

The Palace of Excellence David Meredith

When my big brother took me on a 'young man's tour of Europe' on my seventeenth birthday in the '50's, we visited the great city of Florence. I was fired and inspired with what I saw and touched, the doors of Paradise at the Duomo, the masterly work by Ghiberti, I saw the brilliant sculptures by the greatest artist and sculptor of them all Michelangelo, and the great Uffizi Gallery which houses the art collection of the Medici family. Florence, the great creative cauldron of the Renaissance, a city bustling with creativity.

And then forty years and more later I had the same experience when I visited the Foundry of Castle Fine Arts in Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, a creative centre bursting with energy, creating works of art of great beauty and sensitivity. This is the foundry chosen by the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society to make, to create a sculpture to commemorate its centenary in 2004 (1904-2004). What a pleasure it was for me as the Centenary Officer to report back to David Walters, the Chief Executive of the RWAS that Castle Fine Arts was in my opinion the ideal company, the foundry to produce the prestige sculpture to honour the farmers of Wales and their families. The RWAS Centenary Committee agreed with this view. With the brief that the sculpture should consist of a farmer, his faithful dog and a ram, Chris Butler, Castle Fine Arts' Director immediately saw what was needed to convert the idea into reality in hard bronze.

Chris, managing director with a vision for Castle Fine Arts, educated at the Cardiff College of Art, immediately presented the Society with an exciting concept of a farmer on a rock guiding his ram, with the help of his faithful dog. This concept, now a reality, has been wonderfully received and is recognised by all who view it as a powerful symbol of the Welsh farming scene.

Chris Kelly, the highly experienced sculptor who trained with Chris Butler at Cardiff College of Arts was the one asked to make the dream a reality. Chris Kelly, whose public works in Wales include the John Frost sculpture at Newport, the Shelly sculpture in the Elan Valley and bronze heads at St David's Hall Cardiff has also sculptural work throughout Britain and abroad.

Chris drew immediate inspiration from Sir Kyffin Williams' portraits of Welsh farmers, men who love the land and their stock and who brave the elements in their care for both. At the front of Chris' mind was how vital it was to get the animals right and time was spent photographing and measuring a ram and dog beforehand, and getting expert advice from the shepherds of Wales.

In this respect Mr Robin Price, of Rhiwlas, Bala, former president of the Royal Welsh Show was invaluable.

The sculpture was made on time and on budget and was unveiled by Prince Charles at the Centenary Royal Welsh Show during July 2004, in a central spot on the show-ground. Dealing with Castle Fine Arts on behalf of the Royal

Welsh Agricultural Society was such a positive experience – from the start Chris Butler and Chris Kelly understood in precise terms the needs and requirements of their client. Their reaction to the inevitable twists and turns of any project is always positive and constructive. Although the foundry at the time of the RWAS commission was involved in very large prestigious projects throughout the UK such as the 'Venus' sculpture for Trafford Quays in Manchester, the sculpture of Willie Horne for Barrow-in-Furness and the new Wales Millennium Centre building in Cardiff Bay. Nevertheless Castle Fine Arts always gave me the feeling that the RWAS commission was the most important project in the World, exactly the feeling that any client wants and needs! The sculptors and craftsmen, the men and women, at Castle Fine Arts are always welcoming and informative giving you the feeling of security as a project proceeds and certainly expanding any client's knowledge of the whole complex operation of sculpture production.

Castle Fine Arts, under the inspired guidance and direction of Chris Butler, has succeeded in making sculpture accessible to those wishing to commission works of art. For too long, Arts Councils and Art Committees have held sway over the creative process, enveloping it all in mystery. Castle Fine Arts has created a 'one stop shop' Art emporium where a client can go and discuss what he or she wants, agree a price, agree the style and get the object desired produced without lengthy competitions and artistic bureaucracy. Castle Fine Arts should be proud of their achievements, they are open to new ideas, receptive to clients' needs and wishes and always seeking inspiration from other centres of creative excellence in different parts of the world, from Carrara to China. What a privilege it was to work with the team at Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant!

