

Public Art



In her video, Liv Laumenech, Public Art Officer at the University of Edinburgh gave us a thorough definition of an art form that is hard to pinpoint with just a few words.

Some of the points she highlighted were:

- Public art is a designed, creative addition to an environment.
- it operates (amongst other things) as an aesthetic thing, experienced on an artistic level.
- It's public nature leads to a location where people/the general public can see it and it is often 'context specific' or site specific'.

Let's look at some examples of public art here in Scotland:



In Pursuit of Knowledge by Iain McColl. The context of the sculpture is within the University of Stirling...a place of knowledge. It was commissioned in memory of the first ever principal of the University who died suddenly in post.

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The crystal that the young man is looking into represents the search for knowledge as well as the idea of a young person looking into the future with hope.

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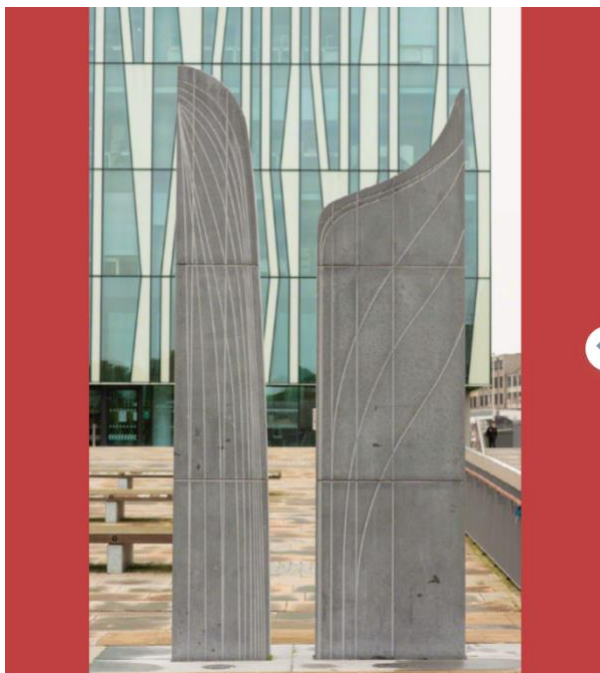
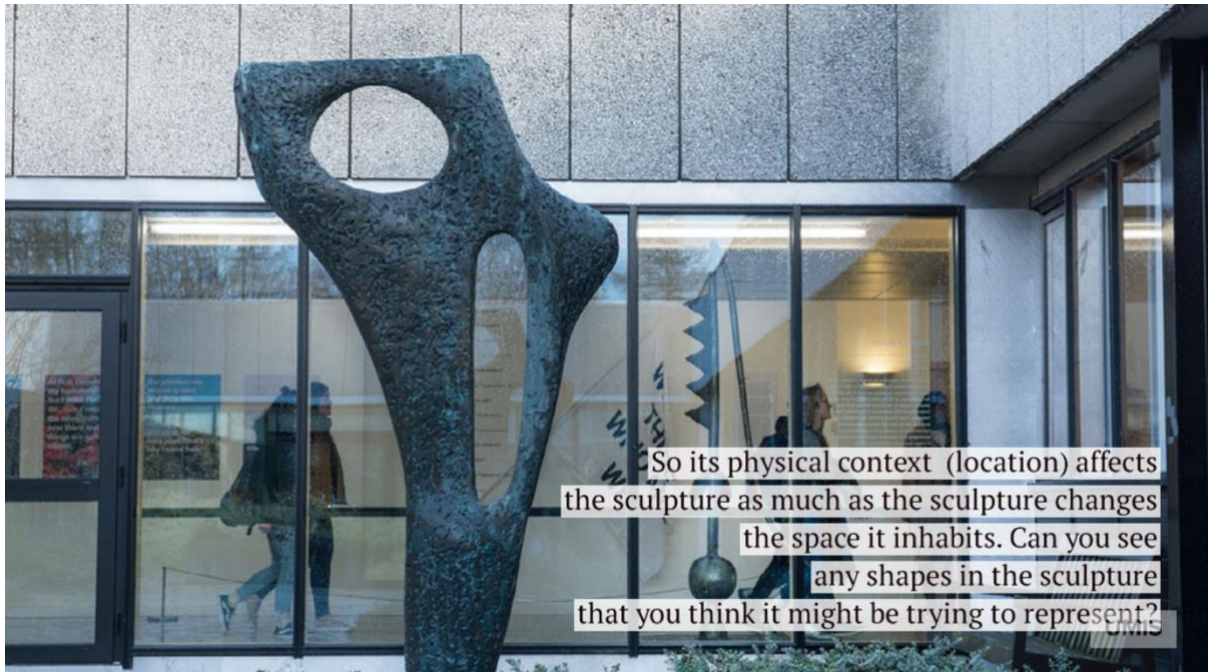
Why do you think the artist has chosen the colour blue? What does that colour mean to you? Does it change the meaning or atmosphere of the work?

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Figure (Archaean) by Barbara Hepworth addresses form and void and the way in which space around and within an object play a part in giving it form.

