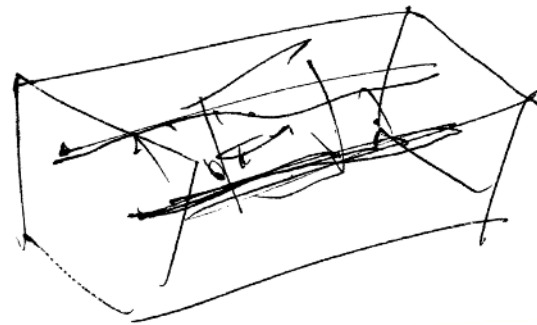


**curio**



from 1936 until metrification, the standard British brick had an actual size of 228 x 106 x 67 mm  
making a *brick format* of 228 x 114 x 76 mm

## CURIO - Site, Context and Social Inclusion within Public Art Practice

During 2002 I was commissioned to produce a piece of public art work for the Arboretum Park, Nottingham. The park is situated in the heart of the city and is a focus for many communities, a meeting place, a place of social interaction and a place of escape from the demands of city living.

The park is an area designated by the council for leisure its root being in the Victorian provision of green space within industrial areas for the workers and the gentry to enjoy tamed nature.

Now, as then, it is traversed by many different social groups; students as it is close to the University, Nottingham locals who have lived there all their lives and

the attendant social problems of inner-city areas with many different [sometimes oppositional] groups having to co-exist within this environment.

At the heart of all this is the park.

How does one, as an artist, begin to create a publicly sited work that responds to all these different communities and contexts?

I began by creating a series of workshops, a dialogue between myself and two chosen groups; The Bradford History Group and Unity Primary School.

During the sessions we explored the nature of public art and how their histories, both personal, social and cultural could be explored in relation to the historical and geographical demands of the site.

We worked together to find a way of representing the personal histories of each of the group members and yet also to site those identities within the broader historical context of Nottingham and the Arboretum Park.

These objects were then cast into fifty transparent blocks made from clear resin which were based on the dimensions of an original Victorian brick.

# 3

These resin forms articulate the industrialization of the city during the Victorian era and yet also contain contemporary artifacts which create a psycho-geographical mapping of the site.

As Mary Jane Jacob comments, In order to become part of the natural surroundings and daily experience, contextual art integrates object with site, promoting the concept of art as environmental and experiential.

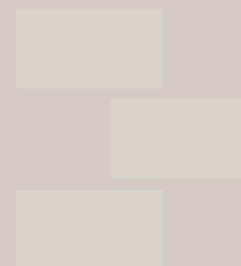
These objects, which were cemented into the very fabric of the park, invite investigation.

Visitors are able to see them in a variety of contexts, they are invited to be curious, to wonder about where and from whom the objects came.

These capsules of time open up and invite an exchange of various layers of meaning and experience. They talk of exchange, of exchange between the past and the present, between history and culture, geography and time, groups and individuals. It is this system of exchange that interests me as an artist.

Curio is fundamentally about and is the result of dialogue, communication and negotiation.

**Juliet Robson**  
edited by Jordan McKenzie







In Juliet Robson, Nottingham has witnessed the emergence of a young artist of the very first rank.

This Year of the Artist project, for all of the difficulties that have dogged its progress things changed all the way along, she told me - has seen her at her best.

Taking as her unit of production the Victorian building brick that her own home is built of, she has worked with pupils of Unity Primary School and with members of the Radford History Society to create something really special for Nottingham's Arboretum.

Hers is the sharp, engaged intelligence that characterises the best artists of the early twenty-first century.

While not for a moment, wanting to do a community project they have such a bad name, Juliet Robson has woven a unique relationship with her collaborators to encourage them to ask the most important questions that any artist can ask of their work which, as she articulates them, are

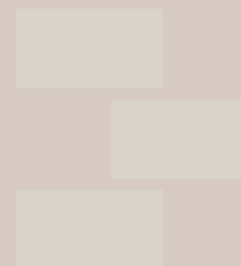
Who is the artist? Who is the work for? When does it work? When doesn't it work?

And they have answered those questions with breathtaking poetry and economy.

It is not surprising that, among the artistic models that she has drawn to their attention has been the haiku which, in her words, can capture in just a few syllables, Something that says something to you, something that means something to you.

So into the bricks they have cast coins from the countries in which they were born, for example, or little fragments of text, or a whole range of other personalised objects, to create a true collaboration in the project, and to Juliet Robson's genuine credit as an artist to put their real identities into the park.

