



Public Sculpture Annual Report, 2023

Katey Goodwin, Deputy Chief Executive, and Tracy Jenkins, Public Art Manager, Art UK

Art UK and public sculpture

From 2017 onwards, Art UK has been recording public sculptures across the UK and making the artworks available for people across the world to search, browse and enjoy online for free. The digitisation has been managed by Art UK's Public Art team and undertaken by hundreds of volunteers who travelled the length and breadth of the UK to photograph public sculpture in our streets and parks, at the top of mountains and beside the sea.

Our funded programme to record public sculpture ended in 2022, at which point over 14,500 public sculptures were available to view on the Art UK website. Since this time, Art UK has been committed to recording new public sculptures as they are unveiled, as well as continuing to add earlier sculptures to the database which had not already been recorded. This process is managed by our Public Art Manager and our network of dedicated volunteers.

Art UK published its first annual public sculpture report in January 2023, looking at the public sculptures that were unveiled and subsequently recorded by Art UK during 2022.

As of early March 2024, there are over 14,800 public artworks on Art UK.

Public sculpture in the UK

Art UK's public sculpture recording programme has given us the chance to discover the patterns and themes in public sculpture and highlight lesser-known sculptures which people walk past each day.

Around 20% of the UK's public sculptures are dedicated to or depict real-life people, whilst the other 80% of the public artworks people see every day are abstract, represent historical, mythological, allegorical or literary themes, or depict animals, birds and flowers.

Public sculptures of people reflect the history of our country and the people who have been celebrated in the past, but they do not represent everyone. Most of the named people depicted in sculpture or commemorated in monuments are white men. Several individual campaigns and initiatives have been established in the last few years to address this lack of representation and redress this balance.

Public sculpture in the UK in 2023

Art UK recorded 94 new installations in 2023, but as we continued to undertake the new model of recording public artworks as they are unveiled, which is not part of a funded programme, it is possible that some public sculptures installed in 2023 have not been

recorded. We will endeavour to fill in any gaps as soon as we can, with the help of our volunteer network.

We have put the artworks we have recorded in 2023 [into a Curation on the Art UK website](#).¹

Five broad categories have been observed in the types of public sculpture unveiled during 2023:

- Environment and nature-themed artworks (29 artworks, 31% of the total)
- Artworks installed in public art trails and collections (24 artworks, 26% of the total)
- Statues dedicated to named women and men (17 artworks, 18% of the total)
- History and heritage-themed artworks (14 artworks, 15% of the total)
- Symbolic and abstract artworks (10 artworks, 11% of the total)

The majority of the sculptures we have recorded have been installed in England (91%), with a smaller number in Scotland (4%), Wales (3%) and Northern Ireland (1%). A third of the new sculptures have been unveiled in London (33% overall), although over half of the artworks in London have been installed as part of public art trails, such as Sculpture in the City, which are not permanent installations.

Sculptures of named men and women

Art UK recorded 17 sculptures dedicated to or depicting named men and women which were unveiled in 2023. Five (29%) depict individual women, eight (47%) depict individual men and four depict men and women together (24%).

The four artworks which commemorate both men and women, include three portrait benches produced by Sustrans, which between them depict seven named people, of which four are men and three are women. One artwork, *Windrush Sculpture*, commemorates five people, of whom four are women and one is a man. One of the sculptures, *The Glimmer Twins*, depicts two named men.

Therefore, the 17 sculptures from across the UK, between them, depict 26 named people – 12 women (46%) and 14 men (54%).

Of these 26 people, 16 are white men and women (62%).

Ten of the 26 people (38%) are Black men and women. Musician Sheku Kanneh-Mason, weightlifter Emily Campbell, youth worker Karl White and comedian Lenny Henry are depicted in portrait benches. A sculpture in Leeds by Yinka Shonibare is dedicated to the memory of David Oluwale, a British-Nigerian man who drowned after being chased by police. Black men and women are also represented in the five portraits attached the side of *Windrush Sculpture*.

