

THE HUSSEY MEMORIAL COMMISSION FOR CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL:

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SELECTED ARTIST

Together by JAUME PLENSA

The Chapter of Chichester Cathedral is delighted to announce that a sculpture by the artist Jaume Plensa has been selected for the highly prestigious Hussey Memorial Commission. The new sculpture will be suspended in the central aerial space within the Cathedral. The form of the sculpture is the hand of the resurrected Christ, raised in the sign of blessing. A 'cloud' of letters form the hand, maintaining transparency and enabling the viewer to see directly through the sculpture. The letters composing the hand are derived from eight alphabets: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Cyrillic, Arabic, Hindi, Japanese, and Chinese.

Chichester Cathedral has an international reputation as a bold patron of contemporary art within an ancient setting; this artwork will revitalise that tradition. The commission was launched in 2009, and was timed to mark the centenary of Walter Hussey (1909-1985) who was Dean of Chichester from 1955 to 1977. Referred to by the art historian Kenneth Clark as 'the last great patron of art in the Church of England', Hussey commissioned many of the 20th century artworks for which the Cathedral is now famous, including a stained glass window by Marc Chagall and a high altar tapestry by John Piper. In addition to regular worshippers, some 200,000 people visit the Cathedral each year and are able to see these and other works free of charge. An exhibition explaining the commission, and showing images of Plensa's proposal, will be on display in the Cathedral from Tuesday 30th November.

Jaume Plensa's proposal, *Together*, is a substantial development from his initial design. Plensa explains the title and the 'cloud' of letters forming the hand in the following way: '*Alphabets are a perfect metaphor for the different origins, cultures and backgrounds that comprise humanity, which is the fundamental idea behind Together, and is in harmony with Chichester's role as a world Cathedral.*' The hand raised in blessing is a familiar motif to be found throughout the Cathedral, from the 12th century Lazarus Reliefs to a detail within a Victorian stained glass window. Jaume Plensa's aspiration for *Together* is that '*it should be perfectly integrated into the architecture of the Cathedral, thus emphasizing the powerful spirituality of the space*'.

Plensa's proposal draws imaginatively on Biblical themes; for example, the alphabets are a visual representation of the description of Jesus as the 'Word made flesh' (the opening chapter of John's Gospel). The hand also evokes the contrast between the Tower of Babel (chapter 11 of the Book of Genesis), where human diversity results in mutual incomprehension, and the beginning of the Church at Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit enables each member of a multi-lingual crowd to hear in their own language (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2). The gesture of the hand also communicates the forgiveness and blessing at the heart of the Resurrection, connecting these beautifully with priestly gestures during the service of Holy Communion.

The material of the three dimensional sculpture will be a matt finish stainless steel, which will subtly reflect the light, and is an appropriate material for its strength, durability and lightness. The size of the sculpture will be approximately 2.5 – 3m high, the exact scale to be determined following a scale model installed in the space. In terms of construction, the stainless steel laser-cut letters will be welded one by one around the shape of a solid, carved model. On completion, the lettered ‘skin’ will be separated from the model and the welding reinforced; the surface of the sculpture will then be finished and coated prior to installation.

The commissioning process has been long and careful. In 2009 the Cathedral engaged the arts consultancy Modus Operandi and five artists were invited to compete for this prestigious commission: Dorothy Cross, Antony Gormley, Ana Maria Pacheco, Mark Wallinger and Jaume Plensa. The brief asked for a contemporary interpretation of the resurrected Christ and called for the work to ‘inspire a sense of contemplation and engage the imaginations of all who visit the Cathedral...an artwork that expresses new life, transformation and hope’.

The artists submitted their proposals to a specially formed Selection Panel (chaired by Timothy Llewellyn former Director of the Henry Moore Foundation) in October 2009. The proposals were also exhibited in the Cathedral shortly after this. At this stage the Selection Panel did not select any of the artworks, but did invite a smaller number of the artists to develop their ideas further and re-present a proposal to them.

Jaume Plensa’s subsequent proposal substantially revised his initial design and this new proposal was enthusiastically endorsed by the Selection Panel and recommended to the Cathedral Chapter in May of this year. After careful consideration, Chapter have decided, wholeheartedly, to proceed with the commission. The commission is subject to final consent by the Cathedrals’ Fabric Commission for England (CFCE), who have encouraged Chapter to refine the proposal in consultation with the artist and appropriate professionals. Funding for the commission will be sought from private trusts and donors. Because of these two factors, the timescale for completion and installation is yet to be decided.

Quote from the Dean of Chichester Cathedral, the Very Reverend Nicholas Frayling:

The Hussey Memorial Commission has been a fascinating and challenging process, and a great responsibility. We have tried to foster the unique spirit of this Cathedral, with its contemporary art in an ancient setting, for which Chichester has become known all over the world.

All modern art is controversial: each of Walter Hussey’s commissions aroused great passions at the time, but they have, without exception, become greatly loved. Jaume Plensa’s design is undoubtedly modern, but it has great beauty and spiritual depth, and will provide rich opportunities for teaching and reflection on the great themes of the Christian faith.

