

FUTURE ARCHAEOLOGY

By Henrietta Armstrong

My practice has been influenced by archaeology - considering what traces others have left behind and, in turn, what we will leave for future generations to decipher.

I'm drawn to man-made monolithic forms such as the Sound Mirrors dotted along the British coast, relics of a defunct technology. These parabolic concrete giants were designed to amplify the sound of enemy aircraft during WWI but became obsolete almost as soon as they were built as radar was invented. Similarly the stark geometric structure of electricity pylons speak to me. Standing tall against the barren wasteland with their arms outstretched to the sky, I imagine them being discovered by someone unaware of their intended purpose and consider how they would view them. Were they temple altars or totemic statues? The word Pylon means Egyptian gateway to the sun, if future civilisations assumed divine meaning would they in turn begin to worship them as we revere religious and pagan artifacts? By manipulating and mirroring photographs I have taken, I create digital drawings that have the aesthetic of futuristic mandalas. You can get lost staring at the shapes spinning out from the centre and they take on an almost sacred feel. Something so commonplace and overlooked in our landscape, becomes alien and beautiful.

In 3000 years, how will our ancestors, the survivors, interpret the objects that we have left behind? Our language potentially lost and indecipherable and all cyber technology destroyed. The landscape vastly changed with nature reclaiming derelict cities with their idle buildings and mountains of digital waste. How will these people differ from us?

While fabricating archaeological artifacts and relics I've looked into ceremonial practices that could be applied to them, considering rituals from the past and future. 'PETROSPHERES' are clay balls I've carved in numerous patterns, shapes and sizes. A documentary about a neolithic settlement at Skara Brae, in The Orkney Islands, galvanised my interest in the discovery of these ornate balls - carved from stone. Their function being unknown, this fascinated me, what was their purpose? Was this some of the first known art or were these magic or sacred objects involved in ceremonies? There is something remarkable about them, you want to pick them up and hold them. For me, the process of making them is a direct connection to our neolithic ancestors, there is something very primal about working with clay.

I have recently gained a public commission to create a series of stone sculptures that will be sited at the top of Pendle Hill in Lancashire - famous for the Pendle witch trials in 1612, as part of the Forest of Bowland's (AONB) Landscape Partnership project for Pendle Hill. It is a provocative project where I will be drawing from the history, folklore and geology surrounding the hill to incorporate aspects into the work. The prospect of creating sculptures that will exist in the public realm long after I've gone, feels very powerful. Each of the 12 stones will be carried up Pendle Hill as part of a performance, culminating in a ceremony or ritual, like a rite of passage. There will be covert messages underneath the sculptures that, once laid, cannot be seen. Only people present at the laying of the stones will be privy to the information, creating legend as the story of the hidden message is passed on through word of mouth, only to be discovered one day by the archaeologists of the future.

Henrietta's sculptures are due to be laid on Pendle Hill between July - August 2018, and her work is currently exhibited on The Mall Galleries online gallery [Buy Art | Buy Now?](#)

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The Forest of Bowland have worked closely with the arts organisation In-Situ to develop an integrated and embedded arts and engagement programme for the Pendle Hill Partnership and the Summit Stones will be one of the first art projects to be realised. You can find out more info about the Pendle Hill Project here www.forestofbowland.com/Pendle-Hill-LP and here www.in-situ.org.uk