

PUBLIC ART – A MILTON KEYNES DEFINITION

In Milton Keynes we consider Public Art as any work of visual art, craft or design produced by an artist, designer or maker and sited in a location that is freely accessible to the public. Most importantly the Public Art Strategy for Milton Keynes recommends that new commissions should be:

- Artist specific
- Place specific
- People specific

'Place Specific' means a work of art devised in response to a specific location – spatially through a sensitivity to scale and positioning; through the selection of materials and processes that are relevant to the site; and also designs that respond and explore the heritage and unique character of the site.

'People Specific' means a work of art devised in response to a specific community – whether that be a community defined geographically or by a shared interest. This can be through the direct involvement of that community, but most commonly on an artist developing an understanding of and interacting with the community to devise a project proposal addresses the needs and aspirations of that community.

'Artist Specific' means a bespoke work of art, craft or design produced by an artist, designer or maker that is created specifically for the site and in answer to the requirements of the brief. Most importantly this recognises the creative role that the artist holds in the process, and supports the artist in bringing their own unique skills and interests to the project.

A MILTON KEYNES CASE STUDY

WOLVERTON PARK – Reaching Forward (2012)

Artist Martin Heron was invited to respond to the brief for an artwork for Wolverton Park. Martin undertook extensive research into the area and met with many groups and individuals to understand the identity of the place and the aspiration of the community. Through a series of workshops Martin explored and tested ideas, all of which informed the final art proposal for 'Reaching Forward'

Reaching Forward captures the past of Wolverton but also the future. It responds to place by the way the new development takes forward the old railway buildings into a new life as modern and contemporary homes. The two figures of Reaching Forward sit either side of the canal and reflect the distinctiveness of each side.

On the heritage side the figure is made from corten steel, rusting and aging in harmony with the qualities of the old brickwork of the railway building. Along the arm of the figure sits a steam train, reminding people of the heritage of the site, the figure is supported by columns, the design of which was devised from columns found in the railway works buildings.



On the opposite side of the canal, alongside the modern apartment buildings the figure is made of stainless steel, a reference to modern materials. Along the arm is a series of cyclists, riding on a penny farthing to the modern racing bike. The cyclists appear to cycle away from the canal, over the shoulder of the figure and appear that they cycling towards the site where once a velodrome sat.