



Breaking Ground

Garry Barker

A Yorkshire Sculptor's Group exhibition installed within the grounds of the Patching Arts Centre, Nottingham.

My contribution to this exhibition focused on allegorical ideas constructed as a ceramic 'memento mori' installation made in relation to responses to stories told to the artist by recent migrants to Chapeltown in Leeds.

The exhibition was an opportunity to open out a very different opportunity for public engagement with my practice and to provide a form of 'closure' to an ongoing series of interrelated narratives concerning responses to migrants.

A series of drawings were done of plant forms, looking at possible memorial or 'Memento Mori' possibilities for migrants losing their lives at sea as they crossed the Mediterranean. These drawings then became the starting point for the development of a series of ceramic 'flowers' designed to sit within a field of a typically English wild flowers.

Beginning with conversations had with recent Leeds migrants whilst drawing on the streets of Leeds, the initial response to these conversations included the making of images that included the tower block that the Leeds local authority were using to house recent migrants. Several exhibition opportunities have since been taken to exhibit different aspects of the allegorical narratives that emerged. One story told though 'resonated' with me and it was the story of a man in a small boat hallucinating a white rabbit as he fell into a reverie because of lack of water and food. This 'white rabbit' began to follow the boat and became a talisman of survival. From this story others began to open out. For example the animation that was selected for the Trinity Buoy Wharf drawing prize this year was one aspect of this story and this memorial piece was an attempt to put some sort of closure to the work that had emerged. Communion with a ceramic 'ghost' of this rabbit being just one form of parallel hallucinogenic activity that was used to encourage images to emerge from the subconscious during the realisation of this project. The rabbit was in this case 'submerged' back into the subconscious and the field of wild flowers became an ocean substitute.

The use of QR codes placed next to the work was an attempt to build in another type of audience engagement, the link made to people's mobile phones allowing them to access myself speaking about the underlying narratives that shaped the work and to remind everyone of the loss of life that continues to occur.

Exhibition

Breaking Ground, Patching Arts Centre, Nottingham, 11 May - 29 September 2019.

BREAKING GROUND

Yorkshire Sculptors Group
MAY 11 - SEP 29

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At the time of putting the proposal together it was one hundred years after the end of the First World War and the poppy, a flower that thrives in 'Broken Ground' has been used for many years to commemorate those that gave their lives to ensure our freedom.

While walking the grounds, I was fascinated by the thick banks of dead wild flowers and was imagining how they would look in Spring, the time of the exhibition opening and how as Summer arrived different flowers would achieve visual ascendancy. These banks of flowers I realised could become traditional 'Memento Mori' art works. I had recently completed an animation about the plight of refugees crossing the Mediterranean and decided that by using ceramics to make memorial flowers that could be inserted carefully in and amongst the existing wild flowers, I could create an installation that commemorated the many people who have lost their lives to a different idea of freedom.

Memento Mori

by Garry Barker



00:00



Memento Mori

Ceramic and steel (various parts)



'Breaking Ground' – Sculpture Walk

Take a walk in nature and discover 24 Sculptures / Installations positioned within the landscape of Patchings, produced by the Yorkshire Sculptor Group.

Open 10 – 4 Daily – FREE ADMISSION



Breaking Ground

11 May – 29 Sep
Yorkshire Sculptors Group

The term 'breaking-ground' has several interpretations: it can mean 'to make progress by doing something completely different' or 'to begin digging into the earth for new construction'. The members of the Yorkshire Sculptors Group will be rising to the challenge and interpreting the exhibition theme in many different ways, reflecting their individual, diverse and deeply personal ways of making sculpture.

