

Artist Statement - Samuel Zealey

For the past 40 years or so, the ever-increasing scale of modern and contemporary sculpture has moved this practice from the private to the public sector; towards a re-evaluation of its relationship with architecture and the natural world. This relationship results in a more evocative 'public art' which embodies the spirit, meaning and purpose of art in the first place.

Samuel Zealey sees his sculptural work as part of this ongoing and complex conversation, whilst also highlighting the challenges our current environmental climate faces and the moralistic issues brought about by contemporary technological advances.

His sculptural works combine playfulness of form with precise engineering and a highly developed material sensitivity. The works radiate a lively aesthetic, alert to the ways in which art and creativity can engage with questions about culture, technology and sustainability.

A body of work *Planes* centred around a folded steel plane aesthetic — a set of sculptures representing an exploration of the polarities between weightlessness and gravity. These scaled-up paper planes toy with the material contrast between paper and steel. Calling to mind the pleasure of making objects from industrial materials, the translation from one to the other creates an incongruous tangibility that the metal could be worked and re-worked in the hand like origami. This series typifies a preoccupation in his work with principles drawn from physics and engineering and a counter-intuitive use of materials to provoke questions about balance, equilibrium, weight and form.

He has a long-standing interest in the relationship between new technologies and environmental issues. With many of Zealey's works, his visual language highlights the use of modern technological advances that impact the environment. Zealey approach his practice with a view to creating works that highlight the environmental problems created as a result of global warming brought about by the use of dirty, non-reusable fuels humans continue to consume and burn. In turn, His work leads to a new awareness in theories surrounding 'Global weirding' - a complementary term to global warming to reflect the belief that climate change will cause weather related and natural catastrophes in extremes.

Zealey use familiarity of form as a platform to engage his audience with the more serious issues he wishes to illustrate. *Onyo*, the artists most recent public commission for Bracknell, is a monumental structure conceived in the likeness of the child's game 'Jenga'; precarious in its leaning, this tension was created to illustrate the fragility of the planet. The sculpture is arranged as a stacked graduation of rocks, minerals and man-made materials referencing a history of mankind's relationship to engineering and material.

The base of the tower is comprised of more natural elements: stone, granite, sandstone, limestone, marble and Portland rock. As the tower raises out of the foundation bolder, passed the stone and wood stage, Zealey has use ferrous and nonferrous minerals such as iron and copper (representative of the iron and bronze age) and at its apex the most modern of building materials are apparent. In this work, and similar to his planes, form is set against material to call the viewer to question deeper messages surrounding mankind's interference with nature.