Robert Ayers



'The first requirement is that the community based art project benefits the community. The community with which the artist has collaborated must be the primary audience for the work.... It must be clear for the duration of the project, no one owns the project more than they do'

*Culture in Action, Outside the Loop -*  
Mary Jane Jacobs









NUMBER		SURNAME	
EMHL 307.1		SMITH.	
CHRISTIAN NAMES (First only in full)			
Mary. E.			
CLASS CODE			
A.			
FULL POSTAL ADDRESS			
128, Hartley Road.			
Nottingham.			
HOLDER'S SIGNATURE			
M. E. Smith			
CHANGES OF ADDRESS. No entry except by National Registration Officer, to whom removal must be notified.			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
17, Brompton Drive			
Totton Bexon hotten			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			
REMOVED TO (Full Postal Address)			

FOR OFFICIAL ENTRY ONLY (apart from Holder's name). ANY OTHER ENTRY OR ALTERATION, MARKING OR ERASURE, IS PUNISHABLE BY A FINE OR IMPRISONMENT OF BOTH.

NATIONAL REGISTRATION OFFICE  
RMA  
16 JUN  
43

Summers balmy airs blend  
Music and breeze into a sweet  
Symphony of green

Green wood slatted chair  
Airs by Novello and Lehar  
Comfort body and ear

Val Stanley 2002

In the Arboretum  
I would like a big climbing  
Tree just for me !





**According to your own definition**

do you consider yourself:  
[please circle one]

- a] 100% normal ?
- b] 60-100% normal ?
- c] 30 - 60% normal ?
- d] 0 - 30% normal ?
- e] something other ? [ please define below]

Do other people in general perceive you to be:  
[please circle one]

- a] 100% normal ?
- b] 60-100% normal ?
- c] 30 - 60% normal ?
- d] 0 - 30% normal ?
- e] something other ? [ please define below]

Do you aspire to be:  
[please circle one]

- a] 100% normal ?
- b] 60-100% normal ?
- c] 30 - 60% normal ?
- d] 0 - 30% normal ?
- e] something other ? [ please define below]



**List three qualities according to your value system that you consider normal:**

- 1] *everyone experiences the human condition*
- 2] *everyone has a certain amount of compassion*
- 3] *everyone is an individual*

**List three physical characteristics that you consider normal:**

- 1] *a beating heart*
- 2] *skin*
- 3] *working lungs*

**Do you consider normality:**

[please circle one]

- 1] a good thing
- 2] a bad thing
- ☒ 3] Other [ please comment below ]  
*an unhelpful concept*



# 15



Hot dogs with mustard  
Will be selling like crazy  
Making kids go mad

*Sam*



It has been said that my mothers generation placed their objects on the window sill facing outwards towards the street and that my generation place their sill objects facing inwards into the room. Whilst one method of placement seeks cohesion with the public domain the other seeks exclusion from the street.

Robsons project looks to include firstly the participants in her comprehensive workshops. The public are then presented with a series of brick sized translucent memorials that trace a specific selection process that has evolved through Robson's own working practices.

The etymology of curio stems from the Latin word cure. The original cure had an associated meaning of anxiety and was used in a medical sense to look after or care for. It is said that curiosity killed the cat, but curiosity is a human condition, it is a principle of living, it is indeed a cure.

In this work, the objects themselves have a meaning that is relevant only to their donor. For the public they are curious sets of analogies; they are thought provoking metaphors full of possibilities.

This is public art at its most inclusive. The original donors are included in the process of the production of the work. The public, as they gaze into the transparent blocks to descry the objects, are included in the potential of generating meanings that differ from those of the donors.

In these times of audit and evidence culture it is good to happen upon a project that uses evidence in a manner that is more human. This work looks at values that are not empiric. It describes an intrinsic value both in the process employed to make the work and the actuality of the objects themselves.

This is a work that is predicated on the notion that the public are indeed-curious.

