

Sean Edwards

Permanent Public Sculpture [Artefact]

Author: Edwards, Sean (2014)

Title: Ghostsign [Artefact]

Date: 2014

Location: Cambridge, UK

Attachments: Images of the artwork and design proposals

URL: <https://futurecity.co.uk/portfolio/clay-farm/>

Abstract:

Permanent public commission for Clay Farm, Cambridge. Part of the Clay Farm and Glebe Farm development by Countryside Properties. Public art project curated by Future City. The Public artwork is a large scale 'painted' image celebrating and falsifying the farming heritage of this part of Clay Farm. It's design references the historical painted advertising hoardings of the late 19th/ early 20th Century that are found at various locations around Cambridge and point to imagined potential past uses of the buildings. This textual work makes reference to the tenant farming family that worked Clay Farm throughout the 20th Century. The sign details the dates the family took on the tenancy of Clay Farm, the crops they grew, and also the kindness that so many people spoke off with regards to Reg Cornwell, adding 'gleaning' to the 'produce' list. With the focus so closely tied to this family, the artwork explores the contemporary history of Trumpington through the lives of its inhabitants whilst questioning the notion of the 'monumental' within contemporary public art.

Description:

Produced as part of my work as Lead Artist on a public Commission with Future City in Cambridge Ghostsign is based on the early 20th century wall painted hoardings that were painted on the facades of the buildings. Through my research I discovered a number of these Ghostsigns located in Cambridge with a particularly strong example located on a just 2 miles from the proposed location of this work. These paintings often allow us to understand an activity that once took place in these buildings. Relating to the past uses of the land this permanent proposal will emulate these adverts, layering an invisible history that once occupied the site of Clay Farm. Acting as an important way finding tool the work will also form an integrate part of the new geography of the area.

The work celebrates the farming heritage of this part of Clay Farm making reference to the farming family that worked Clay Farm throughout the 20th Century. In research undertaken through an engagement with existing residents, Reginald Cornwell came up as an important figure in Trumpington and Clay Farm history. Known as a kind man, Cornwell, farmed up to 600 acres and during the war was praised for actively encouraging gleaning. From this research, which has included contact with the Cornwell, family I created a sign that is factually correct, detailing dates that the family took on the tenancy of Clay Farm, the crops they grew, and pointing to the Clay Farm as Trumpington through the address. It was

important to reference this due to the change in name of the new development that many existing residents feel uneasy about. I also chose to highlight, the kindness that so many people spoke off with regards to Reg Cornwell and added 'gleaning' to the 'produce' list. With the focus so closely tied to this family the artwork therefore explores the contemporary history of Clay Farm and Trumpington. The integration of the artwork into the fabric of the architecture embeds the artwork into ones fundamental understanding of the site and therefore, without any pomposity or monumentality, becomes a significant contribution to the residents understanding of the site both conceptually and historically, but also geographically in their day-to-day usage of the paths and roads.

