

The Shrieking Violet guide to ...



The public art of central Salford Chapel Street and Salford Crescent area





Introduction

This guide was created as a tour for a group of human geography undergraduates in November 2015. The students were taking a module on 'Urban Cultures', encompassing topics such as 'place-making', creative cities, regeneration and urban subcultures. This tour aims to offer a brief introduction to the historical context and development of public art, and some of the debates, concerns and issues surrounding it, asking questions such as 'What is public art?' and 'What form does it take?', and inviting participants to consider:



- Who do you think is the intended beneficiary of these artworks, and why are they here?
- What is different about your experience of these kinds of artworks to going to an art gallery?
- Do you think people who live nearby are more likely to enjoy art if they see it here?
- Why do you think these particular artists were chosen?
- · Do you think the artists should be local?
- Who do you think should pay for the artworks and their upkeep?
- Do you think the artworks are successful when the community is involved?
- Should they be involved in their creation? Do you think you would get involved if you lived here?
- What do you think is the most effective artwork and why?

The guide takes as its starting point the post-war era, widely regarded a time artworks began to step down from the gallery plinth to be installed in public places and buildings, though many of them used the same form and materials, and relied on the same assumed distance between artwork and viewer, and framework of interpretation, as artworks which might be seen in a traditional institutional setting. It concludes in the present-day. The guide moves from a presentation of object-based artworks to highlighting artworks which are ephemeral, activity and performance-based, and may leave the viewer with little or nothing to look at on a permanent basis, but nonetheless contain the potential to transform the way their participants think about and experience the city, and interact with certain spaces and situations. On its way, the guide takes in artworks with aim to engage with communities and local people, as well as artworks linked with specific places and pieces linked with wider agendas of tourism and regeneration.

It was assumed that students had little, if any, familiarity with the area, so this publication also acts as an introduction to an area of Salford which has undergone several phases of development, decline and renewal and is currently undergoing transformation and attempted gentrification at an accelerated pace. It starts at the University of Salford, progressing down the Crescent and Chapel Street.

This guide draws on a number of sources, including original interviews undertaken with artists, curators and others involved in public art in the area and published elsewhere, including on the Shrieking Violet blog. Most photos are by Steve Hanson.

www.theshriekingviolets.blogspot.com



Minute Men, William Mitchell, Allerton Building, Salford Technical College

The Royal Technical Institute became a university in 1967 as part of the nationwide expansion of higher education that followed the Robbins Report.

Prince Phillip, the first chancellor of Salford University, apparently declared 'What the hell is that?" when he arrived to open the new Allerton Building, outside which the Minute Men stand – despite Mitchell saying he had previously complained about a lack of adventurousness in contemporary architecture.

Mitchell was born in 1925 and, after serving in the Navy, studied industrial design at the Royal College of Art (RCA).

His other work includes detailing inside and outside public and private buildings, from tower blocks to offices to libraries and swimming pools.

The Minute Men are similar to the Corn King and Queen sculptures made for British Cement and Concrete Association in Wexham in Buckinghamshire. Mitchell drew upon Central American art, sometimes referred to as his 'Aztec' style.

The Minute Men are three tall figures made of unique coloured and textured concrete blocks with coloured

aggregate made of earth pigments. The figures are covered with patterns and inlaid with mosaic. They are tactile, meant to be touched and open to interpretation. Light falls on their faces and casts shadows.

Mitchell says he had to set them on fire to get the plastic moulds off (something he notes would never be allowed today, especially so close to the main road!). Some of the moulds are rumoured to hang in the modernist Didsbury bungalow of Allerton building architect John Parkinson Whittle. Interviewed in 2011, Mitchell explained:

"I wanted to do something with the material which was not indicative of trying to be something else. As it was new, let it be new. It had as much to do with the practicality and being outside. I also had to take into account, was it waterproof and was it vandal-proof?"

William Mitchell also has a less dramatic work on Manchester University's Ellen Wilkinson Building – textured concrete panels. Apparently Manchester University students referred to the three *Minute Men* sculptures as 'Freeman, Hardy & Willis' (the name of a shoe shop), whereas Salford students know them as 'Faith, Hope and Charity'. *The Minute Men* sculptures have reportedly been vandalised by Manchester university students with paint, and defended by Salford university students.





