OUT THERE

Our Post-War Public Art

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Inside covers: Nicholas Monro, *King Kong* for the City Sculpture Project, 1972, the Bull Ring, Birmingham. © Arnolfini Archive

Elisabeth Frink, *Boar*, 1970, Harlow

FOREWORD

Winston Churchill said: “We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us”. The generation that went to war against the Nazis lost a great many of their buildings – their homes and workplaces, as well as their monuments, sculptures and works of art. They had to rebuild and reshape their England. They did a remarkable job.

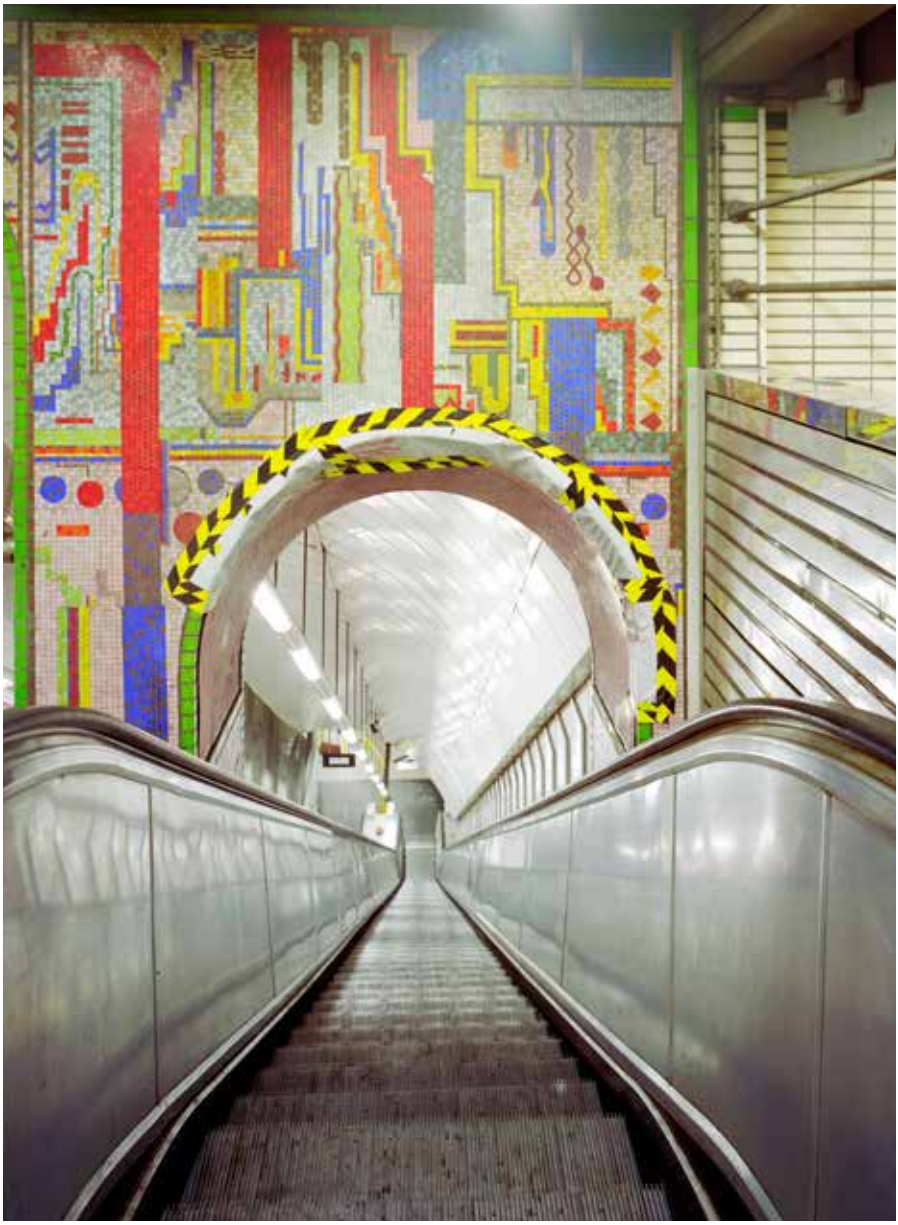
They rebuilt ravaged cities and towns, and they built new institutions. From the National Health Service to the Arts Council, they wanted access-for-all to fundamental aspects of modern human life. And part of their vision was to create new public spaces that would raise the spirits.