John Newlyn



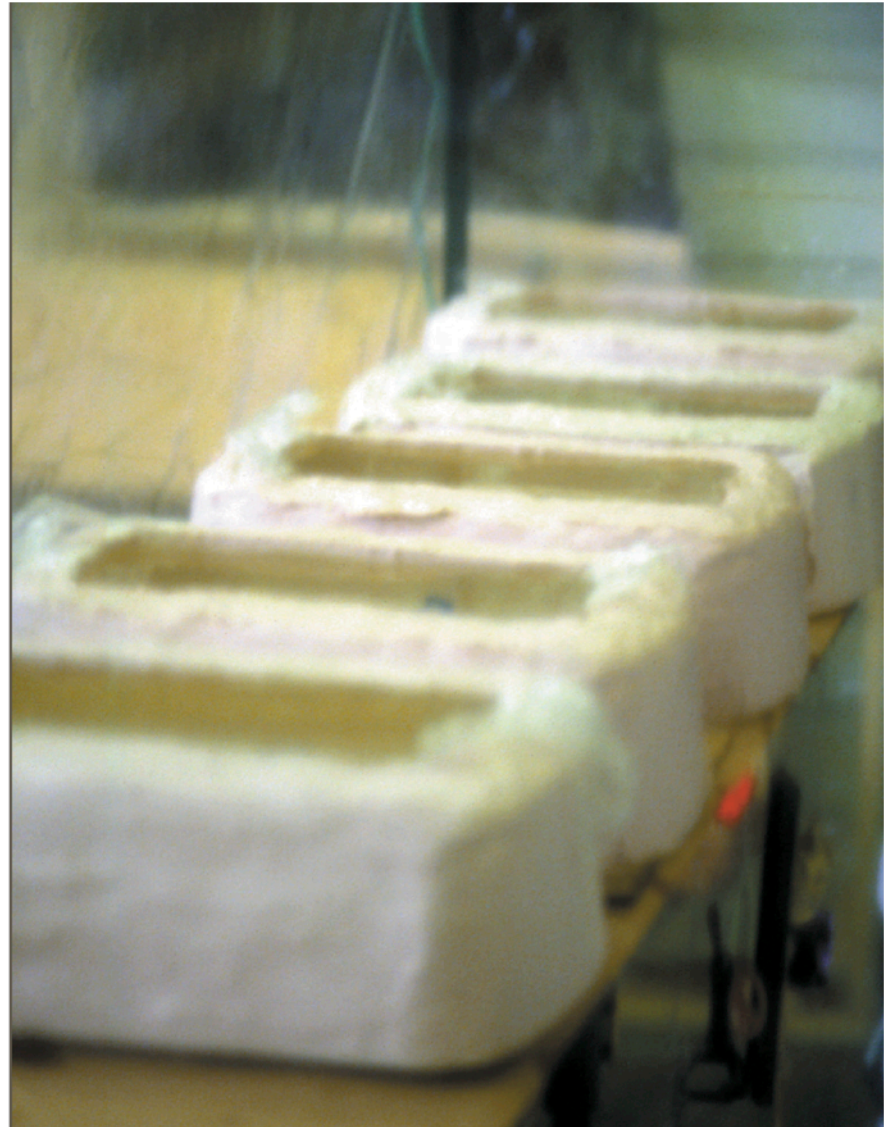






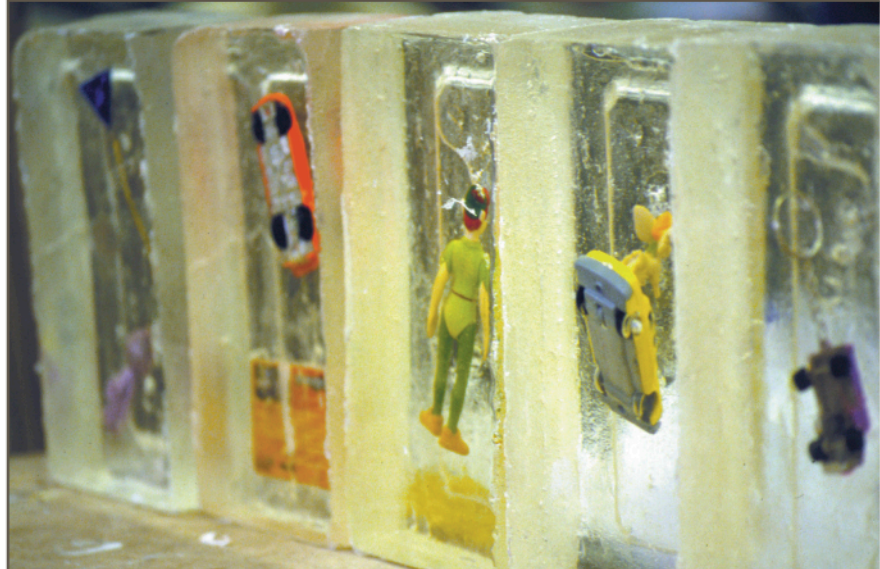




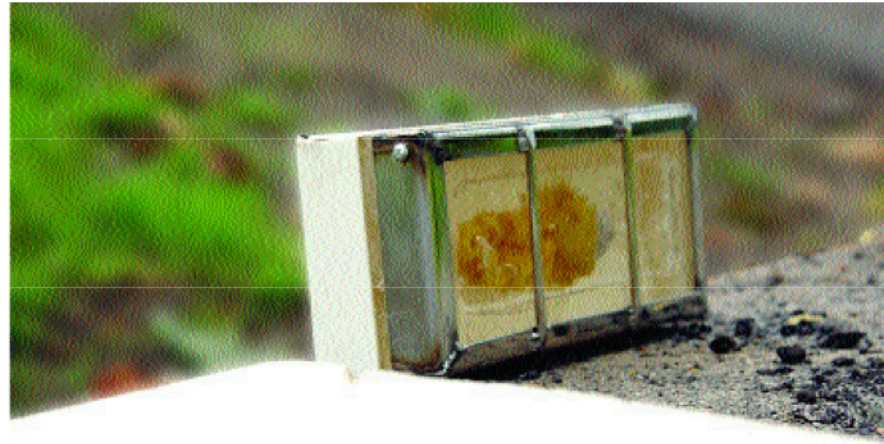




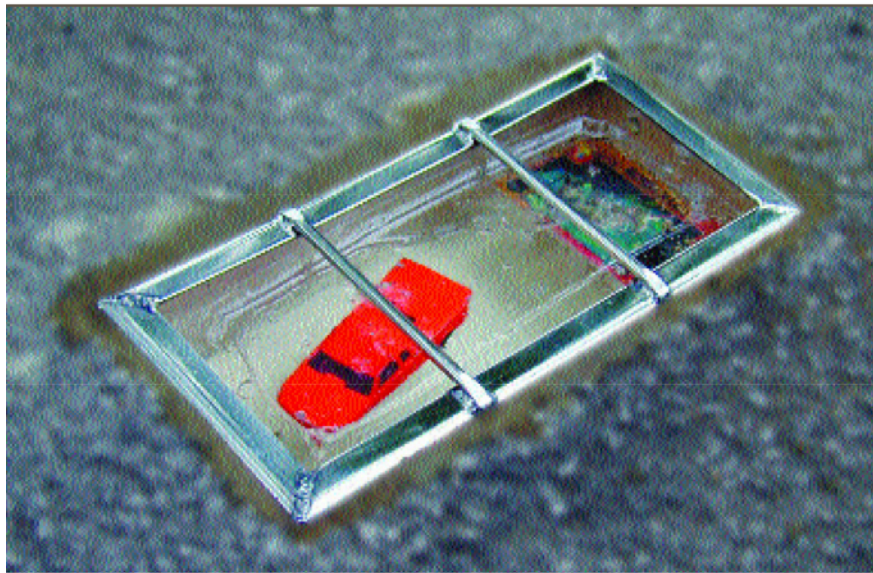








"The way you see the audience observing the artwork, before you see the artwork itself, intrigues you: why are they looking at in the ground every few metres? People look down, pause and look up to another site - it