However, Mitchell was pleased to hear of student fashion shows being held in front of the sculptures.

Mitchell wrote in his autobiography, *Self Portrait: The Eyes Within* (2013), that:

"Salford was workaday but optimistic and go-ahead; a place where modern technology would be the future. My Minute Men brought the atmosphere of the stars and space travel with them – to show the way."

In 2012 the sculptures were Grade II listed, meaning they are of special interest and should be preserved if possible. The English Heritage listing report said they:

"Imbue the college buildings with an air of prestige, which may imply a healthy degree of competition with contemporary university developments.

"Provide a strong aesthetic and humane presence within an otherwise rather sterile environment."



There is also a sculptural wall by Mitchell inside the Allerton Building, which has been partially covered up.

Links

www.william-mitchell.com www.theshriekingviolets.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/meeting-william-mitchell-modernist.html www.the-modernist-maq.co.uk/cominq-soon/issue-2

Digital images of the sculptural wall in its entirety, in addition to Prince Philip next to the Minute Men, can be found by searching the University of Salford special collections at: http://usir.salford.ac.uk/view/archive_collections/uniphotocoll.html





Everyday People, Spencer Tunick, Peel Park



Peel Park, directly behind Salford Museum and Art Gallery, was one of the country's first public parks. It was opened in 1846, and paid for by public subscription. Unlike other parks, it didn't exclude working-class people with dress codes or entry fees, and it had facilities such as swings and gyms for women, who were often discouraged from doing exercise.

Painter LS Lowry studied at the Royal Technical College, Salford, next to Peel Park, in the 1915s and 1920s. He painted Peel Park. A large collection of Lowry's work was on display at Salford Art Gallery, before large new gallery the Lowry was opened at Salford Quays in 2000.

In 2010 American photographer Spencer Tunick, who is famous for scenes composed of naked people in iconic locations such as Sydney beach and opera house, was commissioned to create a work to celebrate ten years since the Lowry opened. Tunick has been doing these temporary, site-specific installations and performances since the 1990s. In Salford, Tunick aimed to reflect the work and spirit of LS Lowry – depicting the mass of people who contributed to the 20th century industrial machine. There was a call-out for 1,000 volunteers – everyday people – to take part, and 4,000 people applied, both local people and people who travelled from far away. In May 2010, they assembled in the middle of the night at the Lowry centre and, early in the morning, were put on a coach and driven around to eight different locations in Manchester and Salford, including a gas tower, a railway bridge, Manchester airport – and the ornamental flowerbeds of Peel Park. Tunick shouted instructions shouted through a loudspeaker. It was mostly regimented, but participants were given an opportunity to 'freestyle' in Peel Park.

People of all ages and body shapes took part. Tunick groups his participants according to characteristics such as skin colour, hair length, etc.





2010 Everyday People, Spencer Tunick, **Peel Park**

Tunick is quoted as saying:

"Individuals en masse, without their clothing, grouped together, metamorphose into a new shape. The bodies extend into and upon the landscape like a substance. These grouped masses which do not underscore sexuality become abstractions that challenge or reconfigure one's views of nudity and privacy."

A Manchester blogger, Moregeous, wrote about her experiences of taking part in Everyday People. She said:

"How did it feel? Liberating, crazy, funny, surreal. We were, without exception, all utterly thrilled to have taken part, elated and on a bit of a high. I didn't speak to one person who wished they hadn't done it or see one person duck out and change their mind.

"It was one of the most thrilling and entertaining days I've ever had, and I'd highly recommend it to anyone looking to lose their inhibitions for a few hours and step out of their comfort zone. There was nothing in the remotest bit sexual or pervy about it, instead we all felt like we'd been part of something marvellous and bonded over the madness of it, both when we were naked and when we were dressed.

"One day, when I'm old and grey, I'll look back on this weekend and see myself and smile. In fact, given the age of some of the participants, when I'm old and grey I might do it all over again."

The resulting photographs were shown at an exhibition at the Lowry soon afterwards.

Links

www.spencertunick.com http://thespencertunickexperience.org www.thelowry.com/events/everyday-people/home http://moregeous.com/2010/05/04/spencer-tunicks-salford-and-manchester-naked-shoot



Introducing



The Irwell Sculpture Trail



The Irwell Sculpture Trail stretches 33 miles from Salford Quays all the way to Bacup in Pennine Lancashire. The trail started in Rossendale following a lottery bid and gradually expanded to reach as far south as Salford Quays.