The wave of public art that emerged has shaped the England we live in, and it has shaped us. Exploring and retelling the story of our post-war public art has brought us into contact with a great number of collaborators; experts, collectors, and passionate supporters and campaigners. We would like to sincerely thank them for their efforts.

Some of our post-war public art has been lost, damaged or destroyed. But many pieces have become cherished parts of the landscape, vital to our national identity. Many remain in public ownership, and belong to all of us.

Every part of our landscape tells a story about England. This story behind *Out There* is about a generation with a remarkable vision that they delivered across the nation. Now it’s your story.

Duncan Wilson OBE
Chief Executive, Historic England



Eduardo Paolozzi's murals prior to dismantling,
2015, Tottenham Court Road station, London

BRAVE ART FOR A BRAVE NEW WORLD

In the aftermath of war, and following the destruction wrought on cities across England, public art formed part of post-war reconstruction and a utopian aspiration for “a brave new world”. A world which saw the creation of the National Health Service and an ambitious building programme for new social housing, schools and hospitals. Creativity flourished, and a wave of new public art emerged. Art for all, accessible to all.

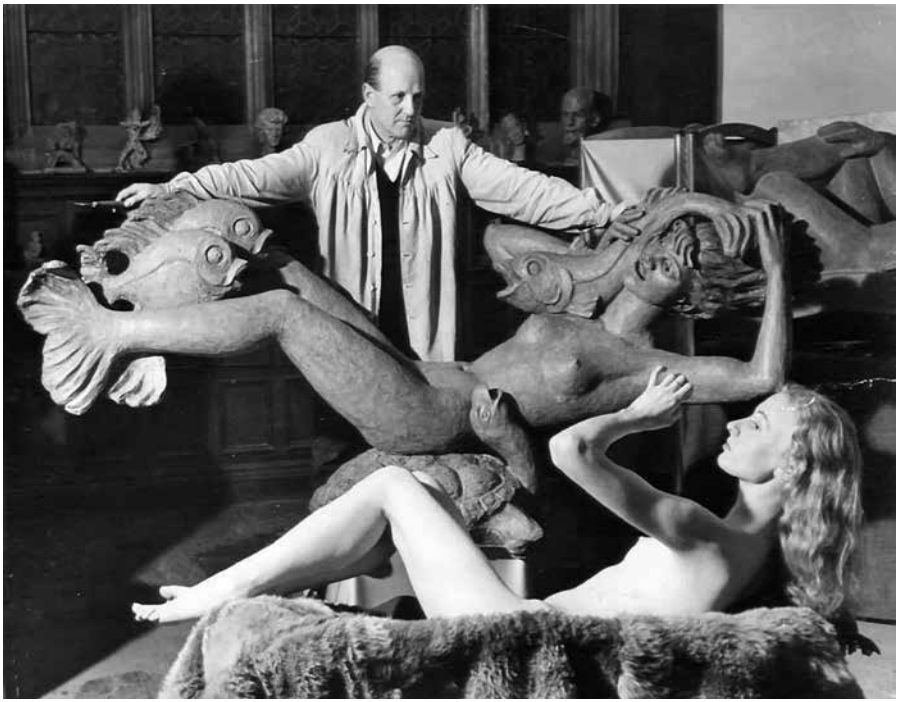
The immediate post-war era’s most significant display of artistic patronage came with the 1951 Festival of Britain on London’s South Bank. Its Architectural Director, Hugh Casson, was keen that sculpture should be fully integrated into the urban landscape – a marriage of art and architecture.

More than 30 sculptures and 50 murals formed part of the Festival of Britain. Eight million visitors saw works by a combination of well-known artists and rising talents, such as Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Lynn Chadwick.

Another major post-war step in showing sculpture outside an art gallery was taken by the London County Council (LCC) in the summer of 1948. It sponsored an open-air sculpture exhibition in Battersea Park. More than 170,000 visitors came, each paid five shillings to attend. The public was allowed to touch the works, which included two by Henry Moore.

