



80 YEARS OF INSPIRATION
THE SALTIRE SOCIETY

44 Years in Art in Public Places

(Art and Crafts in Architecture)

Saltire Society
Test of Time Research
80 years of Art in Public Places

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SCOTLAND



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*Celebrating the
Scottish imagination*

Welcome to a celebration of 80 years of the Saltire Society and its work. Those who started the Saltire Society in 1936 feared that Scotland's cultural gas was at a peep, that the achievements of the past were unrecognised, great traditions were being lost and contemporary arts lacked vitality. They did something about it.

They formed a movement that for 80 years has promoted, presented, published, agitated and debated and in doing so helped create the conditions for today's thriving and confident creative Scotland.

As part of the 80th celebrations the Society commissioned emerging creatives in their field to conduct research in to the Awards, reflecting on their history, recording previous winners, gain a deeper understanding of the current status, use, and quality of each project and record conditions.

The Arts and Crafts in Architecture Awards research has been conducted by Kotryna Ula Kiliulyte, an artist and photographer based in Glasgow.

On the occasion of this anniversary I am conducting a research project looking back on the awards given out since 1971 and assessing the state of the awarded projects. What interested me the most was the diversity of art works awarded and their very different destinies.

In 1971, the winning entries ranged from sculptural works by Sydney Burnett in Fraserburgh Swimming Pool and Broch Centre to tapestry by Archibald Brennan in Motherwell Council Chambers and Vincent Butler's Stations of the Cross panels at St. Mark's church in Edinburgh. This shows the wide range of mediums and a wide geographical spread that the Society has covered when looking for winners. Since then the number of awards have ranged widely with some years having as many as 4 winners (1983), and some years having none.

The awarded art works have had diverse fates. The majority seem to be valued and protected by the communities and organisations involved. Most have survived, notably the earliest winners which were built with permanence in mind. But some only lasted 15 years despite seemingly destined for a longer life.

Those that have not survived have tended to be part of the fabric of buildings that occupy prime locations in a city or urban area. Both the Smith and Wellstood Foundry

building, with its award winning mural, and the entrance relief on the Royal Mail sorting office in Edinburgh were demolished to make way for new housing developments.

Smith and Wellstood Foundry Mural.

The power of community action.

As with most current research, the initial search for information starts online. The image search for Smith and Wellstood Foundry mural returned some pictures of the original artwork and I knew immediately I had to visit, it looked spectacular. The artwork was commissioned by the foundry to mark it's 125th anniversary. At the time this was the longest outdoor mural in the UK.

However, after a little bit more digging for information I was saddened to hear that the building, including the mural itself was demolished as long ago as 1996 to make space for new housing development. It only lasted just over fifteen years.



Smith and Wellstood Foundry Mural by Paul Grime, Ken White & David Wilkinson.
Awarded in 1981.

Little did I know that whilst working on other parts of the research there was something quite important happening in the local community of Bonnybridge. Local resident Paul Cortopassi, who moved to Bonnybridge in 2000, was interested in local history. Whilst running a website for a church he started collecting a photographic archive related to the local community. One of the themes that has prevailed in many family histories was the Smith and Wellstood Foundry. Having seen images of the artwork, Mr. Cortopassi was intrigued and raised the idea, on a local social media group page, of somehow bringing the mural back. According to Paul, the response was overwhelming. People were sharing stories of their family members being employed by the foundry, making suggestions of how to recreate the art work and wanting to get involved.

Money was raised through crowdfunding and contact was made with the original mural artist Paul Grime, who still had slides and photographs of the original piece. Within 8 months permission was obtained from the local council and the mural was recreated on large sheets of aluminium and installed on the wall of Bonnybridge Community Centre. Being a reproduction, and for that reason smaller it still brought back memories for the local community, with people tearing up at the unveiling ceremony in May 2016. Paul Grime, one of the three artists to create the mural, was very happy to see the artwork revived, as the original was already suffering from bad condition before the foundry was demolished.



Bonnybridge Community Centre in 2016.