The artworks lead the visitor through the history of the industrial towns and cities that grew up alongside the River Irwell and the changing uses of the river and surrounding areas. Whereas once city waterways were exploited for industry and filled with waste and pollution, today they are increasingly regarded as a resource of a different kind: an attraction

for leisure, recreation, tourism, reconnection with nature and greenery, and waterside living.

The Irwell Sculpture trail tells a story not just about the Irwell, and the trains, canals and mills that follow its course (the trail regularly meets other waterways such as the Manchester and Bolton and Bury Canal, and the clusters north of Bury can be reached on the East Lancashire Railway), but local people. The trail incorporates memories and experiences into several of the sculptures.

However, the trail fell into disrepair and many of the sculptures became damaged, lost or forgotten. In 2012, the trail was audited to locate and repair all the artworks, and reinvigorated. In a 2012 interview, Project Manager Diana Hamilton explained:

"We discovered some sculptures no-one knew about and incorporated them into the trail. Some people had walked past a sculpture for years and not known what it was. Some of the sculptures melted back into nature and naturally disappeared. Some had been vandalised and some were never meant to have a longer lifespan than they have.

"It's a really unwieldy project as four local authorities are working together. In the past there was a lack of thought when commissioning and a lack of understanding who would be responsible for maintenance, and that's a problem right across public art."

The lack of public information previously available had meant that some sculptures were very hard to find, and some of the trail went through private land or land that flooded. Suggested routes have now been changed to avoid private land, and the Environment Agency is looking at the land that floods. Diana said:

"The trail has gone through a real period of change. It all happened organically. We heard people's frustrations about not being able to find the sculptures so turned the trail from a linear trail into clusters."

A consultation was also held and, while there had been opposition to some of the sculptures at first, Diana says the artworks are now part of their communities. Each area has a steering group, including representatives from tourist information and community groups, and they have a practical role commissioning temporary artworks alongside the trail.





Introducing The Irwell Sculpture Trail

New signs and maps were made. QR codes were added to the sculptures which anyone with a smartphone can scan to hear local stories as well as recordings of the artists and videos of events which have been held alongside the sculpture trail. Visitors can also take part in a monster hunt in Rossendale and a geo treasure hunt. However, Diana says:

"It's all very well if you have a smartphone to use a QR code but we also want to satisfy the rambler in their sixties and seventies. There's a really wide audience, from families with small children to ramblers on their annual expedition. We're keeping all these audiences happy."

The Irwell Sculpture Trail works closely with other venues along the trail, and sculpture trail activities tie in with events such as Bury Light Night and the chocolate festival in Ramsbottom. Diana said:

"The sculpture trail is a free day out that gets people out and about and walking outside. Because each cluster of sculptures is part of a bigger project, people visit other areas they might not have been to before.

"Visitors might pick up a sculpture trail leaflet in Salford and end up in Rossendale in Lancashire to see more sculptures. Some people just go to visit a particular sculpture, but others might want to make a day of it and go for a walk."



Links

www.irwellsculpturetrail.co.uk www.theshriekingviolets.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/revisiting-irwell-sculpture-trail.html www.creativetourist.com/features/get-dirty-look-at-art-the-irwell-scupture-trail

Chapel Street cluster



Fabric of Nature, Julia Hilton, Peel Park (Irwell Sculpture Trail)

Julia Hilton is a landscape architect and artist. Fabric of Nature is both ornamental and functional – it's a sculpture and a seat.

It is inspired by nature – it is meant to look like a leaf and bud unfurling. Stainless steel panels are etched with life-size images of the leaves of all the tree species found in the park. Flower beds were planted with aromatic herbs, such as lavender, rosemary and sage, creating a pattern in gold, silver and purple.

Unfortunately, parts of the artwork are now missing and it is rather overgrown.

Links

www.juliahilton.co.uk







Monument to the Third Millennium, Adrian Moakes, Peel Park (Irwell Sculpture Trail)



Many of the artists live in the area where their contribution to the trail is based, and the artworks often reflect local stories.

Adrian Moakes is a Manchester-based artist who graduated from Preston Polytechnic (now the University of Central Lancashire).