Woman relaxing at the Festival of Britain
1951, London

Boating Lake, Battersea Park, London in the 1960s
with Barbara Hepworth's *Single Form* in the distance



Arthur Fleischmann, *Miranda*, 1951. Image of the artist in the studio with the work and model. Reproduced with kind permission from the Arthur Fleischmann Archive

Heinz Henghes, *Orpheus*, at the Festival of Britain, 1951, London

HARLOW SCULPTURE TOWN

Harlow was one of the first New Towns to be created after the Second World War, and by 1967 it housed more than 70,000 people. Central to the vision of its Chief Architect, Frederick Gibberd (1908–84), was that it should be a place for culture and art. He declared: "The Civic Centre should be home to the finest works of art, as it is in Florence and other splendid cities".

Maurice Ash, a town planner, suggested to Eric Adams, the General Manager of the Harlow Development Corporation, that they should commission sculpture for the town, and gave the Corporation £250 to start the process.

In 1953 the Harlow Art Trust was set up. Chaired by the Director of the National Gallery, Philip Hendy, its trustees included Frederick Gibberd, and philanthropist Patricia Fox-Edwards. Patricia visited degree shows and researched the work of young sculptors to buy or commission. The work was funded by grants from the Arts Council, various trusts and Harlow District Council.

By 1957 ten sculptures had been sited throughout the town and today that number has grown to 65, not including six that were stolen. The Harlow Art Trust still exists and continues to commission and host exhibitions in the town's Civic Centre.

Few other towns can boast a collection of such national significance, with works by Antanas Brazdys, Ralph Brown, Lynn Chadwick, Elisabeth Frink, Barbara Hepworth, FE McWilliam, Henry Moore, Auguste Rodin, Gerda Rubinstein, Leon Underwood and Karel Vogel.

Barbara Hepworth, *Contrapuntal Forms,* 1951
Harlow. © Harlow Museum

William Mitchell, *Seven reliefs/mosaics*, 1963, Harlow Water Gardens

Ralph Brown,
Meat Porters, 1959
Market Square, Harlow

Willi Soukop, *Donkey*, 1935, Harlow

ART FOR THE PEOPLE

The Ministry of Education's first bulletin, published in 1949, contained a section on sculpture and mural decoration. It encouraged local authorities to allocate a small proportion of the cost of new schools to the work of sculptors and mural painters in an attempt to improve the school environment and encourage creativity.

Some of the earliest public bodies to commission and buy artworks were education authorities, especially those of Leicestershire and Hertfordshire.

From the late 1940s, Leicestershire's schools received a startlingly broad range of contemporary art. No new building was without a sculpture or mural as a focal point.

In Hertfordshire between 1949 and 1953, a third of one per cent of the budget for each new school was set aside for the purchase of works of art.

In 1956 the changing financial climate made it possible for the LCC (London County Council) to set up a similar initiative, called the *Patronage of the Arts Scheme*, where a sum of £20,000 a year was set aside for commissioning or purchasing works of art.

The scheme was not just restricted to schools and colleges, and the 75 artworks, acquired over an eight year period, were placed in housing estates, homes for the elderly, schools, colleges, parks and highways.

A new breakaway initiative by the LCC, called the *Design Consultant Scheme*, was set up in 1957. It allowed artists to collaborate more closely with architects and to fulfil their artistic vision for projects, as well as experiment with new techniques and materials.

Unveiling day for Siegfried Charoux's *The Neighbours*
Highbury Quadrant Estate, 1959, London. © Islington Museum

The Neighbours, 2015

PRIVATE PUBLIC ART

Architects and artists didn't always work in partnership in the post-war period, but a small minority of architects welcomed collaboration. Perhaps the best example of this approach is Sir Basil Spence's work on Coventry Cathedral (1951–62) where he worked with sculptor Geoffrey Clark. Despite the success of that project, many architects tended to reject the incorporation of artworks into their designs, aside from the assorted wall relief finishes popular from the early 1960s. The architecture was the art.

Sculptural works were still commissioned with the intention of enhancing buildings, but usually with little discussion of the relationship between the architecture and the art.

Yet designing and commissioning art had become part of a wider corporate vision, and as well as public commissioners, the private sector was pivotal in the creation of extremely important public art, often in order to convey corporate values.

Geoffrey Clarke's *Spirit of Electricity* and Barbara Hepworth's *Winged Figure*, which she created for the John Lewis Partnership, are key examples of sculpture commissioned for commercial premises. Richard Serra's *Fulcrum* has a strong sculptural relationship to the surrounding buildings at London's Broadgate. It was commissioned first, and the buildings were created around it.

