

Speech given at Wellcome Trust, Genome Campus.

It has been pointed out that this sculpture has a socialist message and whilst this is so it doesn't necessarily mean that I'll be voting new labour on Thursday.

I've been asked to say a few words about how this sculpture came about and what it means. I was contacted in October 2003 and met Dave Scott and Phillipa Towlson here at Hinxton. Throughout the project they have provided tremendous support. I was shown some trees that were set aside for a sculpture which had been cleared. They turned out to be beech and, because beech will not last outside, the proposal to use the timber had to be made for an internal mural. The wall on which it is now hung had an alternative proposal and at that time was only around 20 ft wide. After the wood was milled early in 2004 to a range of thicknesses here on site, using a mobile milling machine that had only just arrived from the states, it was stacked behind the site offices and was moved into the underground carpark in September 2004.

The maquette that was shown to the user group initiated some discussion as to the identity of the individuals in the crowd. I initially felt that some reference could be made to the team that worked on the genome here and indeed that image of common interest and progress remained. But the individuals became generalised into figures of different age and type. A theme developed of birth and development, of the extended family and of interdependence. One important idea that developed from the user group was a sense of forward movement. I have particularly given the children forward momentum. In turn there is support for the elderly and a sense of an infinite number of people moving forward with reference to generations to come.

This particular hot potatoe was handed to the construction team when carving began in September 2004. A large and unplanned for problem was dealt with positively and with fantastic support. Working on a building site is mostly enormously rewarding. The available wall space grew to over 30ft when the lecture theatre was turned around. There was no shortage of commentary from the work force who were the most diverse audience I have ever worked with. African, Irish and Eastern European opinion as to the meaning and expense of the sculpture was offered on many occasions with only one negative comment, a tribute to the curiosity of the skilled workman's mind. I felt adopted and valued every sign of interest and concern. Being on site also allowed me to 'fit' the sculpture to its environment with the support of the excellent frame that was provided by the engineers with Wellcome footing the bill. I must at this point thank Julian and Patrick from Mace who with others gave me guidance and advice and without whom the sculpture could simply not have been made. That they treated each new problem with humour and understanding is a tribute to them. I would also like to thank Richard Hardwicke, my consultant engineer and his wife Kathryn, my 'mole' at Hinxton Assistance from Matt Sanderson with the heavy lifting and fixing was effective and safe. The whole job has been accident free, again due to advice and support from Mace.

The sculpture has two layers and is formed from around 40 pieces, some of them very heavy indeed. The whole thing comes in at around 2 tons. One should see the interaction of the wood grain and the figures themselves as intentional- just as we all carry the natural pattern of the genome within us. There is a compositional device of the irregular bottom line and the fine detailed line of the top. When regularity is

closely examined irregularity appears. From the side it appears like an abstract form which begins to reveal its figurative nature as you walk around to the front. With strong side lighting the full three dimensional impression is apparent. The figures are separated by boards and edges cut to the profile of the tree trunks. The wood and the figures share equal billing.

There are clearly references to belief in the central figure, a woman and child, but she is surrounded by supporters and children in various stages of growth. The central mystery of reproduction and inheritance is being shown. My hope and belief is that this research will benefit all humanity. But for that to happen there must be a sense of us all living and working together for the good of all. In many ways this site itself represents an international cooperation towards a common good and I hope that this sculpture can, in its way, contribute to and reinforce that message.