The sculpture is made of steel and also acts as a seat. It is inspired by the history of the River Irwell, which flows alongside Peel Park and regularly flooded the park in the past (there is a Victorian obelisk nearby showing the levels floodwater reached). The five-metre high sculpture depicts a swirling shoal of fish swimming through a vortex of water.

The artist worked with Salford University students to produce this sculpture. He says he is interested in:

"Inspiring ways for people to participate in my work, from collaboration in design development to involvement in finished public sculptures. Each commission is uniquely site specific, developed through widespread community consultation and research into local geographical, architectural, social and industrial history."

Links

www.adrianmoakes.com





Rise, Liam Curtin, Transport House, Crescent (Irwell Sculpture Trail)

Rise is situated at the bottom of a block of flats developed on the site of the former Transport and General Workers Union Headquarters. It is inspired by 'Rise like Lions', a line from Percy Shelley's poem 'The Masque of Anarchy', which was written in 1819 in response to the Peterloo Massacre. Curtin's artwork is a tribute to the strong trade unionist tradition in Salford. As well as incorporating text and historic images from the nearby Working Class Movement Library, it is a huge lighting installation that changes colour at night.

Some of the sculptures on the Irwell Sculpture Trail came about through the Section 106 planning clause, and councils along the trail made a commitment to spend money on the arts, often involving the community. Rise was commissioned by Irwell Valley Housing Association in collaboration with CITE (Commissions in the Environment)

Curtin says he is really keen to consult people, and create dialogue between different groups. Another of Curtin's artworks is the Meccano bridge, near Bolton, a public artwork which also has a function.

Links

http://liamcurtin.co.uk





Seed, Andrew McKeown, outside St Philip's Church, just off Chapel Street (Irwell

Sculpture Trail)

Chapel Street was once the main street in central Salford, lined with shops, pubs, churches and other amenities. The area used to have lots of terraced housing to serve the mills which were in the area – this has been knocked down and replaced by the Islington estate etc

The past few decades have seen high levels of poverty and unemployment and low levels of education in the area. There have been lots of derelict buildings and a perceived lack of public pride in the area.

Seed was commissioned by Salford City Council in 2002 as part of its regeneration strategy. It is a sycamore seed enlarged by 100. It is meant to symbolise the future and the potential of the area to grow and prosper. Cast in iron, the sculpture represents new life and growth emerging from the decline of the traditional engineering and manufacturing industries of the area. The solidity of the material contrasts with the light, ephemeral nature of the sycamore seed. McKeown is inspired by natural forms and themes of growth, change and renewal and his sculptures are often cast in durable materials such as iron, steel, bronze and stone.

He involved local people and schoolchildren through consultation and practical workshops. In 2012, Salford's DIY Theatre Company, a

In 2012, Salford's DIY Theatre Company, a local theatre group who were bringing alive the Salford section of the trail, did a play inspired by the sculpture

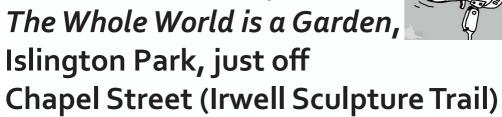
In recent months, many new flats and houses have been built, to attract new residents into and rejuvenate the area, which is close to central Manchester. In late-2015, it was difficult to see the sculpture close-up as it was surrounded by building work.







1992/2010



Between 1829 and 1853, in harsh industrial times, 17,000 people were buried at the site of Islington Park, which is now a remembrance garden.

In 2010 the Friends of Islington Park embarked on a project to restore a weather-damaged mosaic artwork in the park. Originally created in 1992, the mosaic was designed by pupils from nearby St Philip's School. For the restoration project the Friends of Islington Park worked with the original pupils who created the mosaic and they in turn involved their own children.

The centre of original artwork had to be replaced and the new design, developed with local schoolchildren, focused on *the Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, who lived in Islington as a young girl.



Links

www.theislingtonestate.com/foip





2012- *The Wall*, Jen Wu,

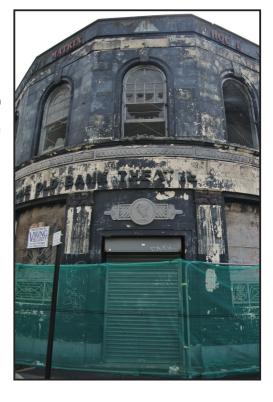
Chapel Street

Until 2014, the Old Bank building (pictured right) stood on this site, one of many derelict buildings. The building, which was used as a community theatre in the 1950s and 1960s, was demolished to make way for the regeneration of the area with new shops and housing.