The foundation of the Public Art Development Trust in 1983 signalled an attempt to foster greater collaboration between artists and architects, while the *Per Cent for Art* scheme, promoted from 1988 by the Arts Council, argued a percentage of the capital cost of building schemes should be set aside for commissioning artists and craftspeople. This led to a new burst of commissions from the private and public sectors.

Geoffrey Clarke, *The Spirit of Electricity*, 1958–61
Orion House, London

CITY SCULPTURE PROJECT

The ill-fated 1972 Peter Stuyvesant City Sculpture Project, curated by Jeremy Rees, Director of the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol, was an ambitious national public sculpture exhibition.

Eight cities were loaned sculptures, created for specific urban streetscape locations by emerging artists. On display for six months, the local authorities were given an option to buy them afterwards.

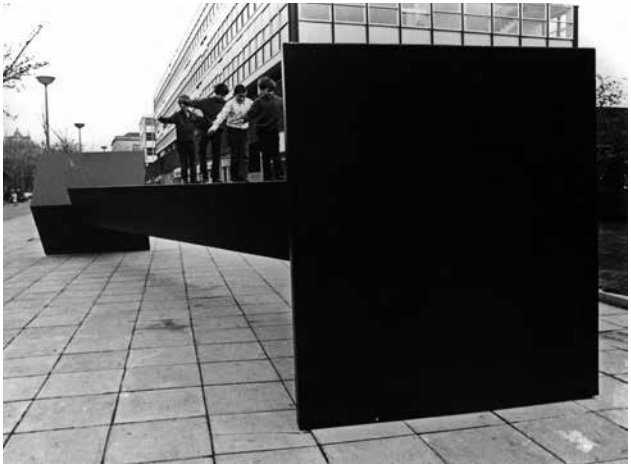
The project's aim was to "inform and interest people who have become accustomed to more classic forms of sculpture." It sought to create an awareness of sculpture as a part of everyday life.

While it certainly stimulated debate, the project highlighted the overwhelmingly negative attitude of both local authorities and the public to contemporary 'modern' art. Only one of the 16 pieces commissioned was kept in situ permanently, and some were even deliberatelyA destroyed, such as Barry Flanagan's sculpture for Cambridge, *Vertical Judicial Forms*.

By the mid 60s, many sculptors were abandoning traditional materials and the conventional 'plinth', and experimenting with new mediums; creating abstract forms and shapes that related more to painting than traditional sculpture.

By the time this outdoor exhibition took place, the notion of sculpture as 'object' was being severely challenged as artists embraced Conceptualism. The project reflected changing artistic practice, and while all the artists selected were still object-makers, they made challenging objects the public initially found hard to relate to, and easy to attack.

Nicholas Monro, *King Kong* for the City Sculpture Project, 1972
the Bull Ring, Birmingham. © Arnolfini Archive



Garth Evans, *steel sculpture*
for the City Sculpture Project,
1972, Cardiff. © Garth Evans

SCULPITECTURE

By 1965, the trend for minimalism in architecture led the commentator Herbert Read to declare that: “It is impossible to assimilate the essentially free art of sculpture into the strictly functional needs of modern architecture.”

The 1960s witnessed a change in public sympathy for brave new world social architecture and the art that accompanied it; partly because it was unfamiliar in a public setting, where war memorials and a plethora of Victorian statuary of dignitaries on plinths was the norm.

The concept of the mural had been taken to new heights during this decade, with artists moving away from wall painting, and becoming increasingly interested in creating sculptural reliefs in concrete, plastics and mixed media.

Technological developments in architectural design and construction, and current art trends, saw these new types of murals gain in popularity as part of redeveloped commercial and public areas, like libraries, shops, offices, banks, churches and colleges.

With subsidies given to companies for research and development, artists began to promote the benefits of working in new mediums, presenting lectures and demonstrations and developing further materials in conjunction with manufacturers. Artists began to devise modular systems known as ‘art by the yard’; combining the personal touch with mass-production.

Architectural reliefs in abstract forms for interiors and isolated facades continued to be commissioned from artists such as Geoffrey Clarke, Trevor Tennant and William Mitchell. But Mitchell said the combination of changing architectural tastes and the economic recession meant the phone stopped ringing with commissions in 1974.

