EMMA RODGERS
INTERVIEW WITH THE LADY BEHIND THE CILLA STATUE
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Congratulations on the success of the Cilla statue. How did you get the gig?

I was approached December 2015, Joe Anderson Mayor of Liverpool had met with the Willis family and Peter Price to discuss a sculpture that the family wanted to gift to the City as a small thank you for all the support and comfort expressed by the city, when their mother passed away.

Peter had recommended that her sons should meet with me.

Angela Samata and I met with the family in January 2016, providing a research document containing images of different looks through the decades of her diverse career. This focused on signature poses, hairstyles and clothing. I felt that as someone who had achieved and lived her life so much to the full, would be wonderful to document this in some way within the sculpture. So I suggested (incorporating details into the clothing, song titles, lyrics and notes, Calciphrases, programmes, facts and phrases from herself and friends.

All along the main thing on my mind, I remember from the original meeting was thinking “she had great legs, you have to feature those legs!”

How did the collaboration with Andy Edwards come about?

It was my suggestion to work with artist Andy Edwards on this piece. He recently sculpted the Beatles on Liverpool’s rooffront. I have known him for 15 years as we both use Castle Fine Art Foundry and I thought our different styles would work well together on this piece.

Why didn’t you portray Cilla as she was in the noughties?

Robert, Ben and Jack felt that the 60's era of her life would be most fitting as the sculpture was to be positioned outside the old entrance to the Cavern where she once worked and also performed. Her sons thought it most fitting as whenever they were back in Liverpool with their Mum, she would always take them to the Cavern and point to this spot explaining “that’s the original entrances to the Cavern”, when they were looking around Liverpool for a suitable site and there was an alarm going off in Mathew Street. When Ben stood in the spot by the old Cavern entrance the alarm stopped of which they took that as a sign of approval.

Where do you start with something that big?

Andy and I started to develop a range of maquettes some based on her singing others on poses for photo shoots and of course her signature pose with her arms outstretched. I worked with my designer Gina Kirby from the family we built up images in relief. I also inscribed text into the panels covering many aspects of her life.

Did you just work from photographs?

No, once we started to scale up the sculpture in clay we worked from life models, for months I had been surreptitiously sizing up friends who I thought possessed the perfect individual body parts for me to model from. Thus Kate Eugeni with her amazing arms, Sue Wright’s elegant hands and Zara Dyers fantastic legs all blend together to make the perfect “Cilla”.

I then approached and enlisted Alan Henry my hairdresser based in Anna Roberts Salon. We had gone for the sixties bob. Robert had very kindly given me a contact sheet to work from which was taken the very first time! Vidal Sassoon had cut Cilla’s hair. The look of joy and excitement on her face in those images a young girl on the crest of the wave of what was to be an incredible career. We just had to work from it!

Kate, Sue, Zara and Alan were brilliant working with us in the often very cold and industrial foundry.

Andy and I became Alan’s fingers, we were under strict direction. He brought hairdressing scissors to the foundry, sometime actually using them to cut into the clay.

Lots of people have made reference to the clever creases in the dress, almost as if the bronze was actual fabric, was that from one of Cilla’s photographs?

No. Once the basic figure was there I clothed the sculpture in a sixties dress and we photographed her from all angles looking at how the fabric would naturally sit and move on the form. We removed the dress and working from our photos built it back up in clay.

The design of the dress is a hybrid of some of her favourite Mary Quant dresses. We divide the squares and working from favourite photos from the family we build up images in relief. I also inscribed text into the panels covering many aspects of her life.

You have researched the finest details but not all are obvious, what is Cilla standing on?

Cilla is stood on a 45 record of “You’re My World” as her base, also placed on the record is an anemone which she held in both of her hands and Zara Dyers fantastic legs all blend together to make the perfect “Cilla”.

Cilla is on a 45 record of ““You’re My World” as her base, also placed on the record is an anemone which she held in both of her wedding bouquets.

What was it like working with Cilla’s family?

It was a real pleasure to work with the family and they gave us so much information and support Robert would regularly visit the foundry throughout these stages, so they would be able to advise us as we went along. Once he was happy with the sculpture it was molded and then cast in bronze, the metal was finished and then it was ready for me to patinate.

The piece was then installed and ready for the unveiling on Monday 16th January of which is the Caverns 60th Birthday. The Cavern could not have made us more welcome in their Birthday Celebrations the day “Cilla” came home.
Is bronze your favourite medium?
I enjoy working in materials that push boundaries

Who or what inspires you as an artist?
I am very inspired by nature and its intricacies and artifact that have not been fully restored.
There are many artists that I admire Elizabeth Frink, Lucian Freud, Marc Quinn are to name but a few of the many artists that I admire.

What is your favourite subject to sculpt?
I like sculpture based on life and energy, capturing a moment in time.

Where can we find out more about the work of Emma Rodgers? Do you exhibit locally as well as internationally?
I exhibit internationally, I have also worked on film sets and structural pieces for interior. Locally National Museums and galleries have my work in their collection and also the Bluecoat Display Centre.

Emma’s Work.
Emma designs and produces the shields for Liverpool Football Club. These shields have been presented to the likes of Pele, one of the greatest footballers of all time, and have also been presented to clubs in pre season friendlies. Emma was also commissioned to create the ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ award for Steven Gerrard.

The Liver Bird is the iconic symbol of the city of Liverpool.
Mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson commissioned Emma to make a 21st century Liver Bird for exhibition at the 2014 International Business Festival held in Liverpool. Images of the Liverpool skyline are a common theme in Emma’s sculpture and she is known internationally for depiction of birds of prey in her Sky Gods collection. Being entrusted by the Mayor of Liverpool to create a Liver Bird Sky God that combines the story of a proud history enjoying 21st century renaissance has been a humbling and exciting honour.

Emma’s 1.5 metre Liver Bird is made in copper as a deliberate act of homage to the famous Liver Building’s Twin Birds made in copper by Carl Bartels a German who moved to Liverpool in the 1880s. Emma’s bird has feet cast in bronze and stands atop a bronze globe representing Liverpool’s sure-footed confidence in it’s new millennium global outlook.

The individual feathers of the wings have been shaped from copper mesh which allow light and air to flood through the sculpture. The riveting is a nod from Emma to the strength derived from a great past. Her Liver Bird is of course a metaphor for Liverpool herself with the mesh showing Liverpool is not only open for business but building to harness the winds of global fortune to power the city into the long 21st century.
“I was lucky enough to be approached by Marvel Films with a view to designing and making sculptures as part of the set for their forthcoming film Guardians of the Galaxy,” said Emma.

“The sculptures would be featured in a laboratory and museum set, based on Knowhere, a fictitious mining planet, which also serves as the headquarters of The Collector, played in the film by Benicio Del Toro. In the movie The Collector travels the galaxy cataloguing the different artefacts and relics he considers to be important in history. As such, he has a wide variety of rare or unique items at his disposal. The sculptures I created can be seen as part of The Collector’s personal possessions. For this I was asked to create pieces that were not instantly recognizable and they had to feel ‘other worldly.’ I took inspiration from museum artefacts as they have a timeless quality and laboratory specimens, as I felt they would help me strip back details and focus on what was important to the piece. One of the pieces created was Man & Ape, influenced by Darwin’s theory of evolution. It is two porcelain skulls layered with details using found objects including shells for teeth, latex, wire and threads for flesh. Another is Mother and Child, where I have aimed to capture the relationship between the animals and their offspring.”

The pieces range from small table top size sculptures through to an 8ft bronze puppet.

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