

Art Trail

These incredible pieces of public art can all be found in Milton Keynes' parks. They are looked after by The Parks Trust, the self-financing charity that cares for over 5,000 acres of Milton Keynes' parks and green spaces. For more information call 01908 233600 or visit www.theparkstrust.com.

Armillary Sphere, Justin Tunley



Date: 1995

Materials: Mild steel, laser cut and painted

Location: Campbell Park – Labyrinth

The Armillary sphere was designed in 1995, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Milton Keynes Housing Association & their rebirth as Midsummer Housing. There is some background information at <http://www.tunley.co.uk/sculpt/mkha/campbell/sundial/sundial.htm>

Midsummer Housings' new logo was a sundial, so the fairly open brief was to come up with something related to this. The Labyrinth had been constructed some years earlier & it was considered alongside several other locations in Campbell Park. The Labyrinth seemed to cry out for a focal point, & somehow the spherical form felt appropriate.

The unveiling took place on Midsummer's' day, 1995- you can see the date subliminally cut in the big band around the sphere, in Roman (MCMXCV) & Arab numerals. The 'Gnomon' (pole in the middle) casts a shadow on the inside of this ring, where more Roman numerals give the hours at GMT (upper edge) & British Summer Time (lower edge). This can be out by up to 10 minutes, as the Earth rotates the sun in a slightly elliptical pattern.

The steel fabrication was by Davroys of Tingrith, the stone carving by HW Masons (Newport Pagnell undertaker-stone masons) & the installation was by Martins' Plant Hire.

Circle Dance, Claire Wilks



Date: 1997

Materials: Steel structure with basketwork and willow

Location: Campbell Park – Canal

Circle Dance is a living sculpture, created from fresh willow wands planted and threaded through a structure of steel rods. It was commissioned by Milton Keynes Craft Guild and the Commission for the New Towns for the 1997 Midsummer Art Show and donated to Milton Keynes Parks Trust in 1998 following its original siting on the roof of the Central Business Exchange on Midsummer Boulevard. The sculpture resembles a group of figures holding hands in dance, moving so fast that they seem almost to merge into one another. The steelwork was created by local Blacksmith Tim Ward.

Gnomon (Shadow Caster), Peter Bowker



Date: 1994

Materials: Ffestinog blue grey slate and bronze

Location: Campbell Park

This piece was commissioned by The Parks Trust in 1994.

A gnomon is the stationary arm that projects the shadow on a sundial, and this sculpture has been designed to act as a shadow caster. A ley-line is thought to run through the centre of Milton Keynes and the sculpture takes its reference from this prehistoric track, its form relating to such ancient structures as Stonehenge. The work was made as a site specific piece and has been constructed of untreated slate, celebrating the beauty of the material in its natural state. The work has also been nick-named the cricket piece due to its resemblance to cricket stumps and proximity to the cricket pitch.

Head, Allen Jones



Date: 1990

Materials: Steel

Location: Campbell Park - Overgate

Created in 1990 by revered pop artist, Allen Jones, Head is a simply constructed yet powerful sculpture in which the artist has used two dimensional silhouettes to create a three dimensional form. The sculpture suggests a tent structure and initially seems to be an entirely abstract piece. However, as the viewer walks round the work, it gradually reveals itself and a human profile becomes apparent. The artist has deliberately constructed the piece to encourage visitors to spend time with it and explore it. The work has been created from corten steel, which weathers over time to create a textured surface.

Chain Reaction, Ray Smith



Date: 1992

Materials: Mild steel, laser cut and painted

Location: Campbell Park - Skeldon Gate

Chain Reaction was commissioned for its site in Campbell Park and sponsored by a large number of local developers. It has been designed to be viewed from every angle. Ray Smith describes the work: 'The basic idea for the sculpture is the simple notion of slotting one flat cut-out figure into another to create ...a three-dimensional model of figures balanced like acrobats. The forms are simple and universal.....The figures that make up the column are links in an endless chain. The structure is large in scale but also refers to tiny self-replicating molecular structures. Chain Reaction pays homage to the Endless Column of Brancusi. It refers to our aspirations but has its feet firmly planted on the ground'.

Onwards and Upwards, Robert Koenig



Date: 2011

Material: Wood

Location: Campbell Park - Woodland Ridge

The Koenig piece originally on this site, Metropolis, was removed in 2000 as it had deteriorated. Onwards and Upwards was commissioned in 2010 to celebrate the retirement of the Trust's then chairman, John Duggan and was created by Robert Koenig (the original Metropolis artist) as a representation of the growth and development of both the park and the city. The sculpture is carved in sweet chestnut and it was installed in August 2011.

