

PERMANENT COMMEMORATIVE ARTWORK LOCATED IN THE BARNSELY PALS CENTENARY SQUARE

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Overview

Beam has been appointed by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to deliver the Barnsley Public Art Programme, which, includes; the commissioning a new piece for Barnsley PALS Centenary Square and a number of key gateway sites; delivery of a Public Art Strategy; and developing a Grants for the Arts application to Arts Council England focusing on a loans programme with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Barnsley Council has supported the commissioning and development of public art for a number of years, most recently with the loan of Crossing (Vertical) by Nigel Hall from the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and its location in the centre of Barnsley. The recent Economic Strategy for the Borough includes a focus on support for the visitor economy. It is considered that the co-ordinated commissioning and development of public art across the Borough has a key role to play in the visitor economy and the cultural development of the area.

As a result of funding and support from a number of sources there is an opportunity to take a co-ordinated approach to commissioning as series of works, in the context of establishing a public art strategy that will guide the development for a number of years. This is also a key period of regeneration for the Town Centre and an opportunity to make a positive impact on the future of Barnsley Centre within a period of change.

This is an important public art commission that requires a combination of historical sensitivity and contemporary vision. This commission is for an artwork/s commemorating World War I. The artist will incorporate the resources available from the Museum and Archives including letters and poems from the 1st and 2nd Barnsley PALS Battalions.

1.2 The Site

Barnsley PALS Centenary Square has recently been developed and is located next to Barnsley Town Hall, which incorporates the Experience Barnsley Museum. The development of the square is of a high quality with a coordinated palette of materials and planting scheme, the square includes benches, a number of water fountains and a large sculpture on loan from the Yorkshire Sculpture Park 'Vertical by Nigel Hall'. Barnsley Town Hall is a Grade A Listed building set within a Conservation Area.

1.3 The Artist

Rachel Welford has been selected for this commission. Rachel is an artist specialising in architectural glass, originally born in Barnsley she is now based in Scarborough. Rachel was trained in fine art and went on to gain an MA Glass (distinction) from the University of Sunderland in 2009. Rachel has also been awarded an AHRC funded studentship to undertake PhD research at the University of Sunderland and is studying part-time whilst continuing with commissions and other artwork.

Rachel designs and makes glass for architectural settings creating artworks that respond to the nature of a space, interact with the varying light of day and are constantly changing, allowing new detail and discoveries each time they are viewed. Inspired primarily by light and its interaction with reflective surfaces, Rachel mixes reflective and matt, transparent or translucent surfaces, layering them to create visually delicate works with complex spatial relationships.

1.4 The Artwork

The artist will create a series of seven glass 'columns' that together form a group or 'family' that relate to each other and allude to the connections and relationships between the PALS. Whilst not representing the human form directly, the columns will be of a human scale.

The columns will be placed in amongst the planting adjacent to the main steps leading up to the square, which will link the artwork with growth and renewal. In time, as plants grow their shadows will interact with the glass adding an extra element of movement and life to the artwork.

The vertical columns are designed to complement the horizontal feel of the landscaping, and echo the format of the large sculpture 'Vertical' by Nigel Hall.

The seven subtle columns create an arrangement that complements rather than competes with the form of the large sculpture and the subtle visual effect of the glass interacting with light is also in keeping with qualities of 'Vertical'.

The imagery and content of the proposed artwork is inspired by research into Barnsley PALS. The artwork will portray a sense of personal experience: the thought, feelings and experiences of those individuals who were the Barnsley PALS, and their families, friends and colleagues.

The words of those individuals will show this in the most powerful and direct way, and so the artist proposes taking excerpts from personal correspondence, written records and other archived written material and where readable using images of it in its original form. The excerpts will be anonymous to avoid any impression of particular merit or hierarchy that might be created through featuring material from particular individuals for whom archived materials exist, and to avoid missing out others.

These excerpts of text will create imagery on the surface of and embedded within a series of glass artworks.

