

SCULPTURE DUBLIN

Update Report for **South East Area Committee** Meeting
July 2021

1. ABOUT SCULPTURE DUBLIN

Sculpture Dublin aims to raise awareness of the Dublin's sculptural heritage and to create a series of ambitious new sculptures in parks and public spaces city-wide. It is a Dublin City Council initiative developed by Parks and Landscape Services and the Arts Office and supported by the Hugh Lane Gallery. Permanent sculptures are being commissioned in Ballyfermot, Finglas, Raheny, Smithfield Square Lower and Terenure, and a temporary artwork is being commissioned for the O'Connell Plinth at City Hall.

2. BUSHY PARK COMMISSION

Bushy Park is a large suburban park situated between the mature residential suburbs of Terenure, Templeogue and Rathfarnham. Through a two-stage commissioning process, artists were asked to explore Bushy Park, its assorted terrains and contemporary uses, and identify a space within the park that resonates and provokes a sensitive and considered aesthetic response. Full details of the commissioning process are included in the [Commission Brief](#).

As reported in the February update for the South East Area Committee, the selection panel for the Bushy Park commission agreed Corban Walker's proposal as the preferred submission, pending resolution of a number of technical queries. Corban Walker's proposal to locate a tall, linear artwork in the pond was reviewed by Parks & Landscape Services in consultation with DDC Senior Structural Engineer, Peter Finnegan and DCC Biodiversity Officer, Maryann Harris. It was decided that the pond was not a suitable site for the artwork, primarily due to concerns about establishing secure foundations in the base of the pond and the potential disturbance of wildlife – water birds, fish and amphibians – for whom the pond is a habitat and breeding site.

It was agreed that Corban Walker should meet with members of Sculpture Dublin and Parks & Landscape Services in Bushy Park to identify an alternative location for the proposed artwork. Due to COVID travel restrictions it was not possible for this meeting to happen until May 2021. The artist met with Les Moore and Michael Noonan from Parks, DCC Public Arts Officer, Ruairí Ó Cuív and Sculpture Dublin team members, Karen Downey and Sabina Mac Mahon on 11 May and a location beside the pond, on the north side, was agreed as a suitable alternative site for the artwork.

Corban Walker has proposed an elegant, large-scale work based on many configurations of a cellular grid. The interplay between projecting and recessed sections of the sculpture will create a lively, joyful vision of simplicity that belies the complexity of its making. Standing at 8 metres high, the minimalist work will enhance the reflective and meditative environment of the duck pond, and assert itself as a distinctive new feature of the park.

Corban Walker was educated at NCAD, Dublin, and since the mid-1990s has gained recognition for his installations, sculptures and drawings using industrial materials to explore

philosophies of architectural scale and spatial perception. He has exhibited in museums and galleries – and realised important public art commissions – worldwide. Walker’s work is part of numerous public and private collections, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and IMMA, Dublin. He represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 2011 and received the Pollock Krasner Award in 2015. A member of Aosdána, the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork will present an exhibition of his work in 2022.

The Selection Panel for Bushy Park included:

- Councillor Anne Feeney (South East Area public representative)
- Anne Talbot (Terenure/Templeogue/Rathfarnham local community representative)
- Michael Noonan (representative of DCC Parks and Landscape Services)
- Liz Coman (representative of the City Arts Office)
- Noel Kelly (representative of Sculpture Dublin Steering Group)
- Paula Murphy (representative of the Sculpture Dublin Steering Group in place of Hugh Lane Gallery representative)
- Eilís O’Connell (external art expert)

The non-voting Chair was Ruairí Ó Cuív (DCC Public Art Officer)

In relation to public engagement activity around the commission, Visual Artists Ireland will host an online café with the commissioned artist and local arts and community representatives on 27 July. Visual artist, Sophie Von Maltzan will facilitate a series of sculpture workshops with students in Loreto National School and Sculpture Dublin has been liaising with Community Development Officers, Declan Hayden and Robert Chester to develop local partnerships to facilitate further creative engagements around the commission.

3. THE O’CONNELL PLINTH COMMISSION

The O’Connell Plinth was originally constructed to support the monumental statue of Daniel O’Connell by John Hogan, that is now located in the Rotunda in City Hall. The plinth is located at street level in a paved area leading to the main entrance of City Hall. This commission invited artists to respond to a historical plinth that has stood empty in the centre of Dublin city for over 150 years. Commissioning a new artwork for the O’Connell Plinth is an opportunity to restore to it its original function: the public display of sculpture.

As reported to the City Hall Protocols Committee in March, completion of the proposed artwork for the O’Connell Plinth ‘RGB Sconce’ by Alan Phelan was originally planned for the end of June 2021. It is now planned for early September 2021. Delays to the production timeline were caused by two key factors:

1. Brexit and resulting additional costs of importing specialist conservation-standard glue from the artist’s UK supplier. The artist has now sourced a more cost-effective alternative product from an Irish company in the required quantity. The finished 3D-printed components of the work will be covered by coloured papier-mâché, meaning that a highly durable, weather-proof and colour-fast glue is required.
2. Level 5 lockdown caused a delay in accessing workspace at Fire Station Artists’ Studios that is essential to the paper-covering phase of production and final assembly of the sculpture prior to its installation. The artist gained access to Fire Station Artists’ Studios workshop space in May and production is on schedule for completion at the end of August.

In relation to public engagement activity around the commission, an online café with the commissioned artist, historians and public art curators was hosted by Visual Artists Ireland earlier in the year. Visual artist, Renata Pekowska will facilitate a series of sculpture workshops with students in Presentation Secondary School and curator and art historian, David Archbold is developing a programme of public talks around the new commission. The proposed

sculpture, made of steel and paper, is a large-scale, baroque-style candle holder or sconce, that is richly layered in reference, including the image of the Acanthus flower, a popular motif in Georgian stucco architecture, and the RGB colour code of the Joly Screen Photography printing process (invented in Dublin). The work also references queer and social histories, including the Dublin Castle Scandal of 1884.

4. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

All of the new commissions will benefit from local engagement programmes designed to raise awareness, provoke conversations about sculpture and involve people in discussing how public art can enhance their neighbourhood. Local engagement will take the form of online surveys, public meetings, artists' cafes and culture clubs, as well as opportunities to participate in the creation of some of the new commissions and get involved in local art projects through schools and community organisations. <https://www.sculpturedublin.ie/sculpture-in-your-area/>

Sculpture Dublin is working with the city's cultural institutions to draw attention to sculpture in their collections and temporary exhibition programmes. Through a city-wide programme of talks and workshops, online presentations and publications, and a number of exciting new initiatives, including International Sculpture Day and the Experiment! Sculpture Award (developed in partnership with The LAB Gallery and Fire Station Artists' Studios), Sculpture Dublin will encourage people to rediscover their city through sculpture – imagining new possibilities for art in the public realm and engaging in shared processes of learning and making. <https://www.sculpturedublin.ie/sculpture-in-the-city/>

For information on upcoming events: <https://www.sculpturedublin.ie/news-events/>