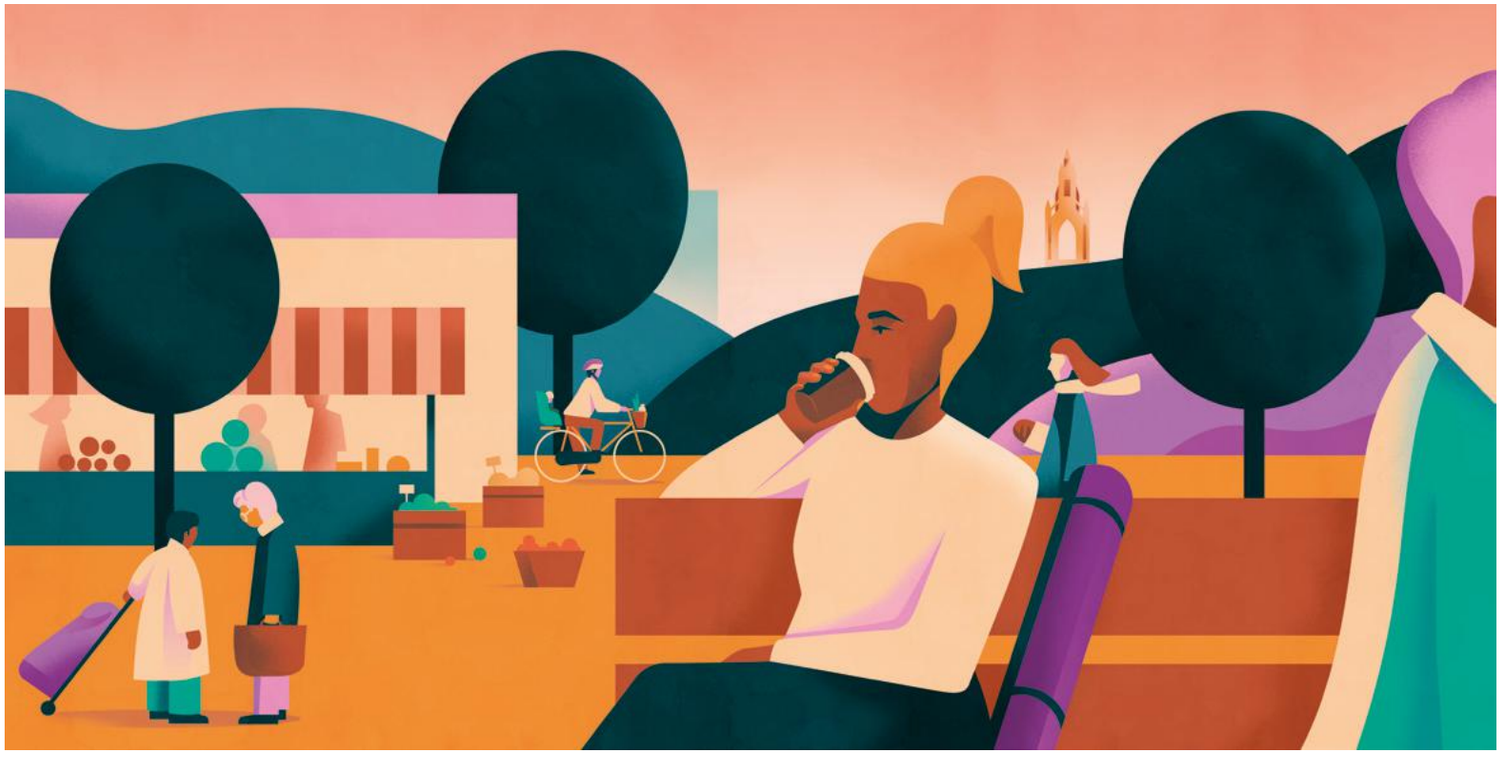
Edinburgh Park commissioned illustrator Petra Eriksson to produce designs which have been digitally wrapped on the trams which travel from the City Centre, through Edinburgh Park and on to Edinburgh Airport. Born in Stockholm and based in Barcelona Petra brings an international dimension to the artists making new work for Edinburgh Park. Her bright colours and bold graphic imagery reference the city's historic architectural landmarks and respond to Edinburgh Park's design values. The illustration brief has evolved from the brand development work by dn&co which aims to challenge perceptions and capture the culture, feeling and vibe of the future Edinburgh Park.

The brand strategy sets out values around the key benefits of the development including:

PROGRESSIVE: A forward thinking approach to living and working with wellness and sustainability at the fore.

EXPRESSIVE: Characterful and vibrant environment with beautiful landscapes and public art.

HUMAN: A people focussed approach to the office and residential community.



Photography

BEN HARMAN
STILLS GALLERY

Residency

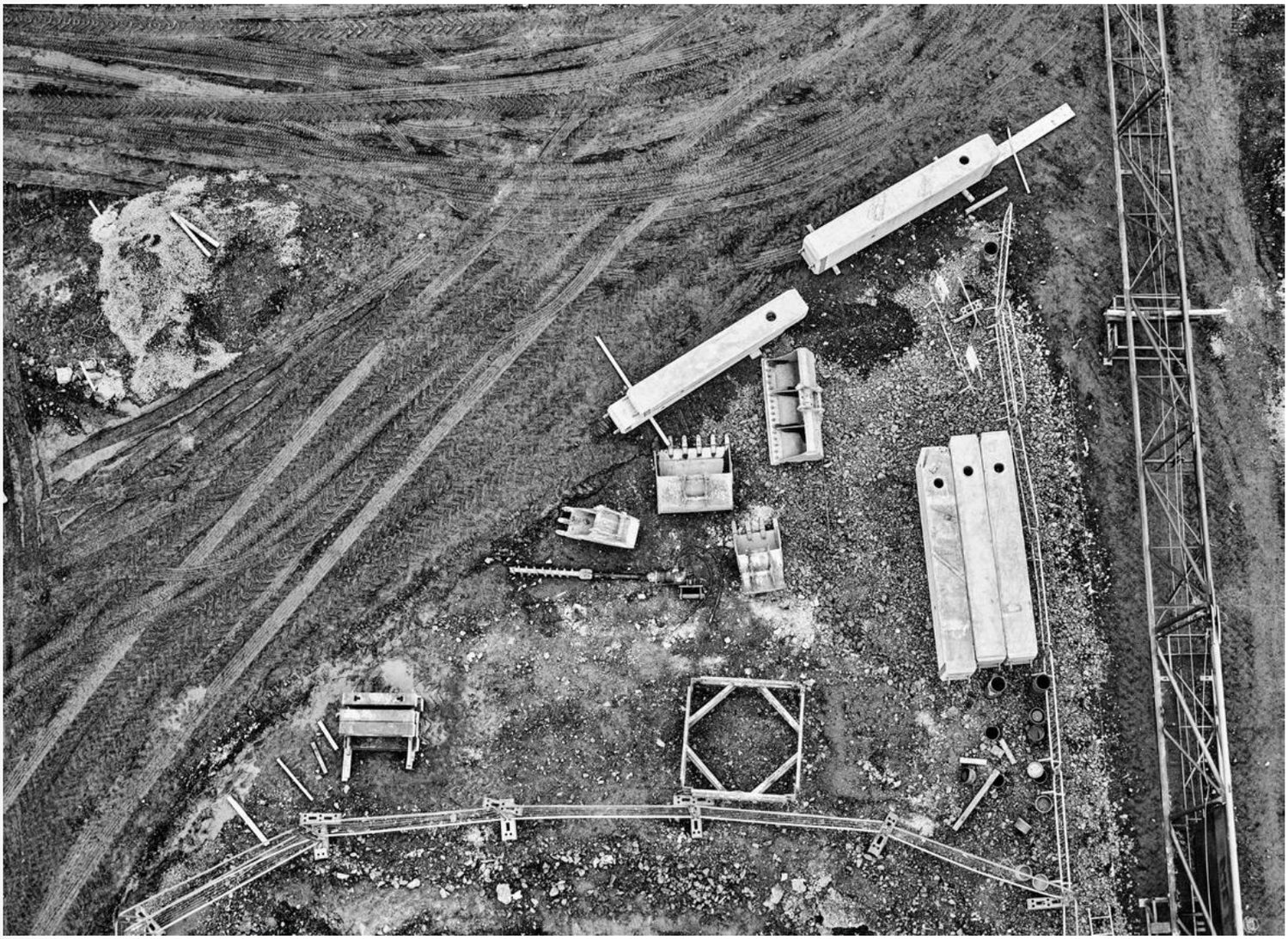
BEN HARMAN
Stills Gallery

Photography was pioneered in Scotland in the 19th Century. Scientists and artists based in Scotland, most notably in Edinburgh and St Andrews, were amongst the earliest experimenters and practitioners of the medium. They were in correspondence (and competition) with others around the world. Since that time, photography from Scotland has been consistently rich with talent. Photographers have made a key contribution to Scotland's world-renowned reputation in the field of contemporary visual arts.