The recreated mural also added the names of original workers of the foundry- as the artwork featured real people rather than abstract figures. By consulting the artists as well as locals the names of workers had been identified and added to the reproduction on aluminium.

What strikes me the most in this story is the strength of community feeling and the strong personal attachment many have to public art. Even though the original mural from 1981 did not last as long as a public art piece could be expected to, I view this as a story of incredible success. This could be used as an example when considering future public art commissions or awards, showing that consultation and involvement of local community may lead to the best results.

Metamorphosis. What happens next?

From this year, The Arts and Craft in Architecture Award changes its name to the Arts in Public Places Award, this was described by Les Mitchell, convener of the Saltire Society visual arts panel as being not only a name change, but a metamorphosis.

The award is being split into permanent and temporary art work categories, moving further in the contemporary direction that we can already see in awards. The video work *Some Distance from the Sun* by Mathew Dalziel and Louise Scullion, awarded in 2007 was a significant step away from more traditional forms of sculpture, metalwork and stained glass.



Some Distance From the Sun in Bryce Hall, Edinburgh
by Mathew Dalziel and Louise Scullion.
Awarded in 2007.

Temporary, or time based artworks currently do not have an official award in Scotland, so this is definitely a step in a new direction. The idea originally was brought up by Glen Onwin, artist and the visual art panel convener until 2009. In his essay from 2013 he writes: “21st Century art often driven by new technologies is tending more towards the temporary the short lived than the permanent, if one thinks about it exhibitions as curated entities by their nature are always short lived, the grouping and bringing together of works, the juxtapositions, all gone after a few weeks rarely to be repeated, the catalogue often being the lasting element. The extension of this to individual artworks is not any kind of stretch, new media, projected images, time based work all tend towards short duration.”

Certain examples awarded by the Saltire Society in the recent 15 years look incredibly fresh, relevant and contemporary, specifically the Dysart Artworks, Sculpture and Interventions by City Design Coop and Place of Origin, earthworks and plantings in Kemnay Quarry, Inverurie by John Maine, Brad Goldberg and Glen Onwin. New forms, distinct visual language, and emphasis on collaborative practice make these projects outstanding.

More applied artworks, striving for excellence in craft are often well integrated in their environment and become part of the interior or exterior design. These could be seen as timeless or classical works, the examples of which would be the gates of Abbot house, Dunfermline awarded in 1998

or the ornaments on the ceiling of Banqueting Hall, Chatelherault, Hamilton awarded in 1988. Both examples, especially the latter one are showing how the approach of Saltire Awards in Arts and Architecture have changed since then.

In the original award ceremony documents from 1988 the winning entry is described: “Members of the panel were impressed by the quality and vigour of the plasterwork which as far as possible reproduces the original, and by the overall effect of sumptuous enrichment which the ornaments create. (...) The present brochure for Chatelherault states that it included :- "The re-instatement of the elaborate rococo interiors in the West Lodge. These replaced the original work of Thomas Clayton, which was rightly regarded as an outstanding example of the craft.” There is a clear emphasis on the quality of craft and the relationship of the artwork with the building itself. However skillful it may be this award as well as a couple of others seem less interesting or contemporary in the context of entries awarded before or after.



*Banqueting Hall, Chatelherault by Dick Reid.
Awarded in 1988.*



*Abbot House gates, Phil Johnson.
Awarded in 1998.*

This could possibly be because the Arts and Crafts in Architecture award has undergone various changes from the very start, the criteria, as well as the title of the award has changed a few times. I believe the Society and the changing members of the visual arts panel were introducing new ideas to reflect the changes happening in the art world as well as entries they were receiving. In 1983 it was decided that the Awards should include both fine art and applied art products and that the range was widened to include furniture, doors, ironwork, bronze work etc.