Trevor Tennant, *New Horizons*, 1963, Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn Garden City

Tennant's relief suffered neglect over the years, before being rescued by a hospital doctor in 2015

OUR POST-WAR PUBLIC ART

We asked a range of people, from sculptors to residents, to tell us what public art meant to them and why it is important.

"The job of public art is to inspire, to annoy, to irritate, to be tactile, to be touched, to be climbed on or even to be used as football goal posts, it's just to be enjoyed."
Lynn Pearson, Architectural Historian

"The role of public art is to be an event, a space to which you walk or drive or ride or run and you are surrounded, it's everything. It's the lamp posts, the seating, the paving, if you're going to do it, do it properly."
William Mitchell, Sculptor

"I think post war public art is really important. It animates its buildings. People's general impression of them is that they are all quite austere. They are quite large and not really human scale. And I think a lot of these pieces really bring the scale right down to human size."
Catherine Croft, Director
Twentieth Century Society

"The role of public art is to enrich the environment in which we work, play, learn and live. Public art can introduce all sorts of interesting colours, shapes and forms into environments which we take for granted."
Posy Metz, Listing Team, Historic England

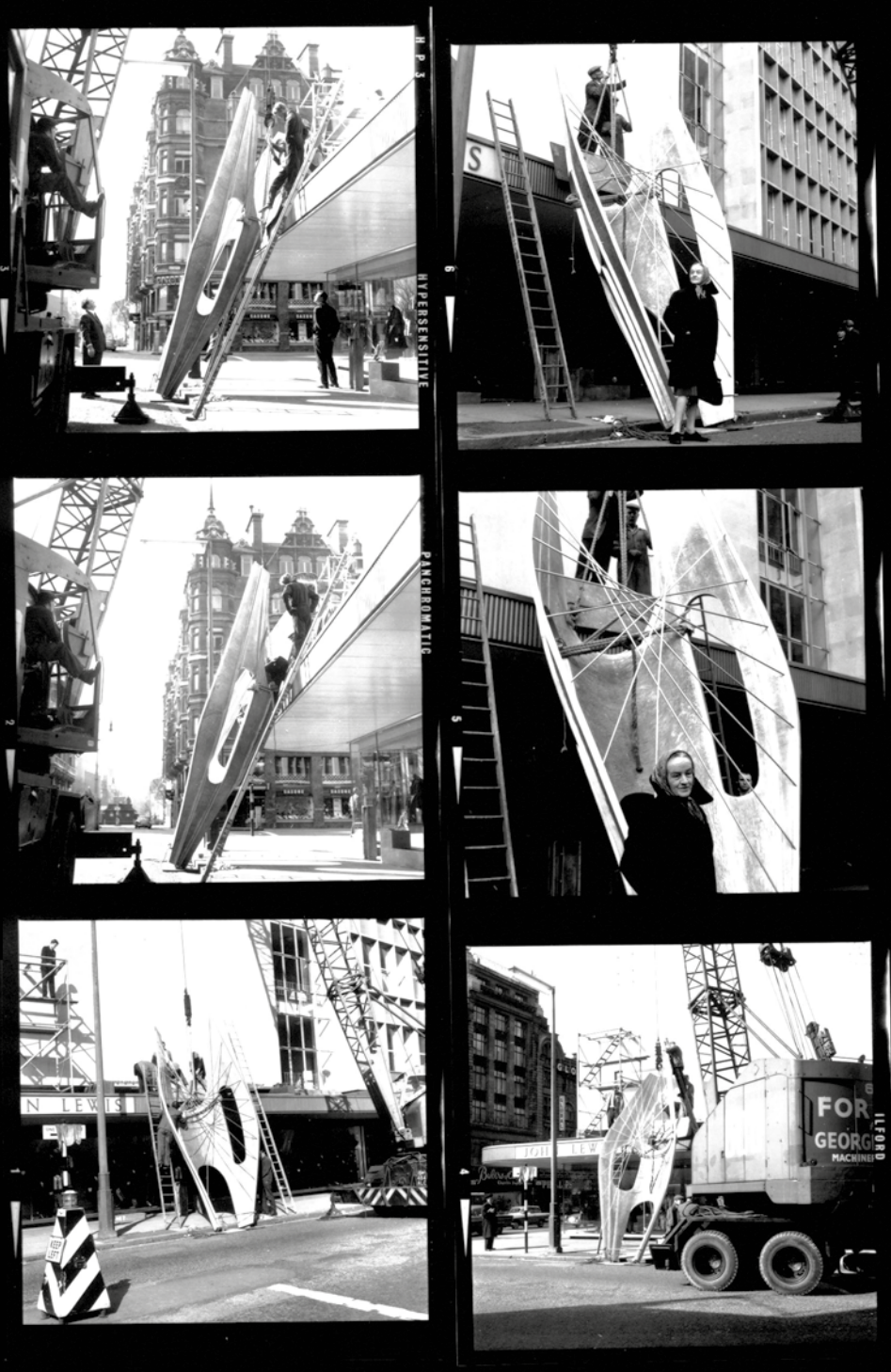
"It's fantastic to have art, local art, in the local community. It's not part of a formal space, such as a museum or a gallery, so people can access it on a daily basis."
Ronit Dassa, Resident of Highbury Quadrant Housing Estate, London