Artist Jen Wu has been working on retaining one wall of he building, which will remain standing as a readymade sculptural artwork, a 'barometer' which will remain constant as the area changes around it.

Jen has a background curating projects in London such as transforming major art gallery the ICA into a nightclub. Originally from New York but living in London for many years, Jen came to Manchester in 2011 to do a three-month residency at the Chinese Arts Centre but ended up staying in the city long-term.

During her residency Jen researched the history of Manchester's former musical landmarks which have been demolished, such as the Hacienda nightclub (now rebuilt as apartments) and the notorious Hulme Crescents, which were once the venue for famous parties. She also went out on Manchester's club scene and became inspired by the DIY energy in Manchester and Salford today,



in venues such as the artists' studios and event space Islington Mill, just off Chapel Street.

Jen became interested in the ways in which spaces where people used to come together, such as nightclubs, have been destroyed and started to explore narratives of regeneration, demolition and starting over again. She came up with the idea of working with bricklayers and structural engineers to stabilise one wall of the Old Bank building. She then planned to invite the local community, which ranges from tower block tenants and artists to 'young professionals' resident in newer flats, to take part in dismantling and then moving and rebuilding the wall across the road in an act of 'creative DIY'. She wanted to have free and open 'demolition' and 'reconstruction' rave parties alongside this.

The focus of the project is not just on demolition, but on action, creating a cycle of activity that would help bring people together to celebrate the past at the same time as looking to the future and channelling the DIY spirit which drives places such as Islington Mill. By holding rave parties, Jen hoped to resurrect the spirit of rave in a positive way, celebrating the creativity and energy flourishing in Salford now.

Jen had to negotiate with English Cities Fund, who own the land, and Urban Vision, which is responsible for overseeing the regeneration of the area. She says the regeneration firms "took a leap of faith" in supporting her ideas, seeing the project as a positive way of empowering and involving local people in the changes taking place their immediate environment.

Jen says *The Wall* is also an opportunity for people to reconnect with the materiality of what's around them, and appreciate the solid sturdiness of brick.





She hoped that the wall, rebuilt nearby, might then become the starting point of something new, such as a community centre.

However, there were challenges such as cost and health and safety. In the end the demolition company agreed to take down the wall and save Jen the bricks, meaning the community action would have to just be the reconstruction.

Jen held public events where volunteers were invited to become involved by numbering bricks and taking mortar off. Despite the involvement of local people, there were problems such as the storage container being broken into and tools being stolen.

The project has received a lot of support from the community at Islington Mill. Documentation of

The Wall has been shown in more conventional art spaces, including in the Modern History exhibition at the Grundy in Blackpool in 2015.

The project has been on hold as Jen, as an activist, has been closely involved in campaigning for the rights of Manchester's homeless population.

Links

http://thewallmustberebuilt.org www.theshriekingviolets.blogspot.co.uk/2013/07/the-beauty-is-in-possibility-jen-wus.html





Seven Sites, various artists, Manchester and Salford

Seven Sites was a series of events, performances and installations that took over seven non-art sites across Manchester and Salford in 2012, curated by Manchester-based writer and curator Laura Mansfield and Swen Steinhauser, who has a background in experimental performance.

Seven artists (or groups) were invited to each produce a response to a site, primarily those who had not worked in Manchester before.

Edwina Ashton hosted a fantastical tea party in a Salford tower block on the Islington Estate (bottom right). Local artist Amber Sanchez took performance to the streets of a Salford estate. Imagined narratives were constructed around hotel guests and recounted by Giles Bailey to a small audience in a darkened hotel room. Theatre



company Quarantine took strangers out for a free lunch and conversation in a city centre curry café. A radio programme broadcast a new monument for Salford, which existed only as a composite compiled from Amy Feneck's survey of local residents' ideas. Antonia Low transformed a run-down serving hatch in Salford's Chapel Street & Hope Church into a white cube gallery space (above right). One intervention took place during a regular pub comedy night where, unbeknown to the crowd, *Seven Sites* presented the comedy debut of Sian Robinson Davies. Sian didn't want to be seen as an artist but as another comedian – regulars didn't realise they were involved in an art performance.