Stills opened in 1977 with a mission to exhibit the work of home-grown talent and to bring the work of celebrated photographers to Scotland for the first time. In its early years, Stills introduced Scottish audiences to the pictures of Paul Strand, Diane Arbus and Robert Frank to name just a few. Since relocating to Cockburn Street, Edinburgh in the 1990s, Stills has been able to take its ambitions further. Alongside a year-round exhibition and education programme, we offer photographic production facilities and training. People of all ages and abilities come to Stills to use our darkrooms and digital suites and we are equipped to provide teaching on all practical and theoretical aspects of photography.

Providing opportunities for early-career photographers is key for the future practice and development of the medium. For this reason, we are extremely pleased to be working with Parabola and Andy Mather on the Edinburgh Park Residency and to support Andy through the different stages of his ambitious project. This opportunity, for a commissioned photographer to document the changing character of a city, is not without precedent in Scotland (one thinks of Oscar Marzaroli's Glasgow or Joseph McKenzie's Dundee, for example) but it is rare. To understand the value of documentary photography in this way and to welcome the insights of an artist during the process of redefining the way we live and work in an area of the city, will inevitably have lasting benefits for generations to come.

Photographer in Residence Andy Mather is making a body of work which explores and records the first phase of construction at Edinburgh Park.

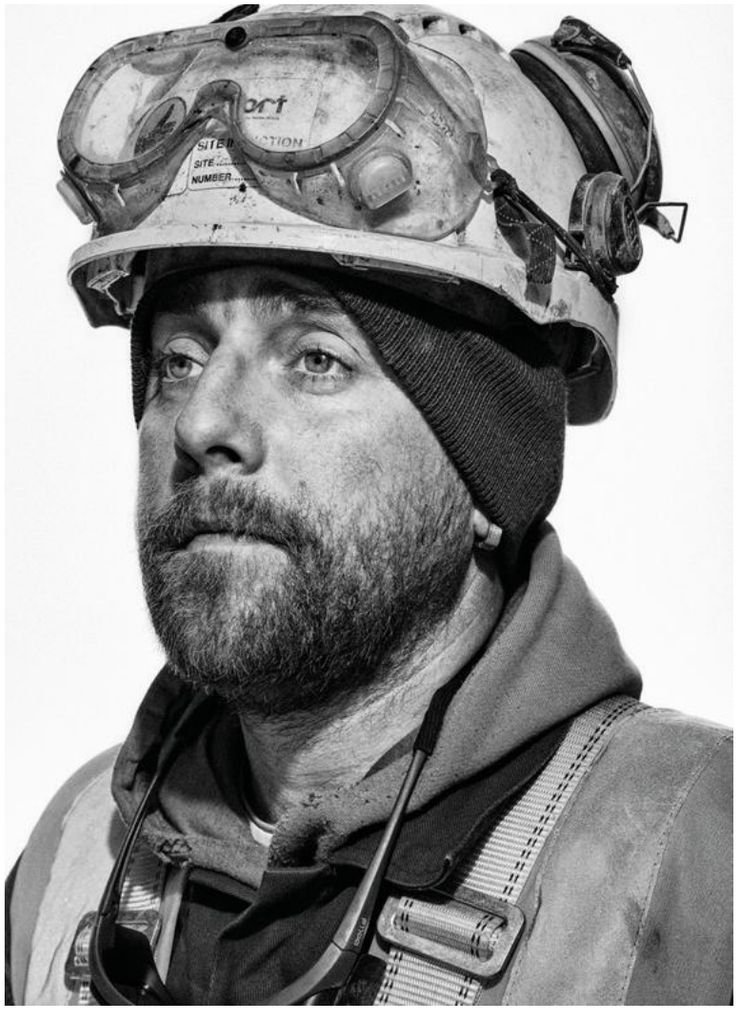


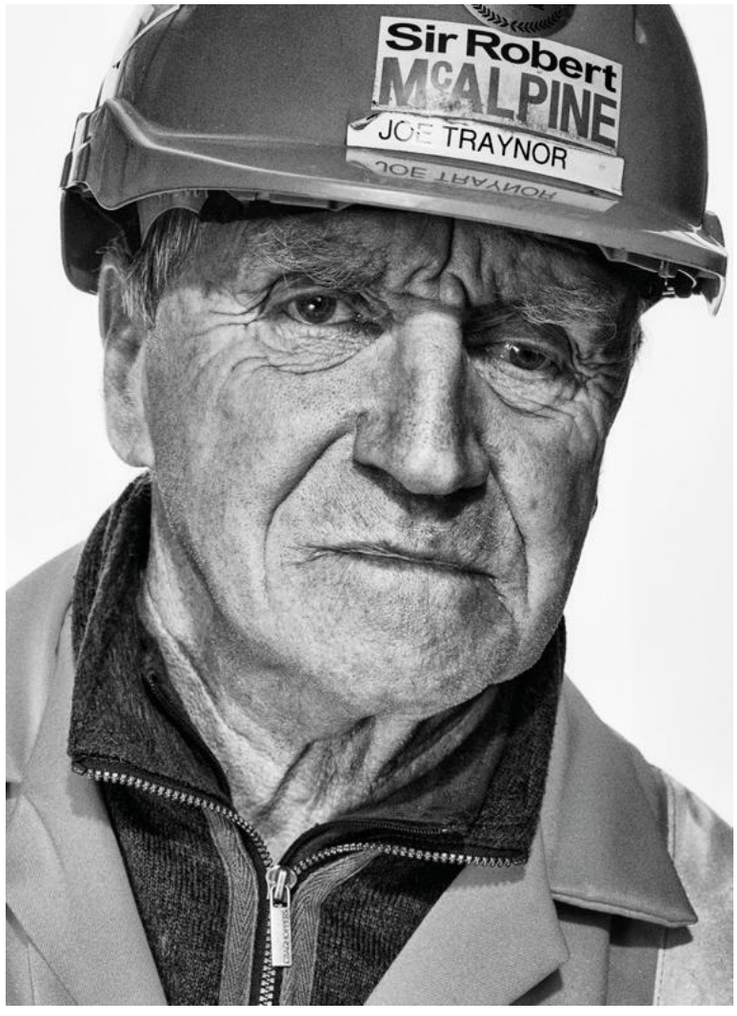
The creative

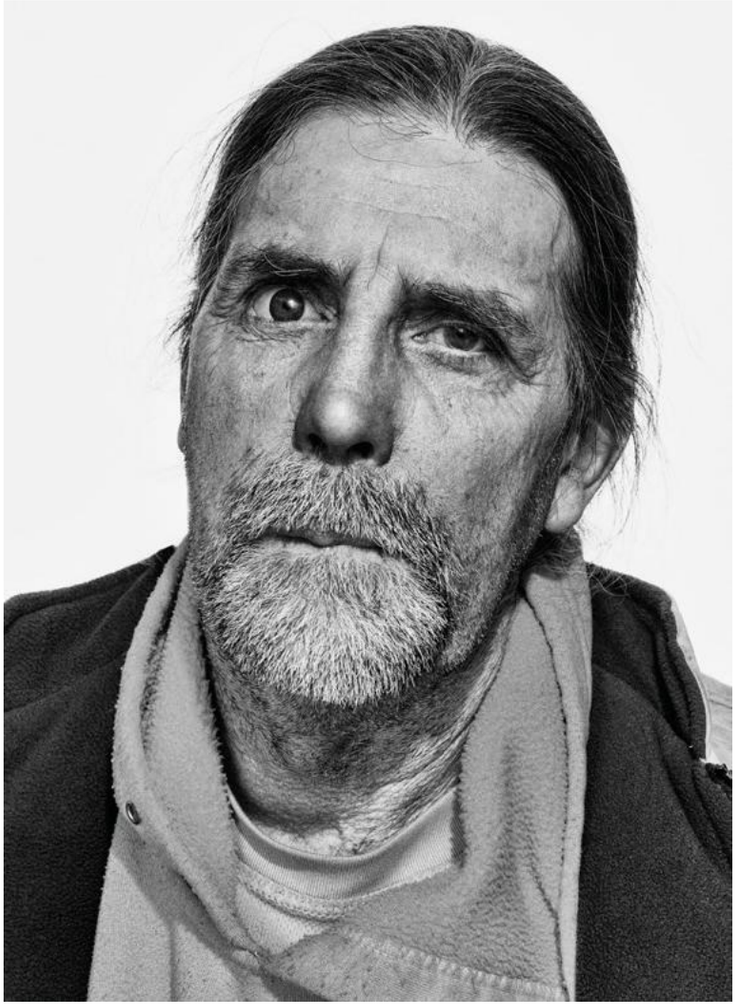
ANDY MATHER
EDINBURGH PARK'S PHOTOGRAPHER IN RESIDENCE

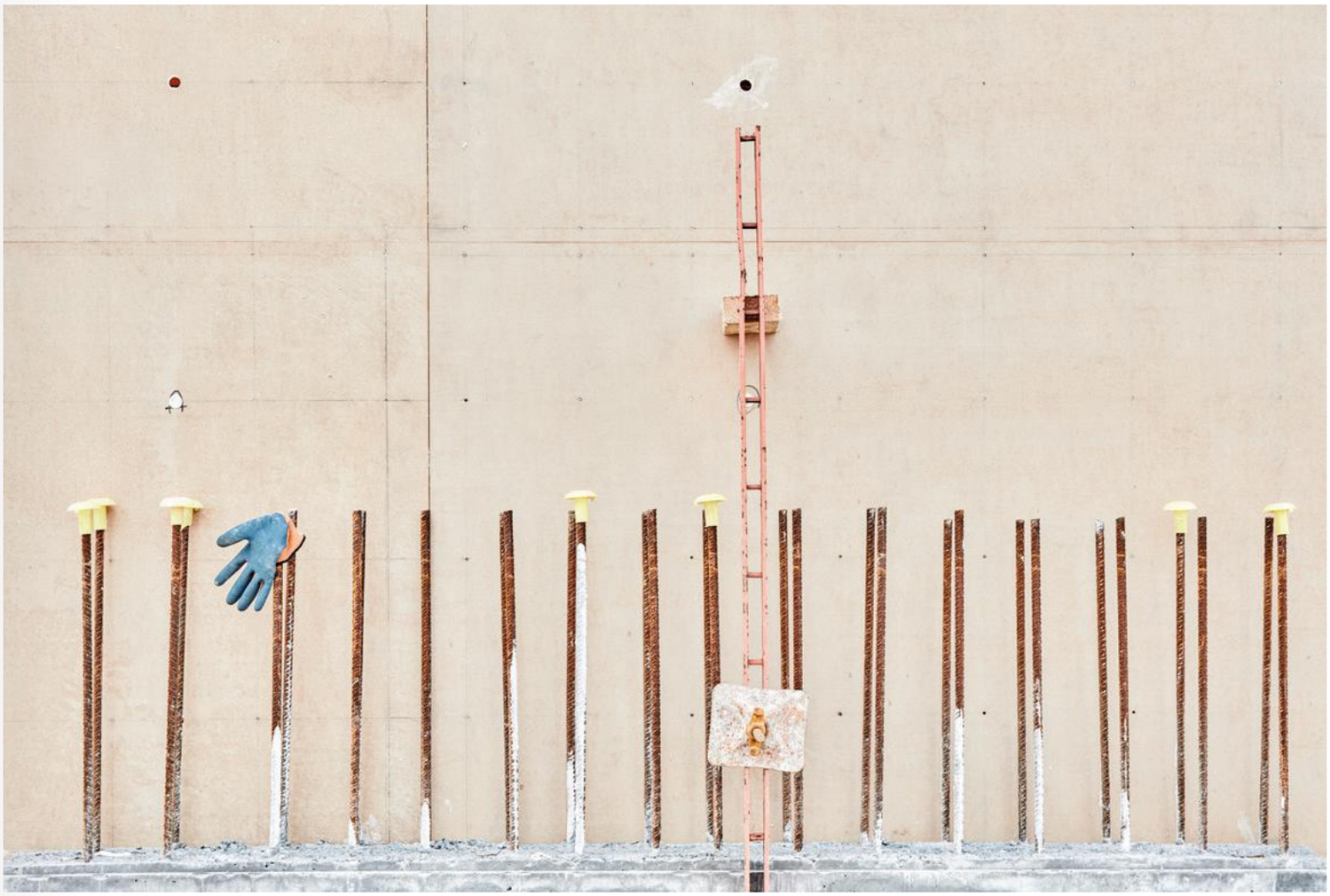
process

Andy Mather is capturing portraits of the workers on site reflecting the individuals and personalities who combine together to build the new spaces and places at Edinburgh Park.









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Making

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ARTIST DAVID MACH
AND POET RACHEL PLUMMER

Mach1

“Where I was brought up there was plenty of stuff, I was brought up in a very industrial neighbourhood as well as on beautiful beaches and gorgeous countryside, there was everything, I had the best playground in the world.”

A conversation between
poet Rachel Plummer and
artist David Mach via Zoom

R: I do creative writing workshops with the Scottish Poetry Library for young writers, I spent some time introducing them to some of your work, showing them what you do, showing them some of your previous work and the plans for the 'Mach1' building too, and asked them to send me some questions to ask you. They have some questions and I have some as well! I thought we'd start off with getting you to tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

D: I'm a sculptor. I've been making sculpture for forty or fifty years – I think I was actually a sculptor very early on; when I think about things I did as a kid, I was moving huge rocks around the beach, damming streams, all that kind of stuff was all very physical, three dimensional stuff, I didn't know that was sculpture at the time, I didn't think about being an artist or anything, it was just things you do as a kid, I liked playing with *stuff*. Where I was brought up there was plenty of *stuff*, I was brought up in a very industrial neighbourhood as well as on beautiful beaches and gorgeous countryside, there was everything, I had the best playground in the world. I try to make my way to that playground every time I make something, whatever it is, wherever I am. I make huge installations, I make tiny little pieces, I make hundreds of collages… It's like guerrilla warfare for me, making art – you get to comment on the world, you get to say what you like, you get to say it how you like. People make of that what they will, with a bit of luck, they like what you do, but if they don't, you're not going to be crying yourself to sleep at night either, it's a thing you just do.

It's a bit like poetry. Poetry's a new thing for me. I'm not a poet but I'm putting some words together and I'm surprised by how something will come at you, but I shouldn't be! It's the same as art, art comes at you, you think about things, you have a feeling about something, you pick up a material, you get excited by it, you see, hear, feel, smell something and it affects you. Putting that into words is a new thing for me, making things is my usual pastime so I'm pathetically thrilled by words.

R: I can really imagine you being interested in some of the concrete poetry or landscape and installation poetry, poets like Thomas A. Clark who invites you to physically walk down a trail to enjoy a poem or enter a room and have the poems on the walls or on objects.