From 1975 to 1978 the award title was The Saltire Awards for the Embellishment of Buildings in Scotland. Possibly it would have lasted longer, but as the original documents and correspondence reveal there was a pressure from funding organisations to change the title. So a new rule was introduced in 1978: the entry had to be an intrinsic part of

the built environment and created in such a way as to enhance a specific building or location. The aim of the award was redefined further stating it wanted to bring the customer, the architect and the artist/craftsman together at the planning stages, so the artwork is designed as an integral part of the building from the beginning.

Based on dialogue.

Another important aspect of considering the future of the permanent artworks is community. In fact the involvement of local residents in the decision making process when considering public art works can take the results to the next level. It does not have to be a straight public consultation - taking into account local history, regional industries or simply being site specific can make the artwork worth more than it's artistic value or craft skill. Active dialogue rather than a passive observation brings the best results in creative place making, it develops collective identities and encourages discussion.

Looking at this year's entries (at the time of writing the winners are not announced yet) this seems to be the aspect that commissioning bodies and artists consider more than ever before. From public consultations with local schools, residents and art groups (Kilsyth Community Health Centre Public Art) to involving the communities in the making of the work (The Great Tapestry of Scotland) the art works demonstrate interest, sensitivity and fresh approaches to local histories and people.

There is also the interactive nature of some entries, they are not only there to be seen, but invite the viewer to become part of the work. For example the White Wood project that was planted by local residents and will take 300

years to grow, or the Pyramid Viewpoint inviting visitors of Argyll to take in the view of surrounding nature. These examples show a shift of attention from the craft of the artwork to the local history, environment or community. The pieces themselves serve as a platform or a magnifying glass for visitors or locals to look into the stories that inspired the works.

Not all artworks awarded by the Saltire Society in the last 44 years have the same reach. This does not necessarily define the quality or importance of works though. Art that is most true to the word 'public' like sculptural pieces in town squares or other public areas will be seen by the most people, however I believe there is an importance of artworks that exist as an integrated part of a smaller environment. Examples of these would be stained glass windows in churches- mostly seen by the local Christian community they are nonetheless an important part of architecture.

The same goes for artworks located in more remote areas - for example the 2007 awarded Place of Origin- by John Maine, Brad Goldberg and Glen Onwin. Situated in Kemnay Quarry, Inverurie and being very site specific the work requires a viewer to travel to see it. Taking in travel time and the walk up the quarry into the experience of the work it expands the boundaries of what public art could be. Less people will see the Place of Origin than, let's say the

Scotsman Steps by Martin Creed in Edinburgh. I wonder though if for those who decide to make a journey to visit the Kemnay Quarry it will leave a more lasting impression precisely because of the experience of getting there.

Grangemouth- still celebrated 40 years on.

One of the more intriguing projects to receive the Art and Crafts in Architecture award was the Mosaic Mural by Alan Davie and George Garson in Grangemouth New Shopping Centre in 1975. This was the only object awarded that year. Incorporated into a modernist shopping precinct with outdoor areas, benches and separate entrances into small shops the mosaic brings bright colour and playfulness into a heavily industrial town. Alan Davie, whose paintings formed the base of the mosaic, was originally from Grangemouth himself.



*Mosaic Mural by Alan Davie and George Garson, Grangemouth.
Awarded in 1975.*

The mosaic mural won one of the very first awards, at the time called the embellishment award, and was remembered again forty years later. The Saltire Society presented a plaque restating the appreciation of the artwork and the contribution it makes to public art in Scotland.

Visiting on a sunny spring day the La Porte Precinct where the mural is situated was full of people, some out shopping, some having lunch or just sitting on the benches outside. It was possible to get a sense of the intention of the architects and planners responsible to create a public space and see how the artwork was integrated into that. The mosaic is installed above what is now a cheap clothing shop, right next to a frozen foods store. In this setting the mosaic stands out as an excellent example of the public art of it's period.