Cave, Ivan & Heather Morison



Date: 2011

Material: Concrete and Wood

Location: Campbell Park

This piece was commissioned in 2011 as part of the Campbell Park Public Art plan. The piece celebrates the relationship between Campbell Park and Milton Keynes Gallery and offers a shelter for reflection, story telling and sharing. The piece is constructed of concrete.

Light Pyramid, Liliane Lijn



Date: 2012

Material: Steel

Location: Campbell Park

This piece was commissioned in 2012 as part of the Campbell Park public art plan. The piece was commissioned to replace the original basket beacon which was situated on the belvedere but was hit by lightning in 2002 and had to be removed. It was lit for the first time on the Queen's diamond Jubilee on 4th June 2012 and is currently lit for several hours each evening from dusk onwards. A lightning conductor has been installed to ensure that it does not suffer the same fate as the original beacon!

Tree Cathedral, Neil Higson (MKDC)



Date: 1988

Materials: Trees

Location: Newlands

This cathedral of trees is based on Norwich Cathedral and designed by landscape architect Neil Higson. The plan of the 'building' was shaped in earth and planted in 1986, with a range of different tree species used to establish the character of its component parts. Neil Higson describes its planting; 'Tall evergreen trees form the central tower and spires of the west and east ends, and pines define the walls. The Nave is lined with Fastigate Hornbeam and tall growing Lime trees. Poplars occupy the north and south aisles, removed as slower growing species reach maturity. The choir is planted with Golden Ash and the chancel in Holm Oak. Flowering cherries and apples form foci in the chapels. The Transepts are simply treated but punctuated with small columnar evergreens at focal points. The Cloisters take the form of a large slightly sunken square lined with Hornbeam and the Chapter House is a conical mound, crowned with laurels, from the top of which the cathedral can be viewed....and colourful bulb planting interprets the effect of sun shining through the stained glass windows onto the grounds.'

Leda and The Swan, Michael Morse McDonald



Date: 1992

Materials: Granite

Location: Willen Lake

This piece was created as a commercial sculpture which was offered for sale by the artist for a number of years before it was finally gifted to The Trust in 1992. Willen was chosen as an ideal location due to the proximity of the lake and the number of swans that grace Willen Lakeside.

Peace Pagoda, Minoru Okha & Tom Hancock



Date: 1980

Materials: Various

Location: Willen Lake

The first of its kind in the West, the Milton Keynes Peace Pagoda was built by the monks and nuns of the Nipponzan Myohoji, a spiritual non-violent movement, and enshrines sacred relics of Lord Buddha presented from Nepal, Sri Lanka and Berlin. The Pagoda frieze, of traditional design, tells the story of Buddha, from his birth 2,500 years ago at the foot of the Himalayas, to his death at Kusinagara after 50 years of teaching. The Peace Pagoda is a working Buddhist temple with regular services.

The Four Faces, Tim Minett & Neil Higson



Date: 1985

Materials: Bronze

Location: Willen Lake (The Labyrinth)

The four bronze faces represent the four main races of mankind and are inspired by the faces on the artist's bollards in the Shopping Centre. The Willen Labyrinth unifies them in peace and places them in the context of dominant nature, symbolised by the oak tree.

Medicine Wheel, Roy Littlesun



Date: 2000

Materials: Stone

Location: Willen Lake

The medicine wheel consists of two concentric circles of stones, with longer stones at the north, south, east and west points. The grass space between the circles is divided into four sectors and a depression for occasional fires is located in a smaller circle covered in gravel and planted with wild flowers.

The design was inspired by the legends of the Hopi Nation in North America whose prophecies foretell an age of peace when all nations from the four corners of the earth join a common effort to live in peace and harmony. The Hopi are now a small tribe based in the 'four corners' region of the USA where Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. They believe we are living in the fifth world of man when the human race assembled at 'four corners' and were instructed to spread out in the four directions - north, south, east and west. Four also represents the elements - fire, water, air, earth.

The wheel's design also pays homage to British traditions of building circles alongside meeting places and important sites. Two extra pairs of stones situated in the NE and SW of the circle, align with the needle stone alongside the Lake. These join the 'line' of the Midsummer sunrise that runs through the tree cathedral to Midsummer Boulevard in the centre of Milton Keynes.