However, there were bureaucratic hurdles raised by insurance, security and noise.

By presenting art and performance in places where neither are typically encountered, *Seven Sites* aimed to subvert the expectations of both audiences – at the same time as incorporating the preexisting users of these places, and those who were merely passing through.

In a 2012 interview with Laura and Swen, Swen explained:

"The two disciplines seem quite divided so we thought we should work on bringing them together."

Laura explained:

"I felt frustrated with being part of a certain community, and all the announcements of cuts presented an opportunity to do something outside of fixed spaces. The minute you fix something to a place you always get an expectation of a fixed audience. If you shift spaces you get a diverse audience. Two audiences meet with the general public in a place that's not their own."

Seven Sites required the audience to take a leap of faith, with each event advertised only with the barest of information – date, time, artist and location, its exact form remaining a secret until it took place. Laura said:

"Some of the audience thought it was some kind of city tour!"





Swen said-

"If you frame something it really alters your experience of something that's already there. Certain institutions are associated with a certain aesthetic. A gallery is such a safe environment. We wanted to take audiences away from a safe environment and bring people in to see work they wouldn't normally have seen."

Each instalment existed both on its own and as part of a series. Swen explained:

"A single site is dependent on whoever comes and it is difficult to get a big audience outside of a tested institution. A series is less dependent on one occurrence of a big crowd. There was very little continuity of audience. Some people came to one or two but still got a sense of it as a series."

It was also a chance for artists to try something outside their usual practice, and for the curators to step back and be surprised, with the shape of the final work left up to the artist. Laura said:

"Your expectations of who that artist could be were changed. Antonia really put a spin on her own practice and did the opposite of what she usually does."

Links

www.theshriekingviolets.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/seven-sites-experiencing-unexpected.html www.theshriekingviolets.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/antonia-low-white-cube-longing-chapel.html





Minute Men

Allerton Building, Frederick Road, M6 6PU

Sculptural wall on 1st floor accessible during term-time.

Fabric of Nature/Monument to the Third Millennium

Peel Park, Crescent, M5 4PD

Sculptures situated close to children's play area and River Irwell.

Rise

Transport House, 1 Crescent, M5 4JN

Seed

St Philip's Place, M₃ 6FJ

The Whole World is a Garden

Islington Park, East Ordsall Lane, M₃ 5EN

The Wall

255-285 Chapel Street, M3 5JY



Good places



Library/exhibitions/events: Working Class Movement Library, 51 Crescent, M5 4WX

Exhibitions/local history/cafe: Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Crescent, M5 4WU

Pub: The Crescent, 18-21 Crescent, M5 4PF

Cafe: Deli-Lama, 220 Chapel Street, M3 5LE

Pub: The New Oxford, 11 Bexley Square, M₃ 6DB

Events/club-nights/gigs/exhibitions/cafe: Islington Mill, James Street, M₃ 5HW

Cafe: Lupo Caffè Italiano, 142 Chapel Street, M3 6AF

Gallery: International 3, 142 Chapel Street, M3 6AF





Interesting reading



Burk, A. (2006). Beneath and before: Continuums of publicness in public art. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 7(6), 949-964.

Cant, S., & Morris, N. (2006). Engaging with place: Artists, site-specificity and the Hebden Bridge Sculpture Trail. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 7(6), 863-888.

Garlake, M. (1998). New Art, New World: British Art in Postwar Society. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Hall, T. (2007). Artful Cities. *Geography Compass*, 1(6), 1376-1392.

Krauss, R. (1987). Sculpture in the expanded field. In R. Krauss (Ed.), *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths* (pp. 276-290). London: MIT Press.

Morris, N. (2011). The Orchard: Cultivating a sustainable public artwork in the Gorbals, Glasgow. *Cultural Geographies*, 18(3), 413-420.

Paddison, R., Pollock, V., & Sharp, J. (2005). Just art for a just city: Public art and social inclusion in urban regeneration. *Urban Studies*, 42(5/6), 1001-1023.

Wyke, T. (2004). *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Links

www.vads.ac.uk/learning/designing britain

www.pmsa.org.uk

www.c2osociety.org.uk/murals-campaign

http://historicengland.org.uk/news-and-features/missing-public-art

http://tilesoc.org.uk





19