D: It's funny, I was never interested in this kind of stuff and have only recently found an interest because I've been writing myself, but I'm very interested in the Humanist side of things, the sardonic or critical side of things, what you can say and how important it is to say things and just be yourself, the self that exists on this bloody planet. For instance, I like stand up comedy, it's a fantastic thing, we're a country that is rich in that material. It's as if I've been training for decades to get to a point where I can write a poem that's only ten sentences long. It's taken me that long to get to this point and I think "*What a twit*! *I could've been doing this a long time ago!*" But maybe I couldn't, maybe I've had to go through loads of bushes and crossroads, etcetera, to get to this point. Maybe there are timings for you to do things.

R: Do you have plans to develop your poetry?

D: I do. Unfortunately, I'm completely snowed under with loads of different pieces of work. In my ideal world, I'd be working on architecture, sculpture, collages, poetry, music, and I've got about two or three books on the go as well. For a while I was managing to make all of that roll over and keep progressing, but then, recently, not so much because of COVID, but the things around it have slowed things down. There was a point I was getting up at three o'clock in the morning and working until eleven o'clock at night in order to achieve all of those things but I think you just get tired. Now I'm getting up at eight in the morning… I used to be writing things in the middle of the night because they were coming at me in the middle of the night, but I'd also be going to things, there would be parties, there would be celebrations where people would ask me to say things. I thought it was weird that I actually wanted to read what I was writing to people. To me, it's really important how you read things in different scenarios. I also like the collaboration in poetry, as well as the emotion. I'm a good crier. I cry every night watching the TV, I cry watching adverts for digestive biscuits. You could employ me as a mourner at a funeral and get good value for your money. I like things to be emotional, so you know you're involved and not in a light way, I think it's good for you. I like when you read something and it catches in your throat, because you really get it.

R: It's that same feeling of awe that you can get from a lot of different kinds of arts and it makes you think "I want to give someone that feeling."

D: The funny thing is, is that I rarely get that feeling. I get it from my own art but hardly ever from other pieces! I do from time to time, but I think maybe I'm around so many different things that I maybe take it for granted. If I'm watching a film or listening to music especially, I like the honesty involved – art I'm suspicious of, I've always been very suspicious about it, even though I'm heavily involved, especially contemporary art, very suspicious of that. Whereas I'm less suspicious of music, in fact I'm not really suspicious

of music at all, I'll know instantly if it's shite or if I'll love it. I think I look at art that way as well but we're always encouraged to "wonder what the artist meant" and all that bollocks, I can't deal with that! Music and writing give you the honest meaning immediately and you can tell if it's bullshit or whether the words are important to you. This honest meaning seems to be more important than ever at the moment. In the world that we live in, everyone's lying about every damn thing under the sun and getting away with it. It's a strange thing that the artists are the ones telling the truth, or maybe it's not! Maybe it's always been like that and I'm just being naïve, I don't know.

R: Madeleine, who is nine years old, says "I really like your sculptures, and the 'Mach1' building, because they're so unexpected, my question is: have you always looked at the world like this, and what sort of things did you make when you were nine years old?"

D: I think I probably have always looked at the world like this. The great thing about being a kid is how you can look at the world. I would lie in bed and redesign my whole bedroom into the headquarters of *Joe 90* with things I was going to make out of Kellogg's Corn Flakes packets. I'm still using Kellogg's Corn Flakes packets, I actually cut the card out and make collages on the back of them, I love using that stuff. As a kid, I used to love staring at the back of the packet, it didn't say very much and it was the same thing every day, but somehow you could still read it and have this other world open up to you that's bigger or more exciting than it seems to someone who looks at you reading the back of the packet.