"Many of the works that were commissioned in fact now have already disappeared and it's one of the reasons why this exhibition is so important, it'll draw attention to a great moment for public art in Britain and I hope it will both engender new commissions and also ensure those works that are there are preserved."
Sir Nicholas Serota, Director, Tate

"Public art is all around us and if it has a job, it is to point out the visual world of design, architecture, fashion. It is to highlight that human beings have designed things. In a way public art, punctuates the public world."
Bob and Roberta Smith, Artist

Barbara Hepworth, *Winged Figure*
1961–2, Holles Street, London

Overleaf: Installation of Barbara Hepworth's
Winged Figure, 1961–2, Holles Street, London
John Lewis Partnership Archives


HYPERSENSITIVE
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SOS – SAVE OUR SCULPTURE

Post-war sculpture is often overlooked or under-valued. By their very nature, public artworks are vulnerable to change: through damage, removal or vandalism, or the redevelopment of an associated building or landscape.

Many are undocumented and few local authorities have audits of artworks in their care or possession. Historic England has been working to assess post-war sculpture nationally, in order to build a better picture of late 20th century sculptural art works of special interest, and to update the National Heritage List for England.

This exhibition is part of a wider project to improve public and professional understanding of the significance of public art, and to communicate the importance of safeguarding this part of our nation's heritage.

Many works of public art have been lost, stolen, moved, sold, destroyed or are no longer on public view, but a number of successful campaigns have saved work from such fates.

The 'Save Old Flo' campaign for Henry Moore's *Draped Seated Figure* in Tower Hamlets, involved the Museum of London, Art Fund, artists and local people who prevented this major sculpture being sold.

Other success stories include the listing of Victor Pasmore's *Apollo Pavilion* in Peterlee; the re-siting of Dorothy Annan's ceramic relief from Fleet House to the Barbican, and the spot listing of Elizabeth Frink's *Desert Quartet* in Worthing.

National and local bodies such as the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association and the Public Arts Trust Milton Keynes also play an important role in caring for the UK's sculpture and public monuments.

Henry Moore, *Draped Seated Woman*, 1957–8
Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Reproduced by
permission of The Henry Moore Foundation

Bob and Roberta Smith, *Save Old Flo*
campaign artworks, 2013

OUT THERE NOW

Much like post-war re-building, post-industrial regeneration became a significant driver behind several public art projects during the 1990s. A large sculpture was often seen as a significant sign of progress in local regeneration.

Sometimes these standalone works were viewed as 'Turds in the Plaza', an unfortunate but occasionally accurate term coined by American architect James Wines to describe the widespread 'depositing' of large artworks in new civic and corporate squares. These works were not related to their locations and were often regarded with disdain.

The type of sculpture commissioned for 'out there' today varies enormously. One trend is the move from permanently-sited work to temporary, changing displays, which seems more in keeping with the zeitgeist.

Examples include the *Fourth Plinth Programme*, where world-class artists are invited to make new works for an empty plinth in London's Trafalgar Square. S*culpture in the City*, an annual open air exhibition displaying cutting-edge contemporary works by leading international artists in the City of London, is another example.

Encouragingly, it is now more common practice for artists to be commissioned at the very start of an urban project. Their place-specific creative responses can be embedded in, and an integrated part of, the environment – a place-making rather than object-making approach.