Of the people commemorated in public sculpture in 2023, the majority are living people (15 living people, 58%).

The new sculptures of 12 named women unveiled in 2023 include royalty, writers and sporting stars:

¹ Please note that at the time of writing this report, a very small number of the artworks included in this report are not yet live on Art UK. They will be published and added to the Curation as soon as possible.

- Poet and journalist, Sarah Jane Rees 'Cranogwen' (1839–1916) in Llangrannog, Ceredigion, as a result of the Monumental Welsh Women campaign.
- Author, Agatha Christie in Wallingford, Oxfordshire
- Elizabeth II (1926–2022) at the Royal Albert Hall, London
- Sophia Constable in Northallerton, North Yorkshire, who was sentenced to three weeks of hard labour followed by four years in a reformatory for stealing a loaf of bread in 1872.
- Weightlifter, Emily Campbell in Basford, Nottinghamshire
- Paralympian swimmer, Ellie Simmons in Birmingham
- Hockey player, Jane Sixsmith in Birmingham
- Joy Battick, a local resident, Brixton Station, London. This statue stands opposite another statue of Joy created in 1986, which is thought to be one of the first public sculptures of a Black British person erected in the UK.
- On *Windrush Sculpture*, Tilbury, Essex, four women are depicted: Icylin Douglas, Roxanne Beckles, Madgerine Thomas, and Thelma Matilda.

The new sculptures of 14 named men unveiled in 2023 include men associated with football, based at stadiums or related sites, and from the fields of entertainment, politics and medicine:

- Entertainer, Max Boyce (b.1943) in Neath Port Talbot (Castell-nedd Port Talbot)
- *The Glimmer Twins* in Dartford, Kent, depicting Mick Jagger and Keith Richards from The Rolling Stones
- Prince Philip (1921–2021) at Royal Albert Hall, Westminster
- Footballer, Jimmy Murphy (1910–1989) at Old Trafford, Stretford, Greater Manchester
- Footballer Pat Jennings (b.1945) in Newry
- Footballer, Malcolm Lindsay in Kings Lynn, Norfolk
- John J. R. Macleod (1876–1935) in Aberdeen, who co-discovered insulin
- Polish leader Władysław Sikorski (1881–1943) in Newark, Nottinghamshire
- Hibiscus Rising (in memory of David Oluwale) in Leeds, West Yorkshire
- Musician, Sheku Kanneh-Mason in Basford, Nottinghamshire
- Youth worker, Karl White in Basford, Nottinghamshire
- Comedian, Lenny Henry in Birmingham
- Reverend Charlton Thomas, on *Windrush Sculpture*, Tilbury, Essex

Although, slightly more men than women were commemorated in new public sculptures in 2023 than in 2022 (when we recorded 16 statues of named men and women – 10 women, 62.5%; 6 men, 37.5%), it does not mean that the balance is moving back in favour of sculptures dedicated to white men. There are several campaigns still in progress to celebrate women and people from a wide range of backgrounds, which are at different stages of funding and production, and which will be unveiled in 2024 and beyond.

Environment and nature

This category saw the largest number of public sculptures unveiled in 2023 with 29 new artworks.

The sculptures focus on a range of issues related to the environment, representing the flora and fauna of their location. Many of these artworks depict animals and birds, including geese, goats, sheep, horses and owls.

Many of these sculptures have been commissioned and funded by developers as part of new housing developments or as part of improvements to open spaces funded by local authorities.

History and Heritage

Fourteen new artworks have been installed to commemorate the people and industries of the UK.

Five of these sculptures commemorate the people who worked in a variety of local industries, including fishing, mining and textile production.

Six sculptures commemorate people who died during the two world wars or call for peace in Ukraine, asking us to remember those who have been lost.

Two artworks are memorials to people who died during the Covid-19 pandemic.

One sculpture celebrates the contribution of Black people to British history.