We were super active as children, I think my first assistants were six years old, I'd get them to help me dam the streams and the little burns that ran through the golf course, we used to try and flood the golf course, you couldn't do it by yourself, you needed half a dozen other kids to help you. People would stop playing and say "*you're just making us work!*" My environment was incredibly physical with the actual industries that were going on, I lived right by a brickworks and you sort of partook in it, it was as if someone had injected me with the attitude of "y*ou need to use that stuff for something*!" That attitude was in the water that you drank or it came up through the soles of your feet, or in the air that you breathed and I still feel it. I guess I haven't grown up in that sense, and I think probably partly because growing up is well overrated.

R: It's interesting what you're saying about the everyday objects like the cereal packets and the brickworks. I really think that that's what a lot of poetry is trying to achieve: to look at everyday objects in a new way and seeing the possibilities in them, or being able to bring the reader's attention closely down to them. It's interesting what you say about children naturally looking at the world in this way, maybe, as adults, we're trying to recapture that.

D: It's the nuts and bolts of your life, but if all you have is just the basic nuts and bolts, you're going to be bored shitless. If you're in the world of your imagination and you find yourself in the situation that that's what your job is, then for me that's a great place to be. Kids are great, aren't they? They have imagination in spades. An adult could be struggling to pick up on something but a kid will get it straight away. Imagination is surviving when you're a kid; it's surviving your parents being happy, your parents being sad, your parents being poor, whatever it is, they can come out of it grinning.

I used to lecture my daughter in the car. She was five and I'd be like: "Right, you're the kid, you get all the fun. I'm the dad, I do all the worrying. You're the kid, etcetera!" And we'd go on like that for a while. I want that freedom for everybody. It's a bizarre thing, you can read a poem to somebody and they can go "*Jesus...*" or you can show somebody your work of art and they can just be embarrassed, or horrified, or hate you! But I'm like come on, bring it on, which probably isn't an easy thing for adults.

R: Kids are unselfconscious, they aren't worried about what people will think, they just want to do things so they do.

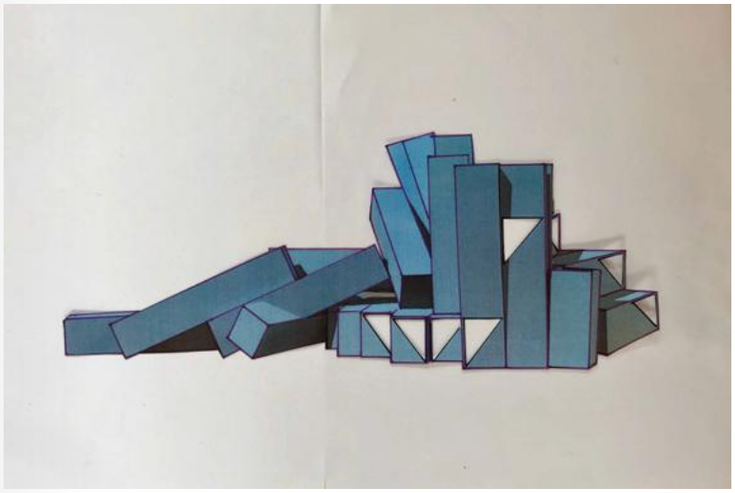
D: We train kids to be self-conscious. How we live, how we educate, how we pressure, how we judge... We make them self-conscious.

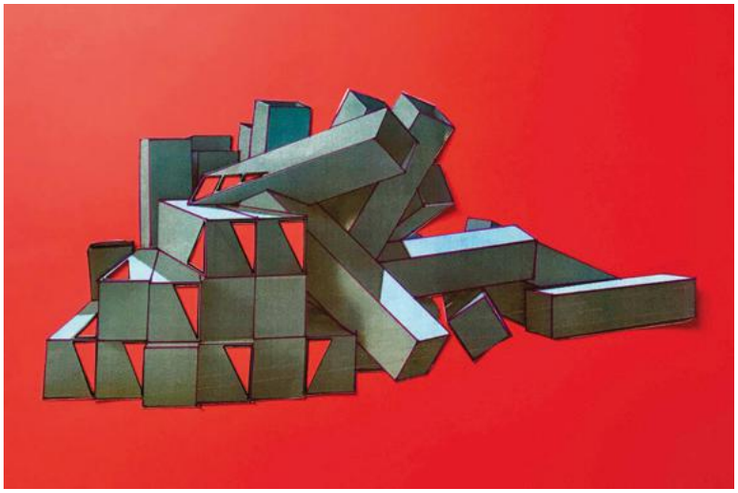
R: That's a big part of why I home-educate my daughter. I want her to have so much of that in her life.

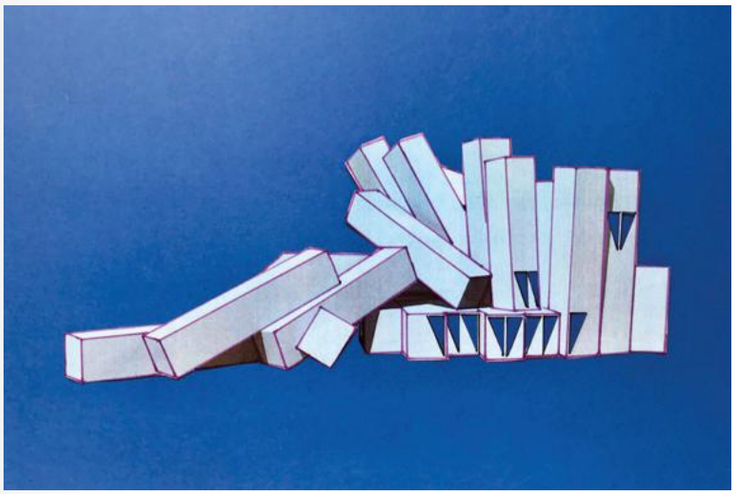
What comes first for you when you're making something? Do you start with these materials and play with them, and end up with something, or do you have an idea in your head? When you're lying in bed are you thinking about your cereal boxes or do you get an idea and then try to make it?

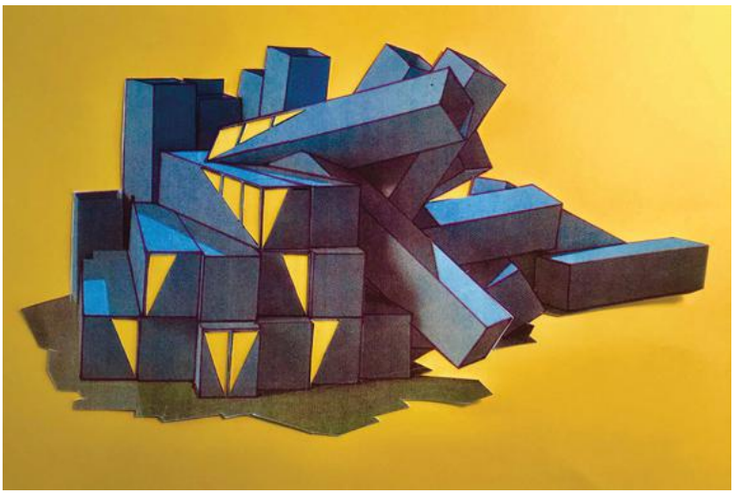
D: It's a total mix. I've made hundreds of installations when I've been trying to figure out how to work with something. Someone had given me 25 thousand biscuit fired plates when I used to work in a gallery in Stoke, and I thought they were horrible things, I didn't know what I was going to do with them. But it was persevering and finding out by mistake what worked, they used to fall apart because they were only biscuit fired, they weren't strong enough to support themselves. I build a column and it just snapped, a but of a plate when firing across the room and I went "*I like that.*" So, I just kept doing it until the whole room was just filled with broken bits of plates flying about the place, then the whole thing lifted itself up and threw itself into the air, it was bizarre! And then

“Poetry’s a new thing for me. I’m not a poet but I’m putting some words together and I’m surprised by how something will come at you, but I shouldn’t be! It’s the same as art.”









“It’s the nuts and bolts of your life, but if all you have is just the basic nuts and bolts, you’re going to be bored shitless. If you’re in the world of your imagination and you find yourself in the situation that that’s what your job is, then for me that’s a great place to be.”

I got stopped because it was *dangerous*, but I did find a way of working with it. Other times it's easier than that, sometimes I have a feeling about something, other times I have to hone it a bit. Then other times, I have complete ideas. I remember reading about Elvis Costello before mobile phones, he would phone his own answering machine and hum the melody that was in his head so he didn't forget them when he was out and about. I think that's fantastic, I think poetry is similar; I'm listening to the news or something, two words will connect and I find myself writing those things down and wondering if it'll fit with something else I'm working on, it's a constant moving thing.