My two-year period as the RWAS Centenary Officer ended at the RWAS Winter Fair at the end of November, '04. A few days later I was at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff attending a memorable Max Boyce concert. Opening one of the many front doors of the exciting new Centre, I held on tightly to a magnificent door handle produced at Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant by Castle Fine Arts – yes their excellence is everywhere and their civilizing influence is profound. Dare I say that now Wales has its own doors of Paradise!

David Meredith

Centenary Officer, RWAS 2002 - 2004

David Meredith worked as the Head of Press and Public Relations for HTV and S4C, and has worked for some of Wales' foremost companies during his remarkable Career. He led four Oscar campaigns for S4C and is BAFTA Wales' first Fellow, and has been honoured by the RTS for his contribution to television in Wales. He is at present a member for the Council of the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, and is currently working on a new book on Sir Kyffin Williams RA.



The life-sized 'Shepherd' sculpture at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells. Artist: Chris Kelly. July 04. Photo Tegwyn Roberts.



Chris Kelly installs the plaque to commemorate the unveiling of the 'Shepherd' sculpture by HRH the Prince of Wales. July 2004. Photo: Tony Butler.



Foundry Director Chris Butler presents HRH The Prince of Wales with one of the limited edition bronze maquettes of the Shepherd sculpture. July 2004. Artist Chris Kelly. Photo: Dan Butler

"NEW CHINA"

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We look forward to visiting again soon. Perhaps you would like to visit Beijing. Contact us for more information about the city and the people we met. I am sure you would be made as welcome as we were.

The chance to travel, work and experience different parts of the world is very important to many artists. The new perspectives gained can really inspire your work. And it's great to feel part of the "Art World". Through the travels of Castle Fine Arts and the people we work with, we are gradually developing a network of friends and contacts around the globe. We want to help create opportunities for artists to visit other countries, to work and share ideas and make it easier for artists from abroad to come and work with us. Why not get involved? You can help us by telling us about your adventures. Contact us with your stories, and perhaps we can share these with the readers of Crucible.



'Dew Drop' - a stainless steel sculpture by Alei in a Beijing Park.



An international artists' delegation to the Great Wall.

100%
guarantee

the work At Castle Fine Arts we always go that bit further. We endeavour to satisfy our customers even when the work has left the building. In fact, we give a 100% guarantee to our build and finish quality!

the budget Making your budget go further whilst adding value throughout the project is our aim and commitment.

the deadline Our project management teams take care of the detail and the unforeseen, providing our customers with confidence and assurance.

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CASTLE FINE ARTS
foundry

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CASTLE FINE ARTS

foundry

March 2005

Here to help you make it

Installing Public Sculpture - A Great Weight Off Your Mind

The unveiling of a new statue marks a great moment in a sculptor's career. It's the result of a lot of hard work and in the minds of all those close to the project is the question "How will the work be received by the public?". Public art creates public interest and a new sculpture always draws a crowd - and of course the press. It's a very big day for all concerned.

Before this happens there is another big day when the sculpture is transported to be installed in its permanent home. This is the first time the sculpture is seen by its new "owners" - the public. An unveiling without the guests of honour perhaps, but you can still be sure to draw a crowd and the press. You really don't want anything to go wrong at this stage. The focus needs to be on your sculpture - not on any last-minute hitches. In a situation like this, Castle Fine Arts can take a great weight off your mind, by ensuring that everything goes according to plan.

Working with sculptors on public art projects has always been central to our business and installing the work safely on site has always been part of that service. Let us take on the responsibility and you can trust us to see the job through to its conclusion.

And we know about deadlines - we have never missed one!

When commissioning new sculpture the most important thing is the work. However, practical concerns also play a part. Clients need to be confident that everything will go to plan. It may be the first time they have been involved in public sculpture. Artists need to work extra hard to be professional as that is not always the perception. Our experience means we can support your proposal by providing all the practical information the commissioning body may require. Tell us about your ideas at the start of the project and we will do all we can to help you win the commission.

We don't just install the work we make. Our experience means that sculptors want to use our services to complete their work whether it's to install finished work or move an exhibition.

