

Nature's Narratives



Dodo by Veronica Dudley

The dodo (*Raphus cucullatus*) is an extinct flightless bird that was endemic to the island of Mauritius, east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Thought to measure around 70cm in height, the dodo's appearance in life is evidenced only by drawings, paintings, and written accounts from the 17th century. The first recorded mention of the dodo was by Dutch sailors in 1598. It nested on the ground and ate mainly fruit and is thought to have been well-adapted for its ecosystem. However, the bird was extremely vulnerable, easily hunted by sailors and invasive species, while its habitat was being destroyed. The last widely accepted sighting of a dodo was in 1662. The extinction of the dodo within less than a century of its discovery called attention to the previously unrecognised problem of human involvement in the disappearance of entire species. The dodo achieved widespread recognition from its role in the story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and has since become a fixture in popular culture. It is the most iconic specimen held in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History – the only surviving remains of dodo soft tissue that exists anywhere in the world. I have been enchanted by the idea of this lovely lost bird since childhood, and now living in Oxford, with a chocolate Labrador named Dodo, I couldn't resist trying to recreate the creature itself!



Torso by Veronica Dudley (In Hedges Law window in Summertown)

The human form has been a source of inspiration and representation since the Paleolithic period, notably the Venus of Willendorf from 25,000 years ago. In my creative practise, I am interested in the relationship between humanity and nature and explore the human figure in an expressionistic, semi-realistic manner. I tend to capture the form in clay but am aware that the final material can inform the perception of and reaction to a piece. Torso has been cast from the original in bronze resin with strong copper highlights that emphasise the curvature of the form.



Blue Man I and II by Julia Beer

These pieces were made as an accompaniment to my installation 'We Are All The Same Underneath', a reflection on the way in which we are all cast from the same mould, despite outward appearances reflecting differences of race, religion, gender etcetera. Hence the pieces are mould-formed to represent the similarity between us all, with the individual decoration – each one different – reflecting the premise that although we look different on the exterior, we are all essentially from the same material, the same source....



Crowd by Guadalupe Charlone

When I witnessed a concert in a huge auditorium my heart was touched to see the faces of the singers and the crowd I: different aspects, faces, ages, some amazed, and others smiling, some others very concentrated but sharing a common loving feeling. That experience marked me and I felt the need to set my feelings in stone so that they would last forever.

Sculpting the stone was another story, more complex: it is not easy to carve on stone a feeling and each of the faces must reflect the emotions of that moment. A hard work, a loving experience.



Coexistence by Guadalupe Charlone

Living together and accepting our differences is a mutual enrichment process. Isn't that what nature is trying to teach us?

Contrary to common perception, stones are not dour or cold; they are waiting for someone to understand them and by sculpting them to bring out the softness, beauty and capricious shapes that each one hides.

It was a difficult work to carve and bring together the two pieces that make up "Coexistence", being of different species, they have different densities and require different tools.

The union and coupling of both stones was a challenge, but I like challenges and I managed to make two stones coexist and complement with each other.



Torso by Nick Foot

This piece titled 'Willow' takes its inspiration from the sculptures of the renaissance where the human form was seen to be the representation of the absolute beauty of nature.

Willow was sculpted in my studio beneath a huge weeping willow tree. The movement of the boughs are expressed in the curves of her form



Little Bird by Liz Judge

Living in a secluded corner of the Cotswolds with a rather wild garden backing onto a water meadow and the river Evenlode, and with woodland beyond (a remnant of the ancient Wychwood forest), birds have been a constant, and often noisy part of life, as well as an enduring pleasure. During the past twelve months I have been able to identify over 70 species, both visually and by their calls: from the busy family of wrens that live outside the kitchen to the raptors hunting for a meal. and from the many permanent residents to the resting and sometimes unusual visitors on their regular migrations



Freedom by Isabel Knowland

In Irish mythology the salmon is the wisest of all creatures, having eaten the nine hazelnuts that had fallen into the Well of Wisdom. As a child growing up in Ireland I was fascinated by stories about salmon, and I remember fishermen talking about how the salmon leapt out of the rivers as they swam upstream. I like to think that this fish escaped the fishermen and leapt to freedom.



Owl by Isabel Knowland

A wise old owl sat on an oak.
The more he heard the less he spoke.
The less he spoke the more he heard.
Why can't we all be like that wise old bird?

As a child I loved nursery rhymes. I still do. To my mind this lovely old nursery rhyme says it all!



Penguin Huddle by Anthony Lloyd

Groups or multiples of repeated shapes and objects enable the spaces between them to be as important as the shapes themselves. Penguins are particularly good as they are an elegant shape individually but work well in groups. Penguins like to huddle together for warmth and appear to be communicating with each other.

These penguins are made from Bath limestone and have been placed angled towards each other in a group on a Kilkenny limestone base. White on black the inverse of black penguins on white snow.



Dove by Anthony Lloyd

A dove is a symbol of peace in a troubled world. Doves are migratory birds that know no borders and move freely around the globe unlike humans that confront restrictions and prejudice wherever they go.

The dove is placed on a post with minimal contact - it could fly off at any moment if startled. It is on a wooden post rather than a plinth so the whole piece merges into the surrounding landscape. It is carved from Ancaster Weatherbed limestone with its distinctive pink and blue striation.



Warm Rest by Maisa Stolz

Imagine a scene of pure serenity, where tranquillity gently hangs in the air, like a welcoming embrace from nature. In a quiet corner of this gallery, this sculpture invites us to enter a world of peace and beauty.

A child, so pure in innocence, rests in peaceful slumber, their small form curled up in a gesture of sweet repose. Their delicate features reflect the purity of their soul, while their quiet breath fills the space around them with an aura of stillness. But what truly captivates our gaze is the graceful presence of a little bird, no bigger than the palm of a hand, hovering over the sleeping child. It holds a twig in its beak, like a gift from nature to the innocent soul resting below. In this moment, we are transported to a realm of deeper meaning, where simplicity meets transcendence. It's as if the sculpture softly whispers to us about the presence of the divine in our lives, about the protection that surrounds us in our moments of rest, and about the promise of peace that awaits us beyond this earthly existence.

This sculpture was inspired by my two-year-old daughter asleep. For me, there is nothing more sublime than witnessing the sleep of a child. It's a moment when the body completely relaxes, allowing the imagination to wander freely. While they rest, it's as if an entire world unfolds within their dreams. Who knows what adventures or magical worlds they are exploring while they sleep? It's a vision of sweetness and peace, a reminder of the incredible potential and beauty of childhood. In this state of tranquillity, each breath is like a gentle song, calming not only their own being but also all who have the privilege of witnessing this moment.

So, open your heart as you contemplate this work and allow yourself to feel the calm it emanates. For here, in this sculpture, we find not just art, but rather a glimpse of eternity, a moment of peace that transcends time and space.



River Boy by Maisa Stolz

This sculpture captures a magical moment from childhood, where innocence and joy intertwine into an eternal memory. The puddle of water not only reflects the image of the boy but also the purity and simplicity of childhood. This sculpture serves as a gentle reminder of how simple moments can transform into precious memories that we carry with us for a lifetime, warming our hearts and comforting us on difficult days.

This piece invites you to lose yourself in the happy nostalgia of your own childhood memories, reminding us of the importance of preserving these moments of pure joy throughout our lives. To create this artwork, I was inspired by a very precious memory from my own childhood when I was still very young and helped my father empty the pond on our small farm, having to "fish" the last few fish with our hands. This is, for me, a wonderful memory filled with water, mud, and laughter.