I like things not to cancel themselves out. You can do that really easily by forcing something. By forcing a material: "*I'm going to bend you, you little bastard!"* but often you don't need to do that, you can find a way of working with materials, let them tell you how they're best manipulated. I'll find the energy in things, whether it's a tune, a word or a physical thing and if you're open enough to follow it, it works. It's letting the tail wag the dog. It's an odd, odd thing. Making a collage is like sitting on a horse the wrong way, steering it with a tail and shouting the directions to the head, it's odd. There's no logic that works. I find myself wrestling with tiny little bits of paper the whole day and I'm exhausted after a day's work, even though it just looks like I'm mucking about, but I feel like I've gone fifteen rounds with a wrestler, it's ridiculous. Sometimes I just couldn't get things to do what I wanted them to do, then I'd leave them for a while and when I came back it was obvious I just needed to go with it and vibe with the thing, rather than trying to make it into the thing that's in my head, I make it into the thing that it wants to be.

R: I think it's really similar with that form a poem has to take. You can decide *"I'm going to write a sonnet,"* or *"I'm going to write a villanelle,"* but once you start, often it will take you in a different direction, it'll tell you what it wants to be. It's always better to go with it, it'll always end up a better poem than if you try and force it into something that doesn't quite fit it.

D: It's difficult because you want things to bend to your will, you have a little internal battle with it. These are things you have to do a lot of to see what works, sometimes it does work and sometimes you think "oh god, that's shit."

R: Zach who is ten asks: Do your projects ever look different to how you imagined them and does that make you feel frustrated?

D: Oh god, he's going to be an architect is Zach! Architects must have that problem all the time, thinking they want it to look a certain way and the client says "well, I'm sorry, it's not going to look like that." It's funny, when I first introduced the idea to Peter Millican from Parabola, and he had Chris Milan, the young architect, I didn't know if I was going to get the job or not, I speak to everybody the same, so I said "this is how it looks, now don't f*** it up." Because architects will do that, they want to shift the angles or the degrees, or they'll say things can't be done because they need to be wired up or goodness knows what else. But with this thing, the design of 'Mach1' is so cranky, that even if it was fiddled with a bit, it still looks good, it fits the bill in a number of ways, it can be interfered with and still look like the thing I want. Either that or I'm getting soft! But I did give very clear instructions not to f*** it up and they seem to be following that to the letter. I've seen the plans, the drawings and the models, and it looks pretty much the same to me! I expect tweaks, it's a building, but it looks good.

The most fascinating thing with Zach's question is that he's interpreted the rest of his life, where people step in and say "No! You can't do it like that, you've got to do it like this." And he we are thinking we don't want to do it like that, I want to do it like this but this is the real world that we live in so too bad, you know?

R: I think Zach already feels like that when he's writing, often he has very grand ideas in his head, he's the kind of person who plans a whole series of novels but he can't necessarily fulfil what he wants to write and it makes him frustrated. Often he's one of the kids who has tried the hardest but at the end of the class hasn't got much to show for it because he feels like it isn't working the way he had imagined.

D: For a youngster, that's quite an interesting thing. My daughter's just started Halifax University in Nova Scotia in Canada. When she arrived, she had to quarantine for two weeks, and it's all got to be online learning. I got a call from her mum saying "Has she told you?" and I said "Told me what?" I'm thinking oh my god, what's happened, I'm really worried, and it turns out she got a bad mark for her chemistry. She's set herself up for a certain standard for herself and it just makes me laugh, like "you're talking to the guy who was the thickest guy in the class." They used to sit me next to this girl at school who used to weep because she wasn't going to meet her imaginary standards, and I'd be sitting there, patting her on the back going "think about me, I'm going to be nothing," but I couldn't get her to relax at all. That intense feeling that people have where they feel they have to achieve something, I didn't have that. Don't get me wrong, I can be frustrated when things aren't working out. I've also had a lot of assistants and I've told them, I don't want to make something that looks kind of like the thing I want, I want to make the thing that I *really* want, and it's your job to make it that way, not

“Say no a lot. Do your own thing. Find stuff that you like, that’s the way forward, it’s the stuff that you like that will make you creative.”

they way you think it should be done or anyone else and that’s a really hard thing to achieve. It’s a different thing to naked ambitions of wanting to be a “thing”, I don’t know if I ever had that. I have lots of ambitions now but I never used to.

Funnily enough, in relation to ‘Mach1’, I saw an E Type Jaguar at five years old and thought “I want one of them, I’m going to be an architect because they make loads of money,” but a week later I was back to having no ambition, which there’s nothing wrong with. I think at an early age, I figured I have to be able to deal with this. I’ve never liked to worry, I think worrying is well overrated. I don’t feel guilty about very much either. I think when you’re a kid, not worrying is a fantastic thing. Worrying about what you’re going to be doing when you’re twenty-five when you’re only ten is something odd.

R: I think there’s a lot of that. There’s so much pressure on young people from such an early age and there doesn’t seem to be much point to getting high scores, etc.

Audrey, who is nine, asks: The sculptures you make are things that can’t be used, does it feel different now to design ‘Mach1’, something that is going to be used?

D: Wow, she’s in the same book as Zach! Are you training a class of young fascists or something?

R: I’m really trying not to! It’s really interesting because I spend a lot of time with them talking about what poetry *is* and we have these big, long discussions about it and in the end, we decide that maybe anything could be a poem. So, I ask is a chair a poem and they all say “No!” so I ask well, could it be? How could we make the chair into a poem? And we think about things really deeply, so it’s really interesting to have them come back with these ideas that are still quite rigid.

D: It’s really rigid! You have to persevere in there. I actually find it quite funny. Obviously, we know that there is use for art and it doesn’t necessarily have to qualify in a certain way. I remember the ruination of art colleges, when they decided not to give people diplomas but give them degrees, if you want to get a degree, you have to write an essay about it and once you write an essay about the thing, it becomes something else. All of that started way back in the 70s, to make art more “useful”, to qualify it. To qualify is something that we all do all of the damn time, we can’t help ourselves. “I don’t like the way your arse looks in those jeans, I don’t like those shoes being too pointy, I like square toes, your jacket reminds me of Harrods, it’s a posh green…” We make judgements about every bloody thing under the sun, thousands of times a day, and most people are so unforgiving. When you go to art college, it’s almost as if you’re trained to be hypersensitive. As a sculptor, I’m so sensitive about *where* things are, and their positioning, whether they’re millimetres one way or the other, and you get home and you need to relax, you put your keys on the table, then you go back and move them just a couple of inches because it wasn’t quite right before, it wasnae the spot they should be left in… So, to have the qualification of “useful”, it’s quite odd, I’d quite like to be described as useless actually. I think I probably have been called useless before! There’s something kind of “f*** yeah!” about it, or anti-establishment.

R: I think that’s it and that’s at the centre of all art, you’re making something that’s not necessarily necessary for survival, it’s just something we’re compelled to make – maybe that is its necessity though!

D: Yeah, I think it is necessary for survival. I think if you take it away, terrible things will happen. Art comes in very, very, very many forms. You may

or may not know that, you may only discover it when you're 85 and lying on your death bed and it's something that someone has to point out to you, or you just don't get it at all. But we weren't put on this earth just to make things useful, that's for sure.

R: I agree with that, very much. One of the main problems I have with the education system; we don't learn so we can get a job and work 9-5 in an office, we learn because we're a curious species and it's part of what makes us human.

D: Wouldn't it be great if they actually said we're going to change the entire education system, we're going to stop f***ing about and everybody's going to be creative. We can learn things that are handy to know, but we're going to build a nation of thinking, doing daft folk that invent amazing things on the back of it. While they're doing that, also having a brilliant time, thank you very much! We're not all capable of working how things currently work and I fear for how that all ends up, with everyone getting home on a Monday and dreading the next four days before the weekend. Life shouldn't all be about achieving and ambition and all of that, you can make plenty money doing plenty of things, but you can have a bit of fun while you're doing it and not be such a dick – that's a message to the education sector!

R: That leads us nicely into my next question which is: what advice would you give to young people who are interested in art?

D: Whoa there. It's funny actually, I was just telling someone to paint flowers. I was laughing because, in contemporary art, we all get very serious and up our own backsides about the whole thing but I do think that things in the art world have opened up again. It's now possible to pop up out of the woodwork with something and have someone go "wow!" and we can do something with that kind of attitude. I would say that if you had any sense as a teacher, you would say "Look, stop pissing about and just paint flowers!" The richest artist in Scotland is probably Elizabeth Blackadder, and everyone goes "Ah, she just paints flowers." Yeah, get on with it. So, I was recently saying that to someone and I thought I would actually take my own advice, I'm going to try it and see if I come out with the same sort of thing. The art world does this thing where it teaches you to be a terrible snob about every damn thing under the sun, it's fascinating as all hell. The question "*Who the f*** do you think you are?*" crops up all the time and I've always found that quite difficult to deal with, whilst also being right in the middle of it, it's what I do. So, I'm really suspicious and I think it's important to be suspicious. Crack on with it, but be suspicious of other people's motives, but also your own; what is it that you think that you're doing? Don't think "*Why does the world need this?"* I'm perfectly aware that the world doesn't need another David Mach making anything, but I'm quite happy to still be doing it. It obviously irritates quite a lot of folk, but I've decided that one of my best qualities is being irritating, it's not that bad a quality.

R: It's a good quality!