Quote from the Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral, Canon Dr Anthony Cane:

'The achievement of Plensa's artwork is to be both beautiful, and profound; both contemporary, and rooted in Christian themes of common humanity, blessing and resurrection.'

Quote from Jaume Plensa, selected artist:

For me, Together is a transparent cloud of different alphabets fused together in the shape of the hand blessing in silent conversation with our souls.

Quote from Timothy Llewellyn, Chair of the Selection Panel:

No-one who has heard Jaume Plensa describe the evolution of his idea will doubt that Together will be a powerful and explicit image of faith, visible from many parts of the building and comprehensible to all. Its great delicacy, luminosity and transparency pay homage to the architecture around it and will spark the imagination of the viewer.

Quote from Vivien Lovell, Director of Modus Operandi:

It has been a privilege to curate the selection process that led to the Cathedral's decision. Jaume Plensa is an artist who commands widespread respect internationally and his final proposal is highly appropriate theologically, artistically and within the context of the Cathedral's world-class architecture.

Notes to Editors:

Further information, interviews and images:

Press and media enquiries welcome. Images of Jaume Plensa's proposal are available. Please contact Ruth Poyner at Chichester Cathedral on 01243 812482, 07973 253414, visitors@chichestercathedral.org.uk

The Artist:

Jaume Plensa, was born in Barcelona, Spain in 1955. Based in Barcelona and Paris, Plensa is an acclaimed artist who has received numerous awards including an Honorary Doctorate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2005) and Chevalier des Arts et Des Lettres (1993). His most celebrated recent works are the **Crown Fountain** in Millennium Park in Chicago, **Breathing** - a light sculpture for BBC Broadcasting House in London and **Dream** in St Helen's, Liverpool, which won The Marsh Award for Public Sculpture in 2009. Yorkshire Sculpture Park will host a major solo show by Plensa in 2011.

Chichester Cathedral:

Ancient and modern, this 900 year old Cathedral has architectural and artistic treasures from every century since its foundation, and is especially famous for its modern art. Open every day and all year with free entry and free guided tours. For further information about the Cathedral: www.chichestercathedral.org.uk telephone 01243 782595.

Modus Operandi:

Modus Operandi was founded in 1999 and is a leading independent agency for commissioning art in relation to architecture and the public realm. Modus Operandi aims to match the vision of artists with commissioners, places and publics. It produces permanent and temporary commissions, collaborations and interventions, based on creative strategies and appropriate selection procedures. Recent projects include commissions for St Martin-in-the-Fields, BBC Broadcasting House, Oxford Science Park, St John's College Oxford and the Olympic Park. For further information on Modus Operandi, please contact Vivien Lovell at Modus Operandi Art Consultants on 0207 490 0009, vivien@modusoperandi-art.com or see the website www.modusoperandi-art.com

The Brief for the Commission:

The brief for the commission asked for a contemporary interpretation of the resurrected Christ and called for the work to 'inspire a sense of contemplation and engage the imaginations of all who visit the Cathedral... an artwork that expresses new life, transformation and hope'. Each of the five short-listed artists responded with widely differing interpretations of the brief, as had been anticipated. The chosen location for the new commission is the space above the Arundel screen at the front of the nave, with the intention that the final commissioned artwork will be visible from the West door, whilst still maintaining views through to the East end of the Cathedral. The resulting artwork by Jaume Plensa will add to the Cathedral's international reputation as a bold patron of contemporary art within an ancient building.

Dean Walter Hussey (1909– 1985):

The commission marks the celebration of the centenary of Walter Hussey. Ordained in 1932, and appointed as Vicar of St Matthew's, Northampton in 1937, it was in Northampton that Hussey began to commission major contemporary artists, beginning with an anthem from Benjamin Britten and including a Madonna and Child by Henry Moore and Crucifixion by Graham Sutherland. Hussey's next post was Dean of Chichester Cathedral, which he held from 1955 until retirement in 1977. Hussey commissioned many of the 20th century artworks for which the Cathedral is now famous, including the stained glass window by Marc Chagall and the high altar tapestry by John Piper. In addition to regular worshippers, some 200,000 people visit the Cathedral each year, and are able to see these and other works free of charge. Hussey amassed an extraordinary private art collection, the basis for the founding of Pallant House Gallery in Chichester.

The Art Selection Panel Membership:

Chair: Timothy Llewellyn; Robert Pulley (Principal, West Dean College), Stefan van Raay (Director, Pallant House Gallery), Jean Jackson (Cathedral Restoration and Development Trust, Trustee), Matthew Saunders (Secretary to Ancient Monuments Society), Canon Dr Anthony Cane (Chancellor & Chapter Member), Canon Thomas Inman (Chapter Member), John Maine (Sculptor and Cathedrals Fabric Advisory Commission for England, Commissioner), Dr Colin Clark (Cathedral Council - Head Guide), Marguerite Saffery (Cathedral Community). Advised by Colin Kerr, Surveyor of the Fabric, and Vivien Lovell, Director of Modus Operandi.