



community arts partnership

connecting creativity and community

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APPENDIX 2

Belfast Bloom Supplementary Information

Site specific art piece, designed for physical context.

The management of Botanic Gardens, along with the Friends of Botanic group had both determined that the best place for the piece was the area adjacent to the entrance. There were multiple reasons for this:

- cleared for new development
- ease of installation
- good drainage
- prominent position

The piece has been designed to be site specific. Its scale and dimensions have been determined by the area originally proposed. It is anticipated that patrons of the park and the communities that the piece represents, would be able to see the piece at close quarters and indeed, it was an aspiration of the parks team and Friends that it would form a new and exciting focus for people to engage with, be able to walk around and indeed, given the in-laid reliefs, touch. Furthermore, an Aeolian (Wind) Harp mechanism is to be introduced to the interior of the piece.



Proposed site as is

principal funder



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
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AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Proposed site after installation of the Belfast Bloom

Site specific art piece, designed for Botanic Gardens aesthetic and design context.

Botanic Gardens blends many aesthetics and has made bold architectural and botanical statements over its long and illustrious history. The Palm House itself was the first example of a curvilinear cast-iron glass house in the world. Designed by Lanyon and built by Turner, it emphasised the aesthetic blend of industrial know-how and functional design. This relationship was struck using flowing, gentle curves to mimic organic forms. We have alluded to the Palm House as an exemplar of Belfast's heritage by adapting the curved, cast form and integrating within it, the function of a perennial flowering planter. Now, over 170 years since its construction, the daring design of the dome of the Palm House is reflected and translated into in the spherical form of the Belfast Bloom. The Palm House was an exciting symbol of Belfast's prosperity and technical ability. Many of the original foundries that serviced that great industrial age of Belfast have long since disappeared. The Belfast Bloom, through its process of construction and form, pays tribute to our industrial heritage. The original flower-petal template was made from wood, machined by hand. Next, it is cast using the same methods that were employed by Belfast's furnace and foundry workers for centuries, but using aluminium instead. Aluminium is remarkably nontoxic and is therefore well tolerated by plants and animals. Aluminium is non-magnetic, is 100% recyclable. It is the most abundant metal on earth, but is primarily used for industrial or domestic purposes. By employing this material, we wanted to say that something so commonplace could be beautiful and aesthetically attractive. In its cast form it is the metal that will least affect the surrounding flora and fauna.

Aesthetically, given the proximity to the modern sculptural pieces outside the Ulster Museum, the Belfast Bloom is not out of place. The form is beautifully coherent as a sphere, and evokes the natural, rounded simplicity of the Earth. Again, this is not by accident. It symbolises a world, growing and developing, populated by ordinary people who have themselves contributed to the design and fabrication of this piece. The sphere recurs in nature time and again: Flowers, leaves, fruit. As a metaphor for community, the symmetry of the Belfast Bloom represents the flowering of a shared, interdependent and organic relationship among communities across Belfast.

Security considerations

We are aware of the spate of thefts of sculptural pieces, primarily for their metal. The Belfast Bloom piece is of low value in terms of the metal it contains. The piece has only around 500-600kgs of Aluminium, valued at around £1,500 - £2,000. The same piece in bronze would have a metal value of £15,000.

Even so, if an opportunist thief were to attempt to steal the piece, he would have tremendous difficulty. The base-plate of the piece is constructed to engineers' specifications, using 20mm galvanised steel. This housing is then extremely securely anchored using a tried and tested fixing system consisting 4 x 4 No. 20mm threaded bar anchor bolts that are then concreted into the foundations. The size of the piece, given that the Botanic Gardens are gated and walled, this would also mitigate against any potential theft.

Aluminium cannot be cut using oxy-acetylene torches. Only steel or concrete saws could cut through the structure. To dismantle this piece using cutting equipment into even 4 sections would therefore take up to 16 hours of very loud industrial sawing.

Funding

The Arts council of N Ireland, as our principal funder, have been the main supporter of the 3 years plus process carried out with community groups across Belfast to the tune of approx £23k The Department of Foreign Affairs have augmented this funding with £15k , supporting the fabrication and installation of this piece along with some community processes as well. The sum total of funding supporting the community process, design, fabrication and construction is therefore almost £40k.

Pictures of Belfast Bloom in development to this point.



Belfast Bloom, pre-cast components first fitting together.

At this point, it has to be dismantled, in order that the individual petals can have individual castings, developed by community groups recast into structure. All the relief pieces have to be recast on top of base components. Then, it has to be fitted together again. First bolted with 20mm bolts, then welded, for additional strength and to cover them to enhance the internal presentation of piece.



One petal component being cast



Inlay relief work being developed by community group in clay.



Inlay relief work being developed by community group in clay.



Inlay relief work being developed by community group in clay.



Inlay relief work being developed by community group in clay.



Design ideas from a community group.



Older people's group, developing their inlay clay reliefs.



Samples of clay relief from community group.



Cast petal base components



Base components assembled.