D: Say no a lot. Do your own thing. Find stuff that you like, that's the way forward, it's the stuff that you like that will make you creative. If you actually like adding up figures you're going to have a very happy career as an accountant, you have to find the thing that makes you happy.

R: That's really good advice, for everybody. Within the art world, that can by cynical and snobby, is there anything that's exciting you at the moment, that you're finding really interesting?

D: I'm always interested in music. I'm a drummer, it took me about 40 years to realise that rhythm and the repeating of something, whether it's hitting a drum or using the same materials in art again and again, which I do a lot, it's that that is very important to me. I can be a very, very slow learner, it took me ages to realise that I just keep doing things. With drumming, I've bloody been doing that since I was about 12 or something, and I get over excited by good music. I love stories, I don't see a lot of actual artworks, I'm very excited by my own, I have to say, if I'm really honest. I'm chock-a-block with ideas at the minute, and I really need to get my arse in gear and get working, I've been thwarted a little bit over the last three or four months and I need to get cracking and make these things. I don't want to leave anything behind, I want to take every idea with me, every man with me. I don't want to leave them floundering like a wet fish, you take it all and that's how you find out what you're doing. You need to work hard. That's advice I'd give: put the effort in, don't pretend you're putting the effort in, don't do anything half-heartedly, do it all full on, if you can.

I'm still enthused. The architecture thing, when we were working on the new project, I was really interested in that, I shouldn't really have done that because we wernae going to make any money out of it, but I spent months working on this particular thing, knowing I wasn't really going to get the job. My girlfriend and the people in the studio were saying I should have been working on other things and I was saying "I don't want to, I want to do this!" I get pathetically excited by that sort of stuff. The same with bits and pieces of words. I finished my book off, but now I have to edit the damn thing and I'm finding that quite hard. Before, I was working with a mate, he was helping me with it and we'd have a great laugh, he'd come in a few days a week and we'd be busy working on it. We'd be batting ideas backwards and

forwards, we'd be giggling at the lunacy of it all, and you kind of need that.

To be honest, I've been unequivocally, ridiculously spoiled rotten my whole life by all of this, I can't complain about that at all.

R. I thought it was interesting what you said about the music, because when I first saw the 'Mach1' drawings I thought it would be a really interesting place to perform music with the kinds of resonances inside and the shape of it and the materials and while things have been stymied by the pandemic but there is a cellist who I've been wanting to work with who works with poets and I was really keen to do a performance of poetry with his improvised cello and his electronic devises.

D. Thanks interesting, I think about it as a place for that kind of thing.

R. And even the name itself 'Mach1' makes you think of sound.

D. Thanks funny because I work with a guitarist whose fantastic, an Australian guy who plays like an angel and I thought I'd like to read some poetry and have him play alongside and improvise but we could never get it right, then I thought I could drum alongside somebody that was speaking. That would be an odd thing, you know? But I don't think I'm that good a drummer to actually do that and I'd be worried about performing, but you know what's interesting is the collaboration and as an artist, collaboration is not something I've been guilty of – hardly ever! It's not an ego thing or "*This is mine!*" but I am more interested in collaborating with a musician or a writer and that kind of opens you up a little bit an I think that's very important and finding something new like that doesn't happen a lot.

R. I agree. I often find that I get most of my inspiration from other mediums and from other media from what I work in, I've worked with cellists in the past, I found that really interesting, or in this project, writing about this artwork and building. I like to write about buildings, I think that's really interesting.

D. That's a really fascinating thing to do. I did a portrait of two companies once and I thought "how do you do a portrait of a company?" and I actually got two works of art out of that that I really like a lot and I was surprised. I think that's valuable stuff when you surprise yourself and I also like to be pressured, I like to do things where there's somebody watching you, I like the performance. I think being a witness for something is very important and you can be a witness by hearing, by looking, by tasting, by touching but the thing about this Zoom thing is that it removes you from that closeness, it's not good, I think you need to be there. It's interesting with music because you can hear music in your head and you carry it with you and for an artist that's interesting and I'm forever meeting people who want to leave a legacy and I'm just thinking "you're just leaving a pile of crap!" but the biggest things in your life, the best meal you ever had or the things you remember, stay with you. You can't hear the Rolling Stones now but if you had ever been to one of their concerts and you were up there in your chair balling and shouting and behaving like an idiot, then you remember stuff like that and it's the stuff you haul along and that's valuable rather than the stuff that slows you down – this is the stuff that makes you light and airy and you kind of need that you know 'cause the world's a silly bugger place! And how you get through it, fairly well intact is important.

R. Yeah, I think that's a really powerful way to think of it, as the things that lift you up and make you lighter or the things that weigh you down and drag you back. That's a really good way of describing it.

I've got a couple of similar questions from Rory who's nine and Erol, who's eight. Rory asks: "Why shipping containers?" and Erol asks "How did you get the idea for the way the building looks and what inspired your initial drawing?" and Erol also says that if he had one of your match head sculptures he would keep it for a long time and then accidentally/deliberately set it on fire – he wanted you to know that!

D. Ha! That's actually happened quite a few times!

The shipping containers are something I've been interested in for decades. I used them once to make a couple of Greek temples and I wrapped tyres around them and made columns around them. They were perfect; four forty-foot shipping containers in a block made the perfect shape for the columns around the block, and then I thought, hang on a minute, this is really weird, these shipping containers actually look like Greek temples they have, that's same the squat gable end and they've even got columns running down the side and I began to think of them like that. Then I started to use them as plinths and sat heads on top of them, and I started getting interested in what I could do with them and I had a couple of huge Sumo wrestlers holding them up. I could write essays about them because suddenly you realise that every single thing you buy in the world has been transported in these things, so every PCU, your jeans, your washing machine, that's all been transported and its all been made to fit and they shape the world – physically they shape the world. They have been dropped from the sky accidentally in Amazonian forests and worshipped by tribes a bit like the big block in *2001: A Space Odyssey* – there are loads and loads of aspects to them that are really interesting. My wife used to say "You have a really unhealthy interest in that big metal box."

When they were looking for an idea for Edinburgh Park, I heard through the gallery that Parabola wanted to use shipping containers. There are lots of container buildings but they are all the same, they are stacked up and great looking things but I said "I've got an idea in my head!" and I went and bought lots of Bacofoil packets – we had enough Bacofoil to keep us going for five years! And they were roughly the right dimensions, I'd chop each box into three bits and I just started putting them together and cutting into them because the way to make the architecture is not just to imagine it or do a drawing, it's to work it out physically and that paid dividends once we started talking to the engineers because the way we put it together actually counterbalances the weight. And that's how you actually put it together, its not fake, as a sculptor that's what you would do to make it become a real thing that can actually stand up by itself so you find yourself having engineering skills just because you've been manipulating "stuff" for forty years.

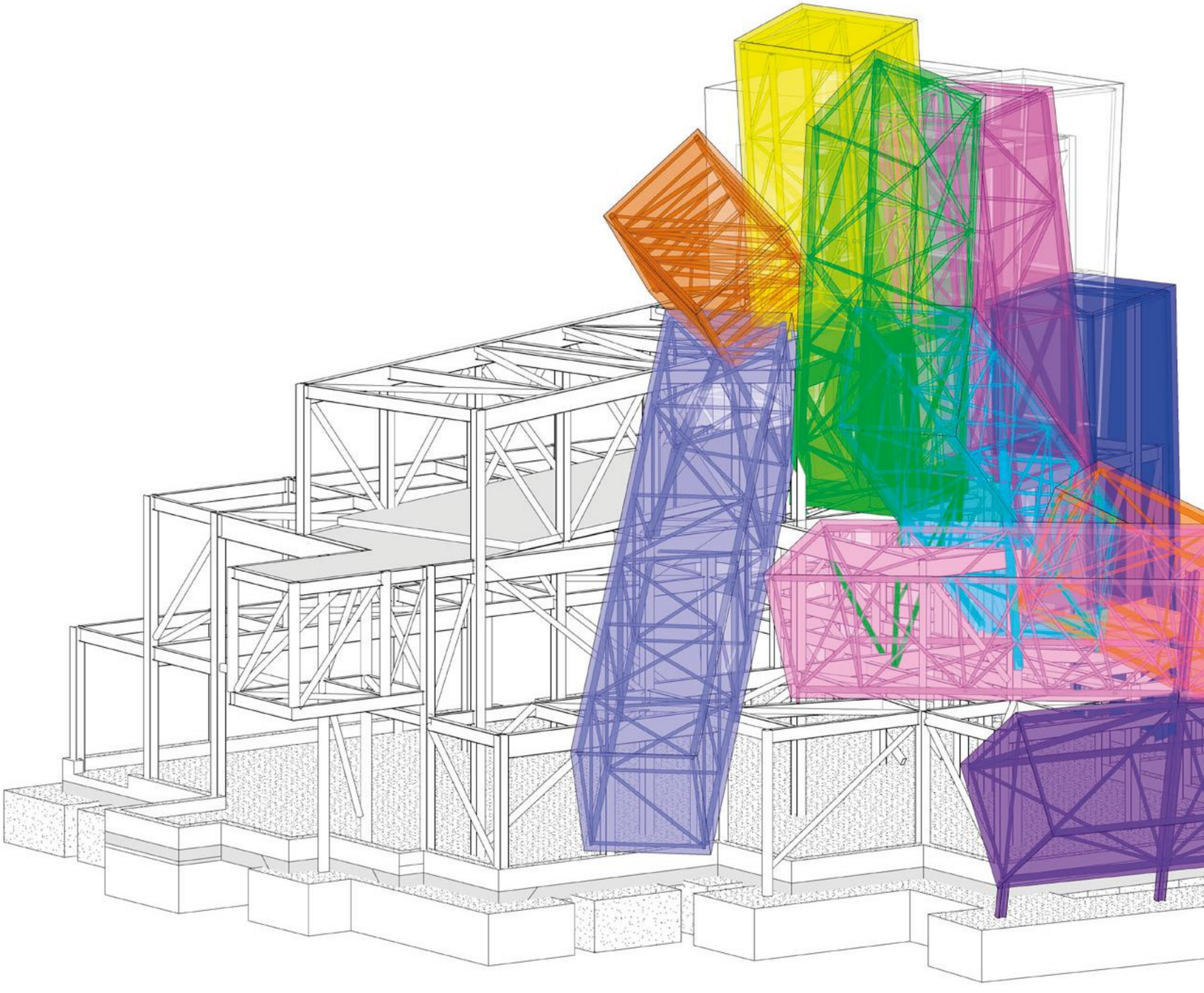
I was laughing with my daughter that just before she was upset for getting a poor mark for her chemistry, she got a great mark for her engineering drawings, which were done on CAD, and I was laughing because I failed my Engineering drawing twice and they gave me a complimentary O-Level because my drawings were really good but my calculations were shit! I did Applied Mechanics at schools as well and I was crap at Applied Mechanics, but I apply Applied Mechanics physically all the time when I make sculpture to the point where I could build you a bridge without working out the stresses and strains and that's just experience of working stuff out!