The artwork will interact with sunlight, the materials used will reflect and refract light, casting shadows and projecting light onto the paving. As a consequence the artwork will be dynamic, offering a different visual experience at different times of the day and through the changing seasons.

The artwork has been designed to be sensitive to the subject matter and also the setting - being sited next to an important listed building and conservation area.

2.0 DESIGN AND ACCESS PRINCIPLES

2.1 Appearance

A series of seven glass 'columns'. Each column will include a number of glass layers each with text and images on each face of the glass using sand blasting, mirror and no treatment to create a lace-like effect. The front and back surfaces will feature matt translucent 'frosted' text.

The middle (laminated) surface will feature silvered text on a clear base. Opaque printed text could also feature in this layer.

The reflective areas will bounce light around onto the adjacent paving.

In hours of darkness the artwork still interacts with light, reflecting street lighting and casting shadows.

The imagery will be different on each column and there will be a logical progression from one column to the next. Whilst the detail of what the imagery will be is still in development, early ideas are:

Chronological progression – columns feature text from and refer to different times of the war: early recruitment of the PALS, letters from the front, end of the war and homecoming.

Columns feature different types of correspondence / memorabilia / writing: Letters / official documents / poems

Columns feature hand written text from original documents / content is retyped

Maps could feature in some of the columns: Barnsley / France

See REF 2: Visualisation of example column

2.2 Timeframe

The artwork will be installed by 24th September 2014 to ensure the work is in place for the launch of the Road to War Exhibition at the Barnsley Museum.

2.3 Layout

The seven columns will be sited at the inner end of each planting strip on the edge of the main steps leading up to Centenary Square. See REF 3: Site Plan, REF 4: Location Plan and REF 5: Visualisations of artwork in situ.

2.4 Scale

Glass Column Measurements :

Columns 1 & 2

Glass: w=500mm x h=1950 x 25mm thick
Baseplate w=700mm x 250mm
shoe 200mm high
Concrete: w=900mm x h=600mm x d=600mm

Columns 3 & 4

Glass: w=400mm x h=1750mm x 25mm thick
Baseplate w=600mm x 250mm
shoe 200mm high
Concrete: w=800mm x h=600mm x d=600mm

Columns 5, 6 & 7

Glass: w=300mm x h=1600mm x 25mm thick
Baseplate w=500mm x 250mm
shoe 200mm high
Concrete w=700mm x h=600mm x d=600mm

2.5 Materials and Technical Details

Each column to be made of flat rectangular toughened and laminated low-iron glass, with slightly bevelled polished edges. If necessary the edges could be covered with a fine protective strip. Each column will be mounted inside steel fixings and bolted to a concrete foundation. Most of the metal casing would be below ground level and the remainder would be hidden by planting. The columns will be resin bonded into the metal casing with a water-proof sealant to avoid water damage. The bolts used will be tamper proof. The concrete foundations will be a maximum of w=900mm x h=600mm x d=600mm in size. The glass surface would be treated with a self-cleaning coating to resist dirt and water. The concrete foundations and metal casing would be installed first, and the glass then mounted within them. The glass surface would be protected during this process.

Maintenance and decommissioning - Columns could be removed individually for repair / cleaning / decommissioning. Occasional cleaning with mild soapy water would be required.

See REF 6: Structural detail and fixings.

2.6 Access

The artwork will encourage quiet contemplation – something beautiful that is experienced holistically through the senses, that enhances the landscaping of the square; something meaningful and interesting that will provide food for thought and chance to reflect and remember.

On close inspection the text will be readable, however it will also be treated in a visual way. The words will be layered, creating overlaps that give a lace-like appearance and from further away appear to be abstract pattern.

The location of the columns will enable passers-by to stand and view the work without obstructing other pedestrians and also minimise any potential damage from people passing or skateboarders etc.

An interpretation panel would give information ensuring intellectual access.

Attachments

REF 1: Design and Access statement
REF 2: Visualisation of example column
REF 3: Site Plan
REF 4: Location Plan
REF 5: Visualisations of artwork in situ
REF 6: Structural detail and fixings
REF 7: Totem Dimensions