propels them forward on a different journey from the one they thought ..."

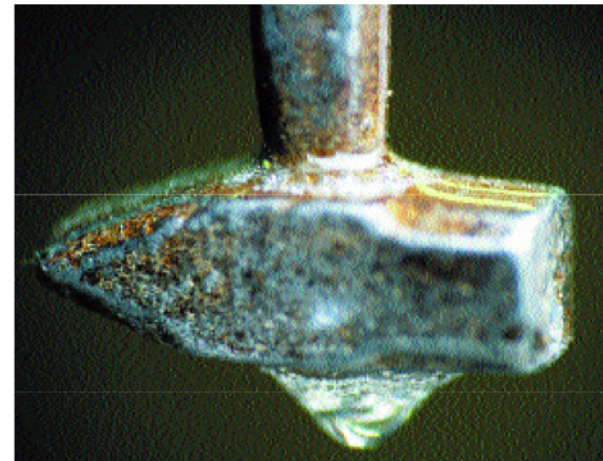
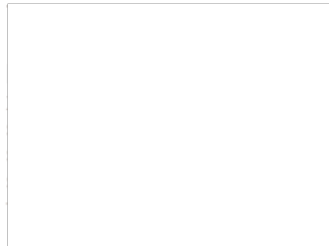


# 23

" On closer inspection, each brick is a resin timecapsule particular to onepart of a city, yet speaking to all. The whole is a beautiful, reflective and generous piece ".



## Curio



Juliet Robson



Supported by the  
Heritage Lottery Fund