We were stuck in Kiev once making an exhibition and we were putting the first Sumo Wrestler sculpture together which is two Sumo wrestlers holding up this box together, like two removal men and a piano. We had to lift a two-tonne shipping container six feet into the air to sit it on this table which would go between the Sumo. We had three weeks to make it and they would never bring us the crane, "there are no cranes in Kiev?" So, I was working with my assistant, Adrian, and I said "I know how we can lift this thing by ourselves…" and we worked out between us how we could lift a 2-tonne container and there's no way that two men should be able to do that and we worked out a way that if the crane didn't come, we could lift it – it would take a lot of effort but we were up for it and the day we were going to start doing it the crane showed up! I always wished we had been able to make the effort to lift that thing and I've had to stop myself lying about it and saying that we actually did that by hand, just to tell a tall story. We should actually maybe just do it one day just for the hell of it before we get too old and decrepit.

R. My final question is what do you think people will take from the 'Mach1' building?

D. I think it will be quite popular, I think that people will smile, they'll grin when they see it. I always say when I make art, "I want people to laugh and to smile and to start crying because you're emotionally pushed over the edge, I want you to reach into your pocket and throw money at me, I want you to applaud and I want you to run away screaming!" That's the kind of reaction I want, I don't want you to walk by and say "What's *that?* – I don't need that." I think people will like it and folk will hate it as well – it's one of those things, people will say "What the hell is this? Who the hell do you think you are?" Especially in Scotland – I come from Fife, but I used to say I come from "Who the hell do you think you are?" I tell myself that every day, I like to be infiltrating and I feel like I've infiltrated architecture so other architects might now say that exact thing from

a different angle “Who the hell does he think he is?” – and I like that about art, that it can make you find your way until you’re sitting next to the Queen having lunch and she’s passing you the salt, and you’re waiting for someone to tap you on the shoulder and you go “OK, I’ll just get my coat.” There’s something about poetry and music and sculpture that enables that to happen and that’s a personal revelation to me that you can get involved, and if they would teach you that as a kid then, whoa!



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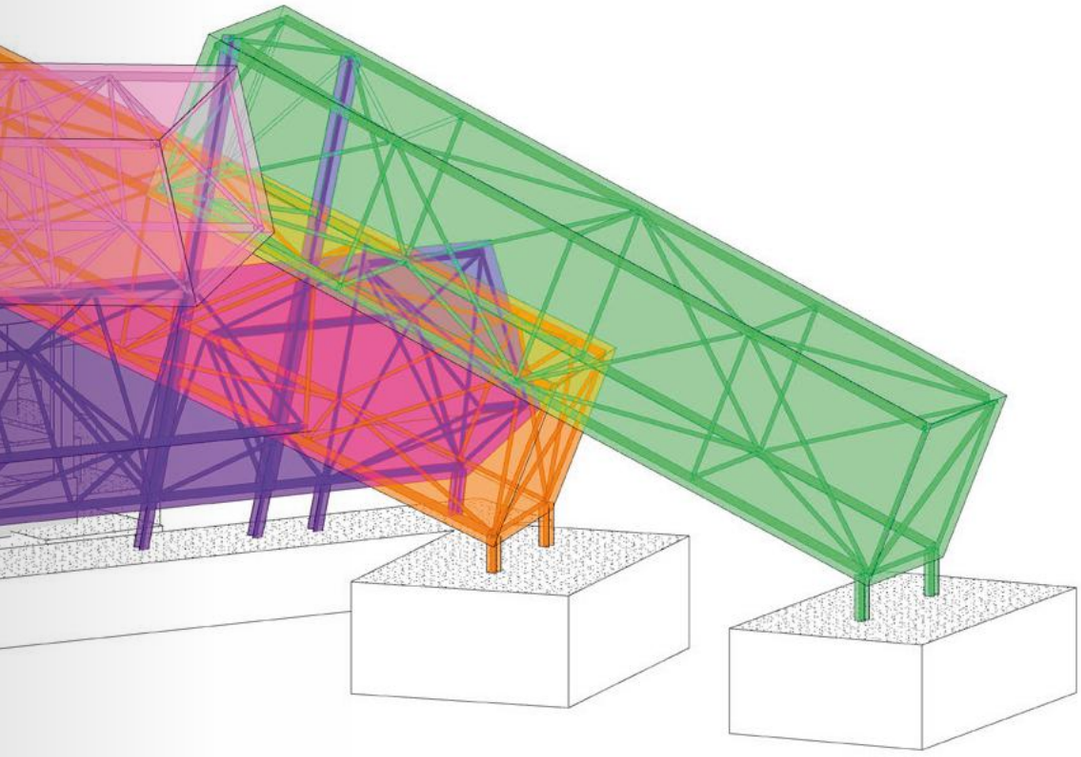


‘Mach1’ technical drawing by Woolgar Hunter Engineers

Mach1

A POEM FOR MACH1
BY RACHEL PLUMMER

As soon as I saw the opportunity for a poet to write about the new 'Mach1' building, I was excited. I love to write about interesting and unusual buildings, and the picture of the proposed 'Mach1' project was absolutely fascinating to me. Sculptural, unique, like nothing I'd ever seen before. I knew I had to apply.

When I was told that I'd been chosen for the project I was over the moon. Getting to meet with the architects, artists and others behind 'Mach1' and then to turn the insights they gave me into poetry has been inspiring and challenging, and I've relished it.

It means such a lot for emerging artists like myself to be given these sorts of opportunities. This is how we push ourselves in new directions, how we learn and grow as artists. I'm grateful to Parabola for this experience, which has influenced my writing in ways that will resonate through my work for a long while to come.

Endlessly building and unbuilding itself,
the guardian of the city
rises from the land to stand
half-stooped, like a man
on one knee peering at his own reflection
in a window's sunlit eye.

How beautiful he is,
about to ask the sky to marry him.

And on such a day as this,
when light has swept clean all the corners
and left the flowerbeds freshly made.

You must remember
there are no wrong angles.
There is only the echo, its tidal
back and forth pooling
in corners, your own voice mirrored, your self
unbuilt, unmade, unmarried.

Come closer.
Come through the garden of steel
poppies reclaiming the ground
in the name of our wild city, raising
the flags of themselves high above the wind
to where the guardian keeps watch
over all the sunwashed horizon,
the sky blushing under her cirrus veil.

You know this place. You know it like air knows
the taste of thunder.

This is where brick-boned buildings grow
as tall as willowherb, and beckon you inside.

Where red meets borrowed blue and you
will make yourself
a living space, a place
that breathes and grows
and knows the only way to rise up
is to fall

and then to build.

WIND BAND

Big Noise

NICKY PRITCHETT-BROWN
SISTEMA SCOTLAND AND BIG NOISE

Orchestra

NICKY PRITCHETT BROWN
Sistema Scotland and Big Noise

Sistema Scotland believes that all children and young people have great potential, skills and talents. We also recognise that poverty and inequality can have a significant impact on the support and opportunities some children have to build their self-esteem, confidence and social networks: key building blocks to nurturing their individual ambitions and dreams. Sistema Scotland uses music and nurturing relationships to bridge some of those gaps.