Art on the Underground exemplifies this very well. It aims to add to the rich cultural heritage of the London Underground network by commissioning art works that are not only site-specific, but that also relate to their wider architectural and social context.

Jacqueline Poncelet, *Wrapper*, Edgware Road station
Commissioned by Art on the Underground, 2012
Photo: Thierry Bal

GET INVOLVED

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Historic England champions and protects historic places, from the prehistoric to the post-war. Find out how you can get involved at HistoricEngland.org.uk/GetInvolved

Discover your local historic places

99.3% of people live within a mile of a nationally important historic place. Explore what's near you at HistoricEngland.org.uk/List

Public art events

To celebrate *Out There* and our post-war public art, there are a series of fascinating events and talks to explore in locations around London. Find out more at HistoricEngland.org.uk/PublicArt

Public art audio trails

You can also discover post-war public art in Bristol, Birmingham and Sheffield with our free GPS-based audio tours. Find out more at HistoricEngland.org.uk/PublicArt

Stay in touch

To hear about the latest heritage discoveries, listings, events and jobs sign up to receive our newsletter: HistoricEngland.org.uk/newsletter

Visit our website: HistoricEngland.org.uk
Join the debate: #PublicArt

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William Pye, *Zemran*, 1972, South Bank Centre, London

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BULL RING

OUT THERE

Our Post-War Public Art

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SomersetHouse.org.uk

HistoricEngland.org.uk/PublicArt
Join the debate: #PublicArt
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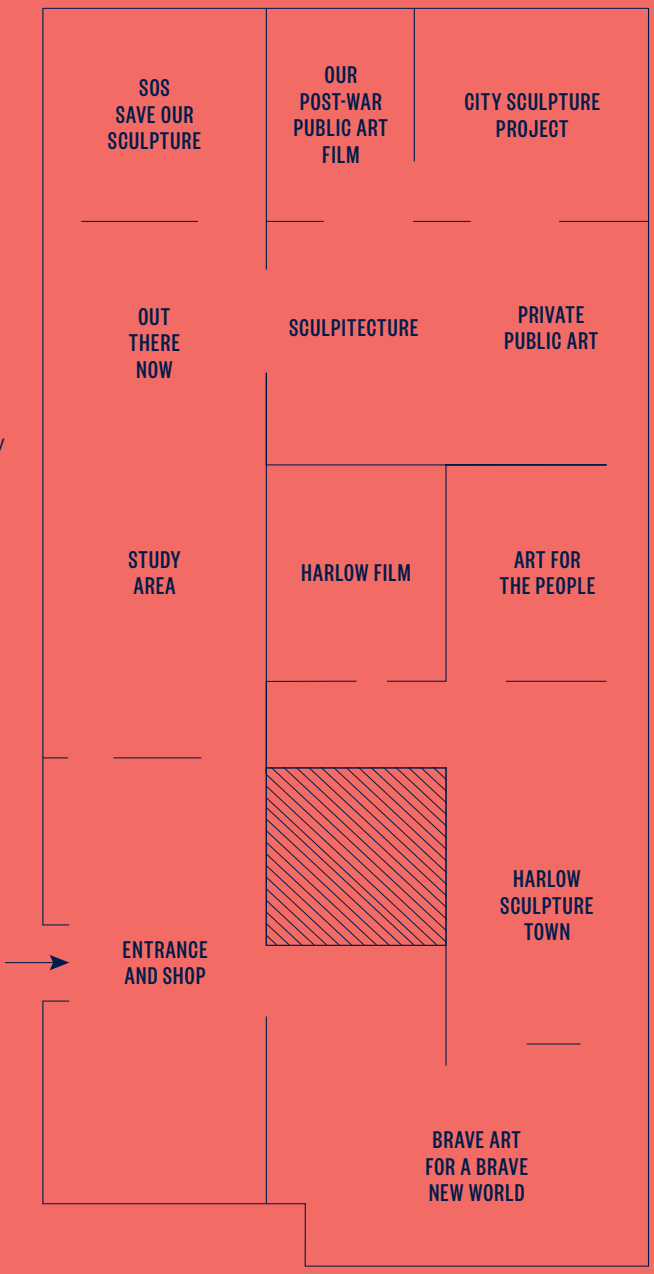

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AT SOMERSET HOUSE