

The first priority for Dunston is to identify a theme which will create the narrative that will help to visually, unify the space. The theme will need to be quite flexible so that it can be used to engage people as the project develops and also so that the artwork that emerges from the theme can be unique to its specific location and incorporate a range of motifs. If possible I would envisage including some smaller, individual pieces through the site so that they orientate people through the space and begin to connect the new development with its locality. A theme that allows subtle and small interventions, which take people by surprise or have to be discovered, will also maintain interest and contribute to the enjoyment of the area.

A good example of such a project is the Watermead housing development at Thurmaston, Leicester, illustrated above. This is a mixed housing project developed by Metropolitan Housing Trust, in association with Charnwood Arts and Mansells PLC. The theme identified for the public art was the local environment and the established community worked with an Haiku poet, in various settings, to explore this theme and its impact on them. The resulting poetry was incorporated into the design of some of the pieces and all of the work has a thematic shape that broadly reflects water droplets, an important reflection of the local water meadows.

Sculpture and seating for the entrance to Witham School in Stainless steel with Nottinghamshire Oak



Ruston School, Lincoln, commissioned a series of pieces for their new school site. 'Welcome' (7) was designed to mark the entrance to the school specifically for students and visitors to walk through. The second piece (8) enhances a small courtyard where students can relax. Both are examples of designing 'human – scale' sculptures for specific spaces.



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- Having identified a unifying theme a series of designs will need to be developed for consideration. Each proposed piece will need to work in its specific context and particular consideration given to how 'protected' or exposed, the specific site is and how the piece might extend the use of the area, for example could a screen, seating or signage incorporate the theme, fit in the space and add to the enjoyment of the community spaces.
- I have been involved in many projects where 'street furniture' as well as sculptural pieces have been used to draw attention to buildings and their purpose or to enhance the environment for users of public space. For example, in Blackburn the local authority and Gleeson homes undertook a major re-development of housing in Bastwell - markers, seating and panels were designed with the local community for the site(1). Similarly, major thematic pieces have been developed for Newark town centre (2) and Birkenhead leisure centre (3).



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- For a major project of this scale I think it is important that the public art reflects the pride and high quality delivery that characterises the whole project and also helps to give the project a human scale. With this in mind the attention to detail for each piece of work, the high quality finish and the use of materials that work within the area are paramount.
- Stainless steel is a very low maintenance, high quality material – flexible in construction but very robust in situ. Its highly reflective properties mean that it changes with the seasons and throughout the day to continually present new views to those who see it on a regular basis. I also combine it with other materials or laser cut/etch it to provide detail in design.
- Some projects that we have completed that illustrate the quality and attention to detail of our work are Ruston and Witham Schools (4) and Nottingham Bio City(5).

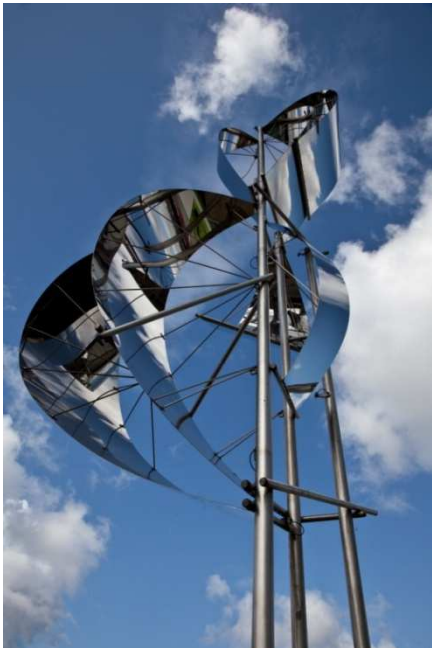


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- In conclusion, my interest is in producing high quality work that reflects its specific environment and location and has meaning for its community of viewers.
- I can add value to the project with the experience I have of designing and making sculptural pieces in a public context for a wide variety of communities and environments, as illustrated below – entrance piece for ASDA, Greenhithe, Kent (8); Chuter Ede School (9) Cambourne new village centre, Cambridge (10) and new town square, Carterton
- For further information please visit my web site – www.richardthorntonsculpture.co.uk or contact me on 01522 703300
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