

Conceptual Art in Motion

Created by Mercedes Uribe Gutierrez, dedicated to us all

'Conceptual Art in Motion' is my lockdown project. It features a series of quotes in colourful wooden letters formed from human figures. All of the letters were handcrafted by me, alone in my flat during the 'Covid-19' pandemic. This exhibition explores the universality of the human form and the power of words to connect and inspire us all.

Since I studied sculpture I have always been fascinated with the human form. The articulation of our bodies is so fundamental to how we express ourselves, communicate and interact as human beings.

I first designed my alphabet of figures for the 2012 Olympic Games. Where other artists had formed the alphabet from multiple figures I wanted to challenge myself to use a single body for each letter. By studying yoga I learnt how the body can bend into different shapes and, through lots of trial and error (I particularly struggled with F!) devised a full system of letters from A to Z.

When Lockdown happened the UK in 2020 we were forced into physical isolation. At the same time there was also an incredible sense of togetherness. Through volunteering, social media, banging our pots and pans for the NHS, staying home to protect the vulnerable, everyone played their role. As an artist, I felt my role was to create. By making these figures I could bring the whole world into my home and I wasn't alone any more. It was a beautiful representation of what we can achieve together - each wooden person is part of spelling out something meaningful.

Many of the quotes in the exhibition are taken from Max Ehrmann's poem 'Desiderata' - a poem which changed my life. I am originally from Colombia and moved to London in the 1970s to escape the political unrest, civil war and a strict Catholic upbringing. The words of 'Desiderata' became almost like a religion to me, replacing condemnation and shame with a generous, hopeful kind of wisdom. During lockdown, I made 1236 wooden letters to spell out entirety of the poem on my living room wall.

The other quotes which feature in the exhibition are from a variety of sources, from Dolly Parton to Steven Spielberg. Even if we have read them hundreds of times before, I believe the right quote has the power to challenge our thinking, change our perspective, or just to help us get through the day.

See more of my work at www.mercedesuribegutierrez.wordpress.com