Public Sculpture Trails and Collections

Art UK has recorded 24 new additions to existing public sculpture trails in 2023, with most being installed in London by Sculpture in the City² and The Line. There is also a new sculpture installed in the grounds of Loughborough University and a temporary sculpture installed in Kensington Gardens, London.

Artists

The new public sculptures unveiled in 2023 represent the work of 87 artists and several companies. Of the 87 named artists, 61 are men (69%) and 26 are women (28%).

Most artists are white (80 artists, 92%). Four are Black (5%) and three are of Pakistani, Indian and Mexican heritage (3%).

These statistics demonstrate that there is still some way to go to redress the balance between artists from more diverse backgrounds being commissioned to create public artworks. Black artists have predominantly been commissioned to create artworks commemorating Black people, with environmental art, history and heritage sculptures, and statues of men and women, predominantly being made by white artists.

Commissioning

Local Authorities, parish councils and public funders account for a third of the organisations commissioning new public sculptures which were unveiled in 2023 (34%). Several sculptures have been commissioned and funded through trusts, foundations and local groups (13%) and through public campaigns (6%), especially for statues celebrating named people and sculptures commemorating local heritage.

² Please note that some of the artworks installed as part of Sculpture in the City were made in earlier years, but they were installed in public spaces in 2023. They will, therefore, have an earlier execution date.

Property developers are also commissioning new public sculptures (20%), as the UK continues to meet the housing needs of the population. The development of new housing estates, villages and superstores often include site-specific artworks, linked to and benefiting from the historical sense of place.

How does 2023 compare to previous years?

2023 v 2022

In the previous year, 2022, Art UK recorded 59 public sculptures which were unveiled during the year, which is fewer than the 94 recorded in 2023.

The themes of the public sculptures are very similar to 2022, although sculptures focused on the environment and nature have taken over as the top category in 2023. The category with the most new sculptures in 2022 was history and heritage, which came lower down the list in 2023.

Sixteen of the 2022 sculptures were of named people (27% of the total), with more women than men depicted in that year (10 women and 6 men). Thirteen of the named people were white (81% of the sculptures of people) and three are Black or Asian (19%). A similar number of sculptures dedicated to named people were unveiled in 2023, but they represent a larger number of people, with some artworks commemorating multiple people within one sculpture. There was a more even split between men and women in 2023, with 2022 having more women than men.

The commissioning processes for public sculpture in 2023 were very similar to 2022, but the year saw an increase in sculptures commissioned and funded by property developers (20%, up from 10% in 2022). Local Authorities and public funders accounted for a third of the organisations commissioning new public sculptures which were unveiled in 2023 (34%, down from 56% in 2022). There were fewer sculptures funded by public campaigns in 2023 (6%, down from 16% in 2022), but several campaigns are ongoing and are working towards unveiling their new sculptures in the next couple of years.

2023 v all earlier years

Art UK has done an in-depth analysis of public sculptures dedicated to named men and women in the UK over the last 400 years.

2,664 public sculptures unveiled up to the end of 2022 were analysed, of which:

- 2,060 (77.5%) are dedicated to named men
- 454 (17%) are dedicated to named women
- 150 (5.5%) are dedicated to both named men and women
- 53 (just under 2%) of the sculptures of people are dedicated to Black, Asian and other ethnicities

As of the end of 2023, analysing 2,681 sculptures shows us that:

- 2,068 (77%) are dedicated to named men
- 455 (17%) are dedicated to named women
- 154 (6%) are dedicated to both named men and women
- 58 (2%) of the sculptures of people are dedicated to Black, Asian and other ethnicities

The sculptures unveiled in 2023 have not made a large contribution to redressing the balance of people celebrated in public art and overall, the people depicted and commemorated in public sculpture are still overwhelmingly white men. With so many public artworks dedicated to white men across the UK, installed over hundreds of years, it is unlikely that the balance will ever be redressed.

Have we missed anything?

If you know of a public sculpture which was unveiled in 2023 which we have not included in this report, please contact us. We would be happy to discuss adding it to the Art UK.