Our work demonstrates that music has a critical role to play in inspiring individuals and communities. Our Big Noise programmes, delivered by inspirational musicians who are not only teachers but role models and mentors, provide a potent, positive route to building confidence, promoting well-being and happiness, and supporting young people to realise their potential. We believe that when children and young people are supported, families feel the benefit. When this support is provided for many children, young people and families within the same community, the wider community can benefit from the multiple impacts.

We created our Big Noise programmes to do just that. Big Noise is our way of inspiring, nurturing and strengthening individuals and communities through music. We have created long-term orchestral educational programmes in targeted communities, where there is identified need. We work with children from babies to adulthood in school, after school and in the school holidays and all parts of the programme are free of charge to children and families. Our first centre was launched in Raploch, Stirling in 2008 with 35 children; by March 2020 more than 2,800 children were taking part in Raploch, Stirling; Govanhill, Glasgow; Torry, Aberdeen; and Douglas, Dundee. Since March 2020 and the beginning of Covid-19 restrictions in the UK our inspirational musicians have been delivering a blend of over 4,200 live lessons via video conferencing, group lessons and face-to-face sessions all supported by an extensive range of over 550 pre-recorded teaching videos for all ages and abilities of Big Noise participants, from infants to school-leavers.

Big Noise celebrates individual and collective endeavour, growing and nurturing long-term friendships, offering support beyond traditional service boundaries, building inner confidence and determination to help people shape their own path, and see brighter opportunities and limitless possibilities.

At Parabola, we are delighted to support Big Noise and Sistema, which is perfectly aligned with our own Parabola Foundation which is committed to a number of charities including Aurora Orchestra. The Aurora Orchestra is host to world class artists in our building Kings Place, which over the last 5 years has provided a remarkable chamber orchestra series, built around the first complete cycle of Mozart's 27 piano concertos ever staged in concert in the UK.

“Arts and culture play a vital part in enriching and illuminating our lives, the value to our economy, wellbeing and productivity is widely accepted yet all too often its inclusion in place-making is an afterthought.

A commitment and understanding that arts and culture has an intrinsic value to our community is the very essence of the philosophy we share at Parabola. It is a thread that binds together the places we are creating.”

Our aim at Edinburgh Park is to realise the full potential, build a new urban quarter that is a great place to live and work but also a cultural destination in itself.

Edinburgh Park provides a unique opportunity, in many ways the perfect blank canvas, to deliver our ambition, share our experience and demonstrate our sheer passion for art and culture – and showcase the true value of art and culture to wellbeing, society and our community and its ability to boost our daily lives.

In the forty-three acres of Edinburgh Park, we are creating the most sympathetically crafted public realm and landscape. The publicly accessible space is set against the stunning backdrop of the Pentland Hills. A landscape which complements the serenity of the established lochan on the edge of our civic square. The setting stitches together existing Edinburgh Park and our new commercial and residential community which is now emerging. The parkland will be enhanced by artists' interventions including sculpture, textiles, digital projections, text-based work, poetry, ambient lighting, functional seating and artist-designed planting schemes.

We are indebted to our professional team who all share our passion for art and landscape, ensuring we have designed and created a set of coherent open spaces and a language which celebrates the art and which is carefully positioned in the optimum setting for our new buildings.

Art requires a plinth, and the new parkland will be that platform. Its quality and prestige will reflect Edinburgh Park as a contemporary business district for the city and a new cultural quarter. There will be surprising, exciting and calming spaces to dwell and relax throughout. With a range of informal meeting spaces, even exercise nodes to help encourage wellbeing and health, or simply to provide beautifully framed views that will inspire further creativity and imagination, Edinburgh Park will offer a vision distinctive to its location.

Art at Edinburgh Park will be for everyone. Young or old, culture expert or arts novice. Legends of UK art history will rub shoulders with emerging talent – creating an inspiring al fresco gallery where everyone is welcome to learn, enjoy and participate in an inclusive and interactive approach.

We will be inviting artists and performers to use this new urban landscape as a creative canvas, to expand their vision and imagination, across the site. The cultural programme will even include residencies in photography and poetry to document and reflect on this ambitious, emerging community. An education programme to engage local schools and community groups will further encourage inclusivity and diversity. Our events programme will invite key festivals to locate activity at Edinburgh Park.

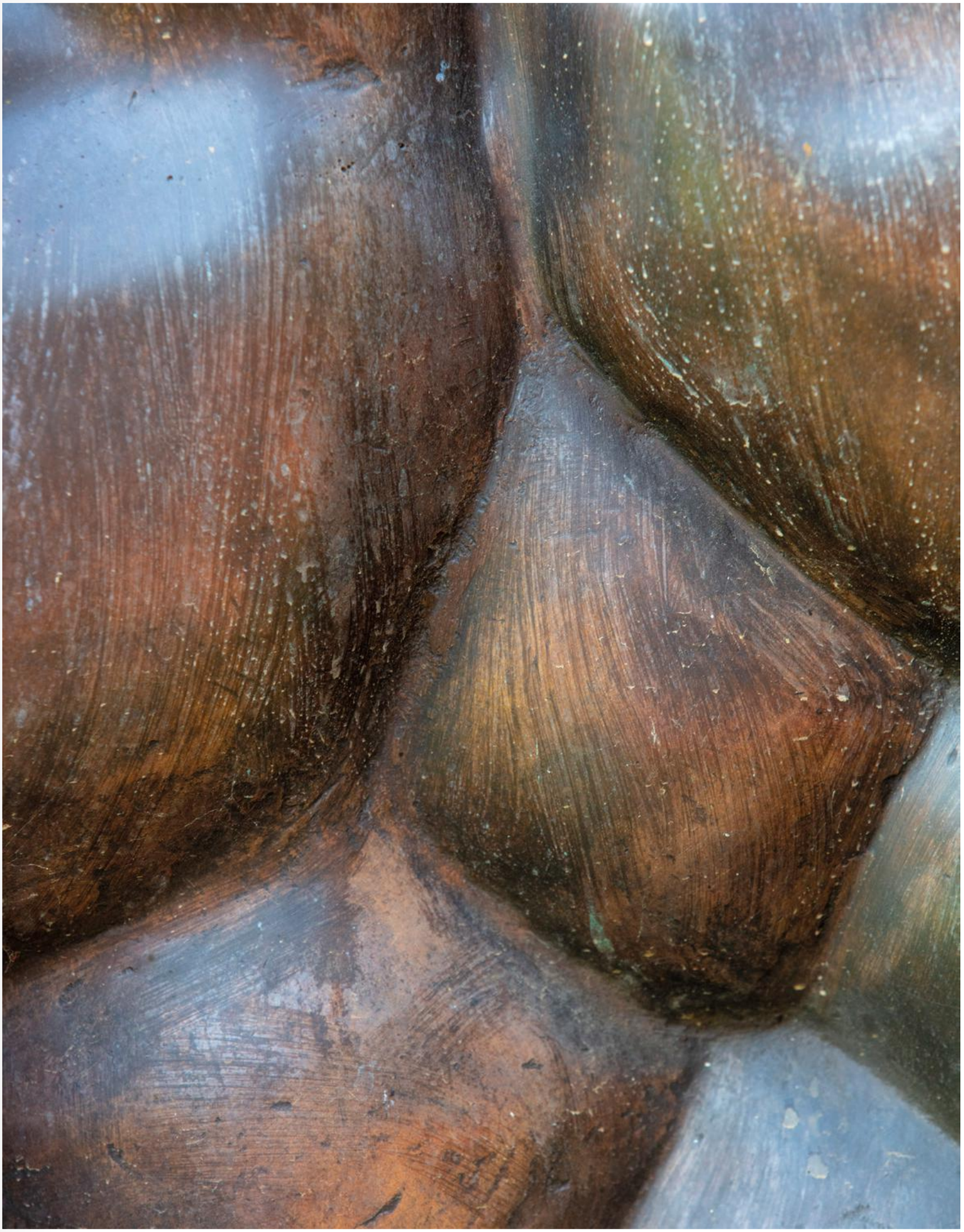
Enhancing our own world class sculpture collection by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, David Mach and Kenneth Armitage we shall be commissioning temporary and permanent new works by a range of diverse, established and 'up and coming' contemporary artists – creating a unique art trail to attract sculpture lovers nationwide. Even the signage and wayfinding scheme will be designed by an artist and feature thought-provoking verse.

Together the landscape and art will create a unique environment to live, work and visit.

At Parabola we feel privileged to own perhaps one of the best connected sites across the whole of the UK. Simply a beautiful piece of Edinburgh. We feel like custodians of a wonderful blank canvas and therefore we have an important duty of care to deliver our arts strategy and programme befitting a city as elegant and as important as Edinburgh.

It has been an absolute privilege to have been presented with this opportunity, and to be part of the team who share the same vision. We truly hope we can enliven and enrich one of Edinburgh's most important sites but perhaps more importantly, people's lives.

TONY HORDON
MANAGING DIRECTOR, PARABOLA



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Sculpture images courtesy of the artist and the artist's estates.

Overleaf: Detail images of Eduardo Paolozzi's
'Vulcan' surface texture and form.