Hiroshima Departed, Ronald Rae



Date: 1985

Materials: Granite

Location: Willen Lake (Peace Pagoda)

A figure twists in anguish and looks upwards saying "Let this never happen again." Carved in memory of those who died at Hiroshima, this sculpture warns of the tragedy of nuclear war. Ever year on 6th August, Hiroshima Day, candles are lit around the sculpture.

The piece was donated to the Willen Temple in 2007.

Willen Labyrinth, Neil Higson (MKDC)



Date: 1988

Materials: Landscape

Location: Willen Lake

Willen Labyrinth is a turf maze based on an enlarged version of the Saffron Walden Rosicrucian Maze and designed by landscape architect Neil Higson. At its centre is an oak tree and in each of the four lobes - at the cardinal points of the compass - is a bronze face designed by the sculptor Tim Minett. The four bronze faces represent the four main races of mankind and are inspired by the faces on the artist's bollards in the Shopping Centre. The maze unifies them in peace and places them in the context of dominant nature, symbolised by the oak tree.

Portals, Susan Hitching



Date: 1985

Materials: Railway
Sleepers

Location: Furzton
Lake

This piece was commissioned in the south of England – originally for a play park but as it was made from reclaimed railway sleepers, on warm days, it oozed creosote and so Milton Keynes answered a plea for it to be rehomed. As it needed to be located away from public contact, the island at Furzton was an ideal setting and so it remains there today. Recent vegetation management work has exposed the piece for future generations to enjoy.

Triple Star Head, Paul Neagu



Date: 1987 - 1993

Materials: Stainless Steel

Location: Furzton Lake

In Triple Starhead the artist has taken the opened up shape of a shooting star and constructed it in three repeated forms firmly bolted together and rooted in the ground. However, the soaring head with its 'comet's tail' conveys meanings quite contrary to those of a heavy earthbound object. The convention of a blurred photographic image capturing a moving body is relevant here, and the 'tail', a graphic device used by cartoonists, acts as a visual thrust whilst in fact being an anchor. The shimmering surface of stainless steel worked to swirling textures endows the material with additional resonance in both sunlight and moonlight, heightening the concepts behind Triple Starhead.

Concrete Cows, Liz Leyh



Date: 1978

Materials: Painted Concrete

Location: Bancroft Park

The artist was an "Artist in Residence" in the early days of Milton Keynes and part of her role was to lead community participation in art. The Cows was one of a number of pieces created during her stay. Other examples of her work here include "The Owl and The Pussy Cat" at Peartree Bridge and a concrete mural near the leisure centre at Stantonbury. They were originally constructed at Stacey Hill Farm near Wolverton, where she had set up her studio. The base armatures were metal, with chicken wire used to create the general shape, then stuffed with newspaper. The original colouring of the cows was achieved using dyes. Some cows were brown. It is only through the council painting the cows that the uniform black and white has appeared. The artist also ensured that each cow had a heart shape used as part of the pattern on the cow skin.

Later commentators have interpreted it as an example of conceptual art: the artist poking fun at the preconceived notion of the new city, held by commentators who had never seen the place, that it would consist entirely of concrete pavements where once there were fields, and where its deprived children would need models to know how real cows once looked.[3] The reality of course was different: Milton Keynes Development Corporation was building "a city in the forest", with substantially more open green space than found in traditional cities. Furthermore, there are real farms with real cows within 2 miles (3 km) of the site, and the cows are currently located in a real field.

Triceratops, Bill Billings



Date: 1979

Materials: Painted
Concrete

Location: Peartree
Bridge

The Triceratops at Peartree Bridge in Milton Keynes was created by local artist Bill Billings in 1979.

Bill made the sculpture from concrete and chicken wire and it's rumoured that he slept in the belly of the dinosaur during its construction. The dinosaur was repainted in 2009 and again in 2012.

Various, Jack Stephenson



Date: 1987 - Present

Materials: Carved Wood

Location: Linford Wood

Carved wooden figures in a variety of forms; mainly woodland animals and plants.

Souls in Love, Frederic Chevarin



Date: 2012

Materials: Marble

Location: Willen Lake (The Labyrinth)

Beautiful white marble piece by renowned French artist, Frederic Chevarin. Donated to The Parks Trust by Tony Sellers to commemorate his wife Debbie Sellers who passed away in October 2011. Tragically, Tony Sellers also passed away in February 2012. The piece is dedicated to both of them by their sons.