

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILL STOREY

Will Storey is a relief artist working on the South Coast of England, UK. Here, he reflects on his transition from teaching to artistry, layering woodwork with modern laser-cut designs, the narratives behind his geometric forms, and fostering community through art.

CG With over 20 years of experience as a teacher of Design, Technology, and Art, how did this experience influence your work as well as evolve your passion for fine art?

WS My experience as a teacher has had a substantial influence on me and my artistic journey but I tend not to share my art with those who I teach. I thoroughly enjoy instilling a passion for practical application and I am a firm believer that these skills are paramount for the fruitful development of young people.

There have been moments when my personal fulfilment from teaching has waned. I feel a sense of hypocrisy encouraging my students to think outside the box, be creative, and avoid design fixation, while not achieving these goals for myself. This realisation sparked my ambition to actively pursue my artwork.

CG Since you combine a variety of techniques and materials in your wooden reliefs, is there a particular significance behind choosing woodworking to express your subject matters?

WS I have always loved working with wood and remain fascinated with how versatile and adaptable the material can be. There is also something symbolic that links us to our ancestry when transforming materials created by nature.



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The intricacy in much of my work pushes the material to its limitations and each relief layer can be fragile until bonded together. Birch veneered plywood is sustainable and provides perfect physical attributes and working properties suited to making layered reliefs.

CG Can you walk us through your process of combining handcrafting and laser cutting to achieve the intricate three-dimensional effects in your reliefs, including any challenges you may have faced.

WS The meticulous design process begins with Illustrator, where each layer is created and then converted into a pathway for a CO2 laser to follow. Once cut, each relief is carefully finished by hand. This involves “weeding” to remove unwanted elements, such as sanding to eliminate scorch marks, and priming for stain or paint. The fragility of each element presents numerous challenges, demanding patience, care, and attention to detail. Each layer is then bonded and pressed onto the next, one at a time. I implement various techniques before the final artwork build, including veneering, gilding, stencil detailing, and spray painting.

CG Your pieces are often dreamlike journeys of imagination and mindfulness. What inspires these narrative journeys and how do you develop them within your layered



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wood?

WS Each of my artistic creations begins with a feeling, a thought, or often a moment of nostalgia. I am fascinated by blending and harmonising contrasting geometric forms in the design of each relief. Often, shapes intertwine or interlock as they progress through each layer, diminishing with depth. This process challenges my three-dimensional vision and, much like Sudoku for some, provides a peaceful, mindful experience.

CG Can you go into detail about the narratives within specific pieces, like “Japanese Umbrella,” “Chaos of Calm,” and the geometric design of “Reflections of Perspective”?

WS “Japanese Umbrella” narrates a journey towards inner calm, equilibrium and emotional wellbeing. A floral silhouetted figure intertwined with the spokes of a transparent umbrella and a twisting dragon. This depicts a fictitious façade of beauty and an inner battle hidden beneath the surface. A demonstration of the importance to share one’s true self to others to achieve emotional wellbeing.

“Reflections of Perspective” is a partly symmetrical composition blending Art Deco and Art Nouveau design. It features iconic architecture set between reflected silhouettes facing each other. This artwork narrates the important relationship between natural and

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man-made geometry, celebrating our engineering feats.

“Chaos of Calm” personifies a dream that drifts between chaos and tranquillity in a fraction of time. The composition explores an erratic, unpredictable journey through stark, diminishing geometric shapes and patterns, illustrating how quickly reality can shift direction.

CG Could you explain why you have chosen to finish your pieces in a monochromatic white paint?

WS I like to use a range of finishes for my artwork, including bright bold colours, wood stain, and natural wooden veneers. Painting in a monochromatic finish, in particular, draws attention to the negative space, which is clearly defined and accentuated by the strong shadows cast through the layers. This approach allows for a new appreciation from different viewing angles, as each detail or edge can soften or sharpen with the change in the trajectory of light.

CG You were able to build you own studio on the South Coast of England due to a successful grassroots crowdfunding campaign, how did this influence your artistic practice?

WS My artistic journey was sparked by a growing desire for fulfilment and a thirst for a creative outlet. A crowdfunding campaign proved to be a great option, allowing me to create art for a local community of supporters, friends, and family in exchange for their investment in tools and equipment.

CG In addition to this, how important do you see the role of art in fostering community ties?