Why use Castle Fine Arts installation team to help install your sculpture?

We're used to working with artists - so we 'speak the same language' and we're sensitive to the artist's needs. We know how important the work is to you and

are happy to spend the time getting everything right. Once sited, the sculpture will be there for a very long time, so we believe that it's worth spending more time at the beginning to get your work perfectly positioned. We will never make you feel rushed.

During your sculpture installation, you'll be confronted with a barrage of questions from an intrigued public. This can be hard work when your mind is on the sculpture. But it doesn't have to be. We have real understanding of sculpture and our experience of working on site means we can engage with the public in a very positive way. Artists appreciate this support and it can even be fun.

Because it's unfamiliar territory, many contractors aren't happy to get involved with the installation of bronze public artworks, and don't have the experience to tackle the job with confidence and conviction. By using Castle Fine Arts, you can be sure that you only pay for what's required, as our experience allows us to pre-empt, and to avoid any potential problems. We could save you money as well as headaches.

Over the years we have built strong working relationships with a small group of professional and completely reliable companies who are specialists in lifting, carrying and manoeuvring large-scale works. Experts who really care about your work and are very much part of our team.

In preparation for the installation, we'll make a site visit to ensure that everything goes right on the 'big day'. To make sure nothing is forgotten we can co-ordinate with everyone involved - local authorities, site engineers and landscape architects, and we'll liaise with sub-contractors to carry out the groundwork. On very large projects, sometimes public highways need to be closed - if this is the case, we can sort out all the logistics for you.

Health and safety is something we take very seriously. There are dangers associated with this work and we never compromise on safety. Councils and building companies have to adhere to the strictest guidelines and the laws are constantly changing. Our fully qualified Health and Safety Officer makes sure we know about changes affecting our work. Documented risk assessments are usually required. In fact stricter laws are even making the insurance increasingly expensive. All this may be new to you. Why worry? We can produce all the necessary paper work too.

Talk to us about your next public art project and see where we can help.

For free advice and information on sculpture installation, contact us now on 01691 780261 or email castlefinearts@btconnect.com



Mike Moran lifts the 10' bronze globe into position at the Commonwealth Games Stadium in Manchester. Artist: Colin Spofforth. 2002. Photo: Chris Butler.



Castle Fine Arts' preliminary visit to Hull involved preparing for the installation of Chris Kelly's 9' long shark. The polystyrene sculpture, shown here was then cast in bronze. Artist: Chris Kelly. Date 2003 Photo: Steve Page



A 16' bronze athlete is secured for transportation to the Commonwealth Games Stadium, where it will be installed at a 45 degree angle, on one leg on a 10' globe. Artist: Colin Spofforth. 2002. Photo: Chris Butler.

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FREE WAX



Wax Frog to be cast in bronze.
L15cm x H7cm x W14cm.
Artist: Marjan Wouda. December 04. Photo: Chris Butler

Would you like to see your work in bronze? Put off by the cost of traditional foundry process?

Here's a great way to get started and get directly involved with the process. We're offering you the opportunity to have a go by providing a free sample of wax to create a sculpture we can cast directly into bronze for you. Why not give it a try? It's also a chance to learn more about casting and the whole range of services Castle Fine Arts offers as support for sculptors.

Contact us for your wax and you will also receive a set of instructions to give you an idea of what is practical, how to use the material safely and also some examples of bronzes created in this way. Or better still visit our workshops at Oswestry or Stroud for a demonstration. There's no obligation. You don't have to even cast the work, or even use our foundry. We just want to offer more artists the chance to cast their work in bronze.

Wax is a wonderfully versatile material for modelling, pouring and fabricating. Artists have been using it as a material to sketch ideas and create works for thousands of years. A cabinet in the Victoria and Albert Museum contains waxes directly modelled by Michelangelo demonstrating the durability of the wax itself.

The material is traditional - the sculpture is up to you. The lost wax process means you can create any shape or surface. Other materials and objects can be worked with the wax - in fact any thing that will burn away. We can advise you on what's possible.