I guess no one would object if I said that the shopping centre will not last forever. Possibly seen as dated by some already, it has a limited life span. Which brings me to the question of what happens to site specific artworks when the site itself is gone? If a public art piece is embedded into a building as this mosaic mural is, chances are that demolition will destroy both. As we see with the example of the Entrance Relief Mural by Deborah Gliori for the Royal Mail mechanical sorting office, once the building is gone, so is the artwork and perhaps even the collective memory of

it. The Royal Mail office relief mural was awarded in 1983 and since the building was demolished to make way for a new housing development in 2010, there is not a single picture of the relief to be found online.

Artist and former visual arts panel convener Glen Onwin sees the Mosaic Mural by Alan Davie and George Garson as a national treasure. He expressed his worry about the future of the artwork, when he was visiting Grangemouth in the last few years. There he met someone who had worked putting the mural up, they revealed that the mosaic was embedded in such a way that it would be impossible, or at least prohibitively expensive, to remove it without demolishing the building. In Glen's opinion the mosaic mural needs to be protected and Saltire Society would be the perfect institution to do this.

This brings me to another aspect of public art, who looks after it once it is created and installed? I was thinking about this extensively during the period of research. Some artworks very strongly belong in a particular community and that community looks after them. A perfect example here would be any of the functioning churches. Stained glass windows, sculptural works and ornaments, being an integral part of the place of worship get well taken care of. Some buildings with awarded entries have changed hands and depending on the new owners and purpose of the building, the pieces may or may not be preserved.

Sometimes even identifying the responsible persons is a hard task.

When looking into the awarded entries by Norma Starszakowna and Michael de Haan (both 1983) at the then General Accident headquarters in Pitheavlis, Perth I faced this very obstacle. Online satellite mapping was of no help as the artworks were meant to be indoors. Aviva, the international insurance company that currently owns the building proved hard to get in touch with. The solution came from social media, when contacted on Twitter, company representatives responded and gave me a direct contact for art related inquiries within the company. After some weeks of waiting for an answer I received an email confirming the artworks are still very much part of the interiors, and even pictures to prove that.



*Mosaic mural by A. Davie and G. Garson
with Saltire Society plaque visible.
Awarded in 1975.*



*Ceramic Wall in Pitheavlis,
Perth by Michael de Haan.
Awarded in 1983.*



*Silk wall in Pitheavlis, Perth
by Norma Starszakowna.
Awarded in 1983.*

Preserving the legacy.

This brings me to another aspect of keeping the legacy of public art pieces- technology. Perhaps unsurprisingly the Saltire Society Arts and Crafts in Architecture awarded entries from more than 15 years ago have very little information about them online. Nowadays when the Internet is many people's first, and sometimes only, port of call when looking for information, artworks with no online presence can disappear from the collective memory. As public art, even the pieces intended for permanent display, may not last forever, one way of preserving the existing artworks is to document and digitalise them. This is common practice for artists working now, as often

exhibitions or installations can only be seen by people in the area for a limited amount of time. I would argue that documentation of the artworks is as important as the work itself.

I touched upon these themes in a conversation with Les Mitchell, I wondered if digital technology is not only increasing the amount of entries for the Arts and Crafts in Architecture Awards due to the simplicity of putting together an application, but is also improving the quality of entries too. Apart from digital pictures, films, websites and blogs that artists or companies can submit, there is also an expanded field of research and preparation that they can do prior to making the artwork. With the help of electronic and digital technologies artists can work with communities from a distance, in a form of questionnaires, mood boards, blogs and social media.

The possibility of digital documentation and archiving makes the question of preserving the artworks not as controversial. Do the public art pieces need to last forever? There is not a straight answer to this. Times and fashions change and things that seemed relevant forty years ago may seem dated or funny now. Certain projects though only get better and more important with time, they become part of the space and therefore part of community. Les Mitchell also mentions the clearly outlined set of criteria that is being used to judge the entries of the Art in Public Places Award for the first time this year. And some of

them are asking for the body submitting the entry to consider the maintenance and upkeep of the piece once it is installed.

I quietly mourn the Smith and Wellstood Foundry mural in Bonnybridge, but at the same time appreciate the community action it has brought out years after the demolition.

