



The Olympic Park Murals

A unique collaboration between contemporary artist and British craftsmanship

British artist Clare Woods was invited by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to submit a written proposal for one of two Olympic Park public art commissions. She remembers, “clunking up the stairs” on the day of her presentation with lots of ceramic tile samples in her bag, a loose creative concept but a clear idea as to the team she would need to put together to achieve some 750 square metres of murals.

The result is a project which spanned more than two years and which Woods describes as a: “collaboration with the unique and hugely talented British tile company - Craven Dunnill Jackfield”. The two murals are Woods’s first major works in ceramics. Entitled *Carpenter’s Curve* and *Brick Field* they are part of the Art in the Park works and intended as a permanent legacy for the Park and surrounding communities now that the London Olympics are over.

The murals are staggeringly large and complex and are inspired by the original industrial site, historical maps of the area and Woods’s own experience from once having a studio close-by. The murals measure 757.2m² and feature over 30,000 tiles in a myriad of shapes, colours and sizes; the tiles took over six months to produce and involved 4.5 kilometres of intricate water jet cutting.

The artistic process was unique for Woods – she was not only working to a fixed budget and timeframe but had to trust Jackfield to translate her work into ceramics. She describes the project as a collaboration: “I saw the whole concept of the Olympic Park as a modern

day Festival of Britain – a platform to show off the best of our artists, craft makers, designers, architects and manufacturers. I therefore knew I wanted to work with a British manufacturer and, having worked previously on a very large scale building cladding design, I had learned that the relationship had to work from the outset; you have to be willing to meet up, talk through your ideas and feel confident that everyone understands their role. The team at Jackfield immediately understood the history and the importance of the commission – it was a unique collaboration”.

The murals were created using four ceramic tile decorating processes involving digital printing and pantone and glaze effects and were put together like giant jigsaws – over 1200m² of tiles were produced and cut, to achieve the required elements to make up the 750m² of murals.

Adrian Blundell, Head of Production at Craven Dunnill Jackfield led the team, which was not only responsible for creating the tiles but worked closely with the fixing contractor, representatives of the ODA, main contractor and ultimately delivered a work of art aesthetically true to Woods’s original: “We created a small team of key personnel and responded flexibly to whatever came our way; it was a case of establishing trust and empathy combined with a bottomless pit of technical know-how to resolve the countless issues that arose – it was an amazing experience”.

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The End

Images: a large selection of images is available on request.

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