Marjan Wouda has been bringing her own waxes to the foundry for many years. Here she tells us of the fun she has making small sculptures directly in wax.

'A Warm Place' Marjan Wouda
"The pose of a figurative sculpture is undoubtedly the most important issue for a sculptor to explore. It holds the key to its expressive content and needs to be considered fully in all 3 dimensions in order to arrive at a sculpture that is engaging and compels the viewer to move around it."

Wax I have found to be the most suitable medium to make small (often hand-held) maquettes. When I explore a new subject I usually make a number of these pieces in order to arrive at one or two to realise on a bigger scale.

I keep the wax (to which I have added some petroleum jelly for increased plasticity) in a bucket of warm water in a warm place. In this way it becomes almost as malleable as clay and inherently fluid and open to change. Once it has cooled it is much more robust than clay, and quite happy to sit around while I ponder or to be turned around in my hands.

I may use it to show a potential commissioner, or to the guys at the foundry in order to get a costing for a bigger piece. I always use it to work out my armatures, drawing on it with a permanent marker. Finally, I often find myself taking the wax maquettes back to the foundry to have them cast into bronze (one-offs are really quite inexpensive to cast as only the ceramic shell is needed by way of a mold); they are valued as a record of the process of a large sculpture but more often these small pieces stand up as sculptures in their own right, which I am happy to exhibit along other works".

Send or bring your finished wax to the foundry. With no moulds or new waxes to make the piece is ready for casting using ceramic shell. Fitting in with our regular working process makes for a fast turn around. There will be a small fee to cover casting costs depending on the size and complexity of the work. This would be fully agreed before casting - so you will know exactly what the work will cost.



Breakfast - BeijingStyle. Photo: Chris Butler.

"NEW CHINA"

Everyone's talking about the new revolution that's happening to China and its economy. Chris Butler and foundry manager Paul Dalton experienced this first hand on a recent visit to Beijing - and got a taste of China's blossoming contemporary art scene.

Beijing is already a huge sprawling city and it's expanding outward and upward with incredible speed. It's an exciting place. On the surface the skyscrapers and the freeways make it look like any western city. But the real city lies beneath this in its people and culture, and to experience this not as tourists but as guests, we were privileged to have the perfect guide.

Sculptor Alei has lived in Beijing all his life and knows this vast city like the back of his hand. We were introduced to him by our friends, artists Phil Bews and Diane Gorvin when he visited them in Britain. They had worked with Alei at an International Sculpture Festival in Canada. He invited us to visit him in China, and one year later

he was there to meet us at Beijing airport.

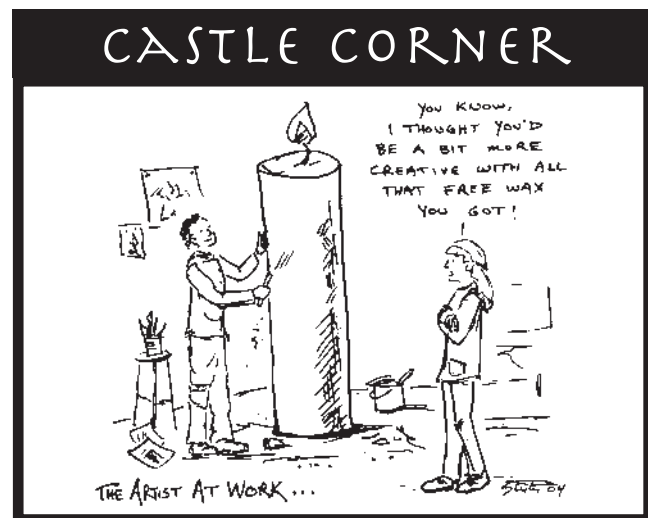
With his knowledge of the city, excellent English, skilled driving and network of contacts he was the most wonderful tour guide, translator, taxi driver and entertainments officer. His friendliness, generosity and humour seemed to reflect the people of Beijing. Alei's insistence that we try as many different foods as possible really gave us a real taste of Beijing!