I wonder what will happen to the figurative ceramic relief panels by J. K. Donnelly in Dundee, an online walk through the street it is on revealed the building to be in a slightly sad state covered in graffiti of low artistic value. The building housed the Tin Roof Collective; artist studios, exhibition space and residencies until very recently and seems to be facing a very uncertain future.



Five figurative ceramic relief panels, Dundee by J.K. Donnelly.
Awarded in 1983.

The Astronomical / Astrological Feature Clock by Alan Hamshere awarded in 1988 still takes the prime spot in the Santander building in Glasgow (previously Britoil headquarters) although it only gets seen by people working

in the building (thank you to the nice security guard for sneaking me in to photograph it quickly). This beautiful piece of craft had no images or information online.



Astronomical / Astrological Feature Clock, Glasgow by Alan Hamshere.
Awarded in 1988.

The sculpture *Thinking of Bella* by Shona Kinloch, awarded in 1992, sits tucked away in the courtyard of Italian Centre in Glasgow. It is perfect for it's location, and hidden away at the same time that even I, a resident of Glasgow of 10 years, didn't know of it's existence.



Thinking of Bella sculptures in Italian Centre, Glasgow by Shona Kinloch.
Awarded in 1992.

The sculpture *Three Scurries* by Sydney Burnett in front of the original Fraserburgh swimming pool and Broch centre was awarded in 1972 and since the pool was closed and demolition planned in 2014, I didn't expect to find any trace of it. However after some phone calls, emails and freedom of information request I retraced that it has now not only been moved to the premises of a new swimming pool but was also restored and returned to a healthy state.



The Three Scurries at Fraserburgh Swimming Pool and Broch Centre by Sidney Burnett. Awarded in 1972.



The Three Scurries after a kids community art project.



The Three Scurries at the new Fraserburgh Swimming Pool in 2016.

Just as cities change and new buildings appear instead of old ones (not always a change towards a better architecture), public art is part of this unstoppable process.

Possibly one way to make art pieces timeless and lasting is to incorporate them in a landscape - an example of this year's entry White Wood- the planting of a forest by local community led by the artist Caroline Wendling. It will take a few hundred years for the trees to grow- the piece will exist as a monument it was intended to be, even after it's history and original background inspiration are lost.

Conclusion/ Future

Public art can sometimes be under appreciated in comparison to art works in gallery spaces or museums. However by being free and accessible it is the art that will be encountered by the widest cross section of society. It allows communities to strengthen their identity, to bond and form an attachment to place.

The challenge of keeping older public art works relevant to the new generations exists, but there are creative solutions to this. A responsible body can be appointed to overview conservation and the state of the art work. This can be done through voluntary committees formed by local residents or local councils. Boards or plaques with information, lighting and public education programmes can be renewed every now and again to keep the stories of the artworks alive.

The Art in Public Places Award is a great encouragement and a means to appreciate, promote and support new and existing artworks. Through publicity, collaboration and encouraging dialogue, The Saltire Society emphasises the value of art in developing local identities of Scottish cities, towns and remote areas. Reflecting the tendencies in contemporary public art practices the Society recognises and supports the best projects in Scotland.

Kotryna Ula Kiliulyte

This essay is accompanied by the interactive map allowing to see the geographical locations and information on award winning projects.

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1QsPryhWkVTQOXY_Uly-yQSaI2fA&usp=sharing

Green markers show the projects that still exist.

Red markers show the demolished artworks.

Yellow markers show the projects in an uncertain state or lack of information.

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We are;

- An apolitical membership organisation open to all
- An international supporter and patron of the arts and cultural heritage of Scotland
- A champion of free speech on the issues that matter to the cultural life of every Scot
- A promoter of the best of what we are culturally, now and in the future
- A catalyst to ensure new ideas are considered and the best of them are made real

We believe we have an important and unique role to play, as an independent advocate and celebrant of all that is good and important about our cultural lives and achievements. The Society has played a crucial role over the last seventy five years, in recognising our cultural achievements. And while times have changed the need for that independent voice remains.

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