

What's this, then?

The Derby guide to interpreting public artworks - specially contemporary ones



Do you ever scratch your head at the sight of a piece of public art and wonder just what it's all about?

If so, you could do your own examination of a piece of public art. All you'll need is this guide, a pen or pencil and, of course, a public artwork!

Choose an artwork that you would like to know more about. There are quite a few to choose from in the City centre - The Derby Ram on Exchange Street, the Fossils in the pavement near to the entrance to the Museum and Art Gallery, and the Heads in Friar Gate are just a few examples. Select your artwork and then write down your answers to these questions. If you can't answer a question right away, you can go on to the next one, and come back later to ones you've skipped over.

1. **Do you know who made the artwork?** Sometimes the artist will have their name on the artwork, or on a plaque near to it.
2. **What kind of artwork is it?** Is it a sculpture, a piece of street furniture such as a bench or post, lighting, water, landscaping, signing, a monument, a mural, or something else?
3. **What's it made of?** Wood, metal, glass, light projection, textiles, bronze, stone? Perhaps it's a mixture of materials if so, which?
4. **Where's it placed?** On a plinth, on a wall, in a room, suspended, in the street?
5. **What's the scale of the artwork and is it in proportion to its surroundings?** Is it small, human scale, building scale, out-sized?

There's more on the other side

6. **Does it have texture?** Rough, smooth, polished?
7. **Does it have a title?** What do you think the artist is trying to say?
8. **Describe the subject of the artwork. Does the artwork have meaning?**
9. **How does the artwork reflect Derby and its public?** Historically, culturally, emotionally, in the community, not at all?
10. **How does it make you feel and why?** Happy, sad, thoughtful, amused, strange?

If you've answered these questions ... well done! You've built up your own interpretation of a public artwork.

If you'd like to know more about public art in Derby, have a look at our website www.derby.gov.uk. You'll find our Public Art pages in the section on 'Living'

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