Like many of the artists in Beijing, Alei's studio is in an old industrial building in the Hutong - the old part of the city with it's maze of alleyways that is fast disappearing in the wake of development. But new developments are also creating opportunities for artists and Alei showed us some of his public sculpture around the city. The contemporary art scene is also reflecting the massive changes, with strong references to recent history and what's happening in the country today.

On the outskirts of the city we visited The Pickled Art Centre. Sculptor Li Gang originally purchased the former pickle factory to set up a bronze casting foundry. Sculptors would come and stay and cast work. He has since developed the buildings into residential studios, which attract artists from all over the world. There is also gallery space with changing exhibitions. It provides a really creative environment where artists can focus on their work, share ideas and experience China. Some artists return many times. Find out more at www.pickledart.com

Li Gang relocated his foundry to the countryside near the Great Wall. He took us there with some of the artists who were staying at the centre and then on to the wall itself. Visiting the Great Wall was one of the highlights of the trip. We felt like part of an international delegation, which made the experience even more memorable.

Not far from The Pickled Art Centre is the Dashanzi Art District, an industrial suburb that is



Castle Corner is created by Amy Steffy, our wax mould specialist.

quickly becoming established as one of Beijing's main cultural areas. The 798 SPACE is an amazing mix of studios, galleries, bars and restaurants housed in a massive old factory complex, built in the 1950's by East German architects in the Bauhaus style. The area attracts thousands of visitors and many international galleries are now renting spaces there. Visit at www.798space.com

One of the longest established contemporary art galleries is The Red Gate situated in one of the stunning gatehouses on the city walls. We met Brian Wallace, an Australian with a great love for China, who set up the gallery in 1991 and is now director. Specialising in Chinese painting and sculpture the gallery also runs artists residencies as part of the Asian Artists Network. You can learn more at www.redgate.com

We discovered a refreshing, pioneering spirit amongst the artists we met in Beijing, and it was great to learn a little about the way art is reflecting the massive changes the country is facing.

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talktalk

News for and about Artists

Art at the Wales Millennium Centre



Bronze handles on the exterior glass doors of the Wales Millennium Centre. November 04. Artist: Ann Catrin Evans. Photo: Luned Meredith.



Bronze and slate awards lined up for polishing. Artist: Ann Catrin Evans. October 04. Photo: Steve Page.



Shirley Bassey, actress Sian Phillips, soprano Dame Gwyneth Jones, composer Alun Hoddinott and Sir Richard Burton's daughter Kate were all presented with bronze and slate 'Cymru and the World Awards'. Nov 04. Artist: Ann Catrin Evans. Photo: Lord Patrick Litchfield.

In November 2004, a new world-class performing arts venue - The Wales Millennium Centre - opened in Cardiff Bay. A programme of opera, theatre, musicals and dance performances are staged at the Centre, and some of Wales' foremost performance companies, such as Diversions Dance and Wales National Opera are housed in the building. Also integrated into the architecture of the striking new building by architects Percy Thomas, are specially commissioned artworks, that include over a hundred striking and flamboyant door handles by designer Ann Catrin Evans.

Castle Fine Arts won the contract to cast and fit Ann's bronze door handles with building engineers Sir Robert McAlpine. The handles were fitted to the centre's exterior glass, and interior oak doors and played a major part in the media coverage of the building's opening events.

Ann also designed the slate and bronze 'Cymru and the World Awards' awards that were presented to Shirley Bassey, actress Sian Phillips, soprano Dame Gwyneth Jones, composer Alun Hoddinott and Sir Richard Burton's daughter Kate during the Centre's opening ceremonies.

www.anncatrinevans.com www.wmc.org.uk

"Working with Castle Fine Arts was easy, and the castings were absolutely beautiful" Ann Catrin Evans.

Contemplation

A casting of Johannes von Stumm 'Contemplation II' (Budda) sculpture - has found its spiritual home in the grounds of the Buddhist Monastery Amaravati in Hertfordshire. Von Stumm's sculpture draws its richness from his interest in world religions, and when Buddhist Abbot Ajahn Sumedho fell in love with it, and bought a small version of the sculpture at the Curwen Gallery in London, he went on to find a sponsor to pay for a bronze casting of a larger version.