WS Art holds profound significance—it can offer hope, provide solace, and help build and reinforce community bonds. I was honoured to be commissioned to create a large 3D wooden sculpture for the NHS, now

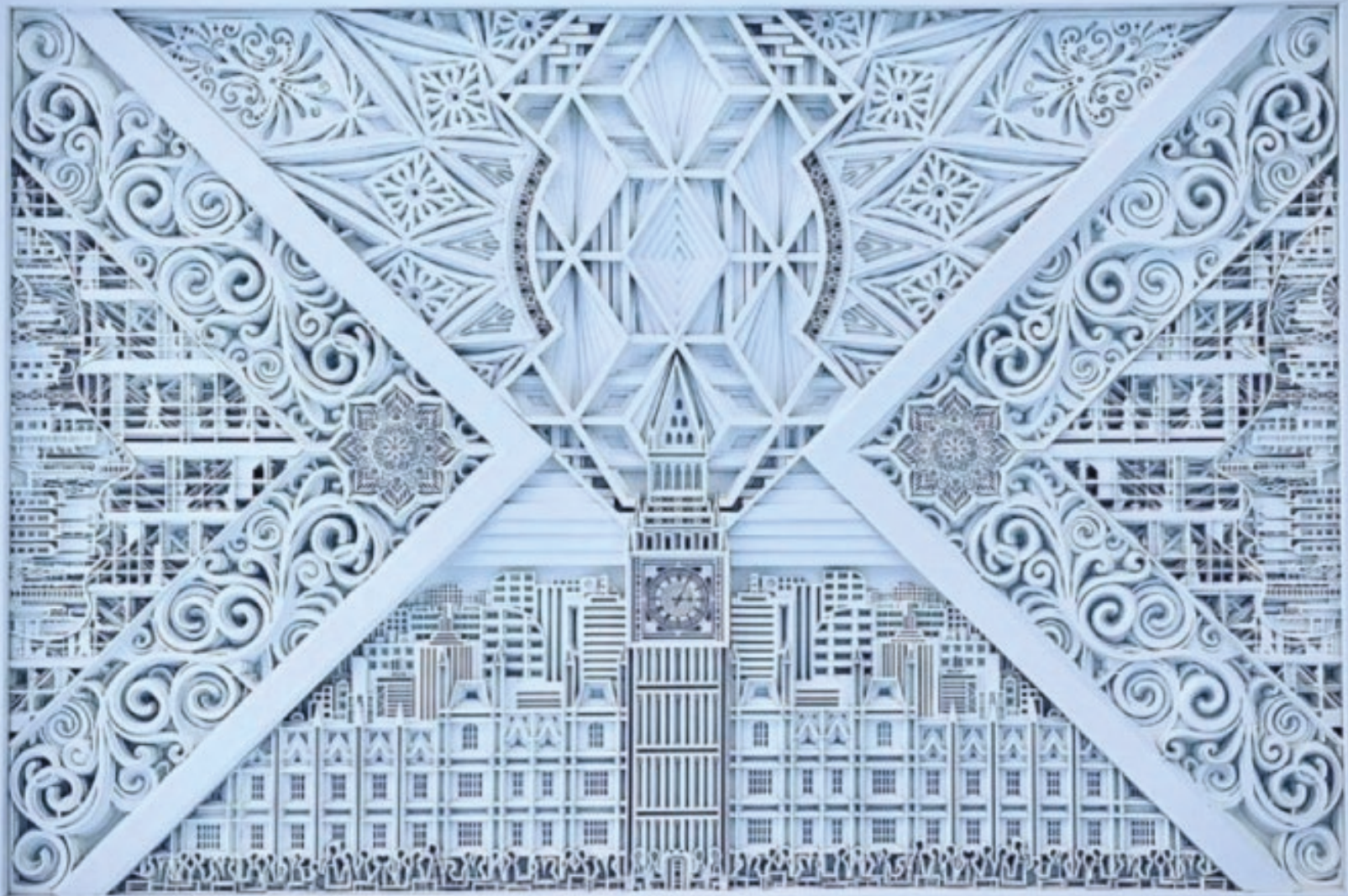
displayed in a community hospital in Sidcup. Meeting the local community during the opening ceremony for the new ward deeply moved me. Art has the unique ability to evoke personal emotions while also uniting and strengthening human connections.

CG What response do you hope to evoke in viewers with your work?

WS I will always have a different relationship with my art compared to those who view my work. Like any artist or sculptor, I naturally revisit the emotions and experiences involved in the creation process rather than focusing solely on the finished outcome. However, I do hope that every viewer can also form their own appreciation or connection to my art.

CG How do you see your technique evolving in the future, are there any narratives you would like to explore further in your works?

WS Moving into a larger studio space in September will mark a significant expansion of opportunities for me as I look forward to unlocking new horizons. I have a wealth of exciting creative ideas and iterations of my processes that I’m eager to explore fully. This transition promises to provide me with the time and opportunity to delve into these pursuits with enthusiasm.



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