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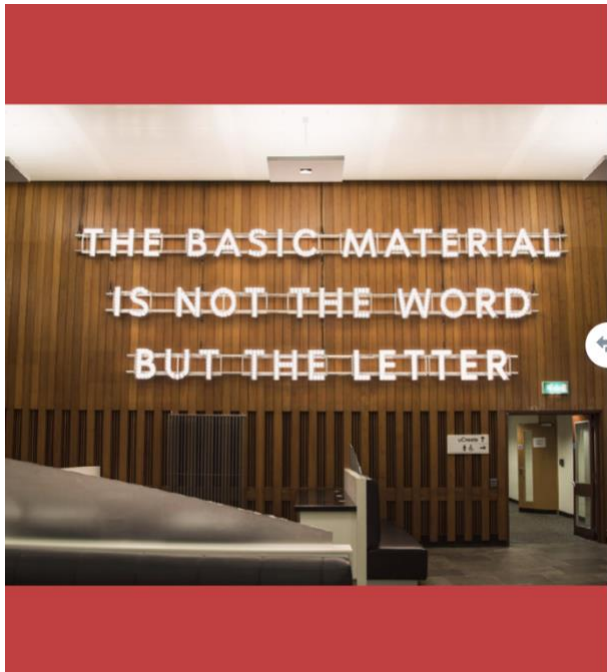


This is called Water Lines by Will Maclean and Marian Leven, and is owned by the University of Aberdeen. The sculpture is based on the form of the iconic Aberdeen fast sailing ship 'Thermopylae' but it also references the Pictish standing stones of its location in Aberdeenshire.

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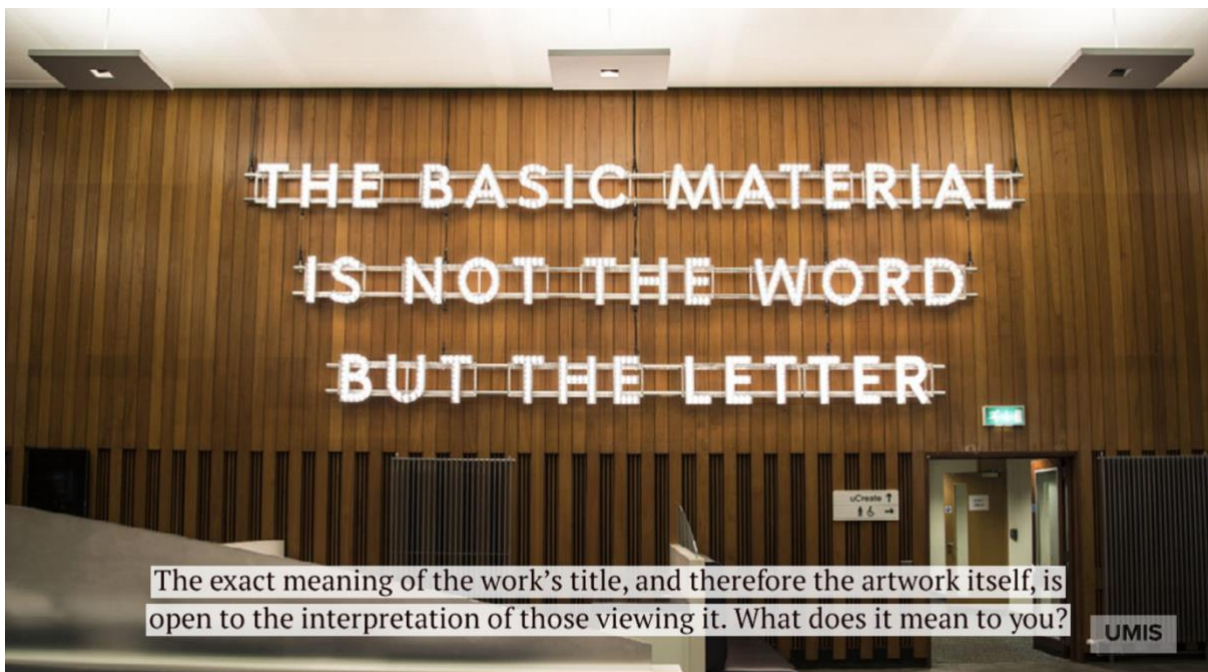
Is it enough to just look at pictures of these works, or do you really need to be there to fully appreciate a piece of public art?

If the answer is yes...how might you get round this problem? How can you make a piece of public art that is as accessible as possible?



The Basic Material is Not the Word but the Letter by Nathan Coley is situated in the University of Edinburgh's main Library. It was made for this location so it is a 'site specific' work.

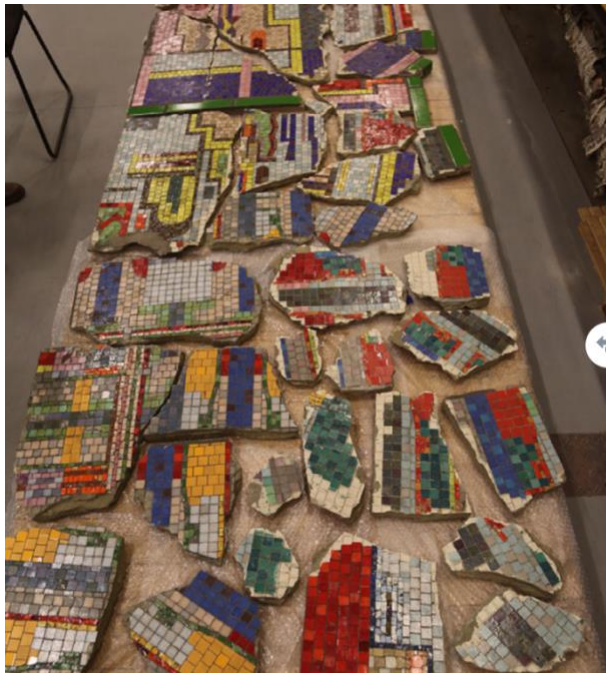
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The exact meaning of the work's title, and therefore the artwork itself, is open to the interpretation of those viewing it. What does it mean to you?

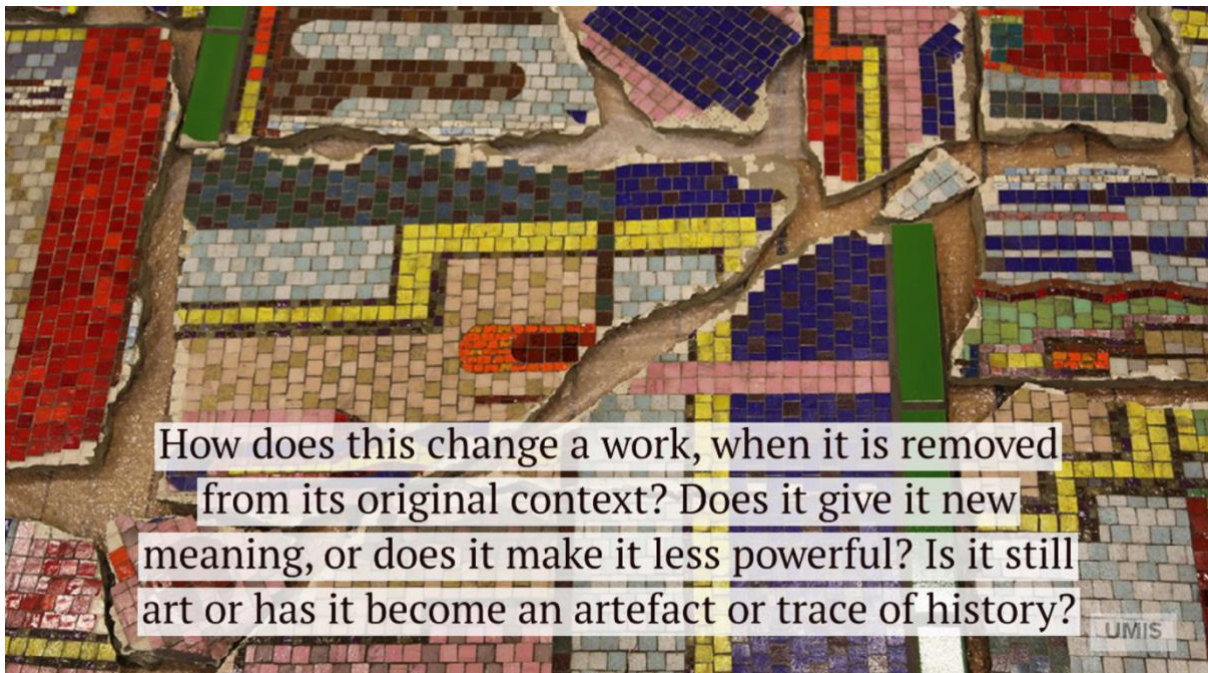
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Finally let's look at the Tottenham Court Road Mosaic Arches by Eduardo Paolozzi.



He was commissioned in the 1980s to make this site-specific work for the Tottenham Court Road Underground Station in London. But decades later after a redevelopment of the site, the mosaics were gifted to the University of Edinburgh.

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How does this change a work, when it is removed from its original context? Does it give it new meaning, or does it make it less powerful? Is it still art or has it become an artefact or trace of history?

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Are there examples of public art in your area? Do you like them? Do you think they work? What would you make if you got the opportunity?

Pursuit of Knowledge (AKA 'Blue Boy') by Iain McColl, 2003, University of Stirling Art Collection (2003.2)

Figure (Archaeon) by Barbara Hepworth, 1959 University of Stirling Art Collection (1995.1)

Water Lines by Will Maclean and Marian Leven, 2012 University of Aberdeen (ABDUA:30129)

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The Basic Material is Not the Word but the Letter (2018) by Nathan Coley, 2018, University of Edinburgh Art Collection (EU5617)

Tottenham Court Road Mosaic Arches by Eduardo Luigi Paolozzi, 1984, University of Edinburgh Art Collection (EU3960)



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