Von Stumm's work will be on show at Sarah Wiseman Gallery Oxford during March, and at the Thompson Gallery, London during April. Find out more at www.vonstumm.co.uk



A bronze casting of Contemplation II (Budda) is now in the grounds of a Buddhist monastery in Hertfordshire. Artist: Johannes von Stumm. Dimensions: 109 x 72 x 56cm. 2004. Photo: Johannes von Stumm.



Preparing Shells in the foundry. Photo: Chris Butler.

Cast Iron Art Conference

The 5th Cast Iron Conference will explore Art and technology, with a wide range of practical events, debates, lectures and exhibitions for people from arts and industry backgrounds.

This exciting international event will take place from 6th - 9th April, 2006, at Ironbridge in Shropshire. For further information, take a look at the conference website or email the organisers: info@ironbridge06.org. Please include your name, email and full mailing address to have your details included on the mailing list. www.ironbridge06.org

Synagogue Sculpture

London-based artist Richard Hoey has brought a number of interesting projects to the foundry over the years, and the latest is no exception.

'Life Waters' is a wall-mounted artwork that comprises 80 bronze plaques that have been 'rolled' to undulate gently, forming a shimmering, water-like mass.

Richard was commissioned to make the artwork for the entrance hall of the newly built South Manchester Synagogue, a modern and simplistic building. It also served the purpose of commemorating the donations made towards the costs of building the new synagogue, in the form of profile-cut text in the bronze plaques.

Synagogue staff said that members of the synagogue congregation had described the completed artwork as 'stunning', and that they were looking into the possibility of commissioning a further artwork for the building. www.richardhoey.co.uk

"Working with Castle Fine Arts, on the project for the synagogue and numerous other projects takes the worry out of the manufacturing process of my artworks. The high level of experience and understanding of the materials gives me the freedom as an artist to create, safe in the knowledge that I have the support from a team of dedicated people who are able to translate my ideas into reality. There is a great sense of team spirit working with the foundry, which is quite rare, yet of great importance I believe, to get to the end of a project successfully". Richard Hoey



'Life Waters', one of the series of 80 rolled and profile-cut bronze plaques. Artist: Richard Hoey. 2004. Photo: Steve Page.



'Life Waters' (H15 x L45cm) at the South Manchester Synagogue. Artist: Richard Hoey. 2004. Photo: Steve Page.

Willie Horne Trophy

The statue of Rugby League legend Willie Horne got such a great reception in Barrow in Furness last year, that sculptor Chris Kelly was then commissioned to make a smaller version as a sports trophy. Each year, the trophy will be awarded to the winners of the annual friendly rugby league match between Warrington Wolves and Barrow Raiders. Congratulations to Warrington Wolves, the initial winners of this unique new trophy.



Barrow in Furness Council Leader Terry Watling holding the Willie Horne Trophy. Artist: Chris Kelly. 2005. Photo: Chris Butler.

The Anglesey Marathon

Sculptor David Chapman designed the Trophy and Medals for the Anglesey Marathon, held in October 2004 and the casting costs for the two Trophies were sponsored jointly by David Chapman and Castle Fine Arts. Chapman also runs 'Ancient Arts', a company that specialises in ancient bronze casting methods. www.ancient-arts.org



Colin Jackson presented the bronze medals and trophy at the Anglesey Marathon in October. Artist: David Chapman. 2004. Photo: Menter Môn.

Investors in People

In July 2004 Castle Fine Arts complied fully with the requirements of the Investors in People (IIP) Standard. IIP is a national quality standard which sets a level of good practice for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

Chris Butler, Castle Fine Arts' Director said that 'Working towards the Investors in People standard has encouraged us to invest far more in the growth and development of our people. This investment in turn improves our business performance and our competitiveness - which in turn benefits the artists and sculpture commissioners that we're working with'. This helps our staff to be able to deal with our customers.

To find out more about the Investors in People standard, log on at www.iipuk.co.uk



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE