

“You don't build statues to fleeting love affairs”

**Preserving and mythologizing
the UK's sporting heroes**



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Talk outline

- ✓ A model for statue design and presentation.
- ✓ Brief design overview.
- ✓ Case studies.
- ✓ Cultural comparisons.
- ✓ The future of sport statue design.

A Model for Sporting Statue Design

Subject:

- Sport and role
- Achievements (and failures)
- Moments of achievement
- Life story
- Physical features
- (Stereo)typical poses?
- Extent of fame
- Captured images



Design of visual image:

- Sculptural Genre
- Design type
- Material
- Detail
- Decoration

Presentation of visual image:

- Plinth
- Plaque or plinth inscription
- Accessibility
- Siting



Promoter:

- Motivation
- Funding



Intended Site of Reception:

- Viewer culture(s)
- Site features
- Site type



Creator:

- Sculptor
- Fashion
- Available materials

A Model for Sporting Statue Design

- ✓ The resulting design is not a complete artefact of the subject and their achievements, but a partial narrative based on moments and elements of the subject's career and life that the promoter and sculptor wish, or the site of reception makes it appropriate to foreground - and those which it is considered appropriate to conceal or forget.
- ✓ The contribution of each design antecedent will vary between statues, and antecedents will interact.
- ✓ How the viewer interprets (or 'reads') the statue may differ from the way the promoter or sculptor intended them to.

Sporting Statue Design: Overview

- ▼ A grass-roots revolt against post-modernism; a rush to reclaim one of the oldest, most traditional and conservative forms of art and worship imaginable.



Caesar Augustus



Caesar Robson

Sporting Statue Design: Overview

- ✓ Sport is theatrical drama, increasingly packaged as entertainment, mythological dynamics, dramatic moments highlighted.
- ✓ Statue designs reflect this:
 - ✓ Faction statues.
 - ✓ Flashbulb memory... and video memory.



Sporting Statue Design: Overview



Sporting Statue Design: Overview



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 1

Thierry Henry

*Emirates Stadium,
Arsenal FC
December 2011*

*Promoted/Funded by Arsenal FC
Design by 20-20
Sculpture by MDM Ltd.*



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 1

Thierry Henry

Impacts on design:

- ✓ Funding source.
- ✓ Designer/‘Sculptor’.
- ✓ Subject: fame, glamour, image and modernity.
- ✓ Site type with reference to existing branding materials.



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 1

Thierry Henry

Design Features:

- ✓ Interactivity through height and posture; enhanced through backdrop... 'join Thierry in the team'.
- ✓ Video memory.
- ✓ Moments as much as people – the former may mean more to the committed fan.



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 1

Thierry Henry

Design Features:

- ✓ Image foregrounded ahead of interpretation.
- ✓ Multiple levels of understanding: a hierarchy of fandom, flattering the 'superfan'.



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough vs Brian Clough vs Brian Clough

- ✓ Comparing statues with the same fundamental roots can highlight differences e.g. the ways in which statues of the same person differ will highlight contextual issues.
- ✓ The three Brian Clough statues form a useful comparison set since they combine the same subject with each of the three principal instigator types and site types.

Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough vs Brian Clough vs Brian Clough

Impacts on design:

- ✓ One subject, three different types of statue promoters: Home Town vs Fans vs Club. Each want to emphasise their place in the Clough story. Rivalry for ownership of Clough. Heightened rivalry between Derby and Nottingham?
- ✓ Location: home town parkland, club's town city centre and club ground offer different audiences and interpretations.
- ✓ Subject's character.

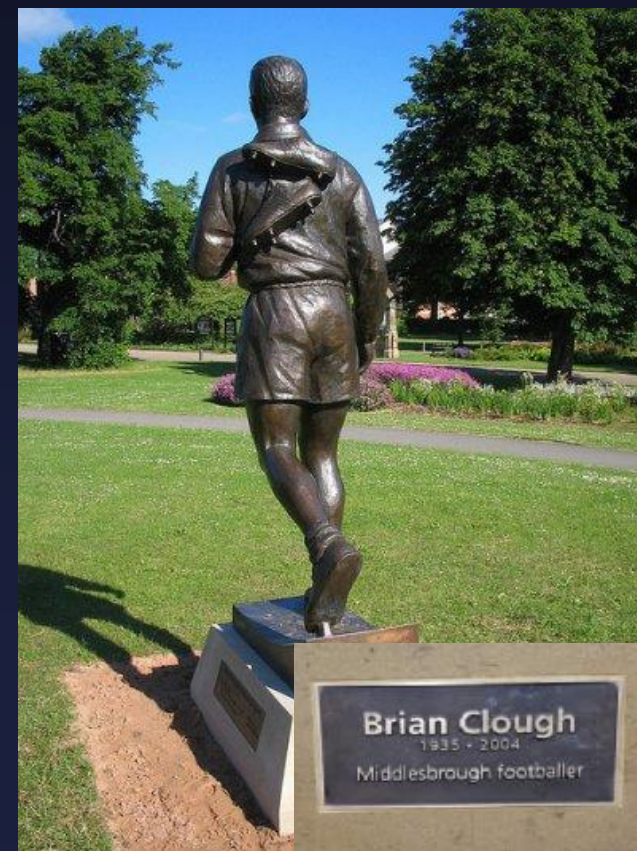
Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Middlesbrough

*Albert Park,
Middlesbrough
May 2007*

*Promoted by
Local Authority
Funded by Public
Money/Appeal*

*Sculpture by
Vivien Mallock*



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Middlesbrough

Foregrounded and backgrounded narratives

- ✓ Clough as player, not manager:
 - ✓ Dressed in kit.
 - ✓ No reference in design or plaques to his future managerial successes or clubs.
- ✓ Relationship with city:
 - ✓ Walking to training, emphasising his place in the town.
 - ✓ Plaques portray Clough's history as Middlesbrough's and ONLY Middlesbrough's.

Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Middlesbrough

Foregrounded and backgrounded narratives

- ✓ Working class background and a more innocent time: boots slung over the shoulder.
- ✓ Man of the people, a grounded, located figure... Middlesbrough, a rooted, humble culture. Minimal plinth adds to this.

Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Nottingham

*City Centre,
Nottingham
November 2008*

*Promoted by
Nottingham
Forest FC Fans
Funded by
Public Appeal*

*Sculpture by
Les Johnson*



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Nottingham

Foregrounded and backgrounded narratives

✓ Personality

- ✓ Base quotes enable Clough to have conversation with fans. Loved for what he said as much as what he did? Personality brought out as opposed to achievements.
- ✓ Wearing legendary green sweater – fans need knowledge to read statue completely. A personal touch and hidden reference point that accentuates the bond between fan and subject.

Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Nottingham

Foregrounded and backgrounded narratives

- ✓ Relationship with fans – and city:
 - ✓ Pose shows Clough celebrating with fans/applauding crowd.
 - ✓ Minimal plinth – man of the people.
- ✓ Fan statue - but city location. Football not foregrounded in design or plinth inscription, which refers to a wider honour, not football success. Clough more than a football manager in Nottingham: a voice of the city.

Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Derby County FC

*Pride Park,
Derby County FC
August 2010*

*Promoted and
Funded by
Derby County FC*

*Sculpture by
Andy Edwards*



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Derby County FC

Foregrounded and backgrounded narratives

- ✓ Derby County FC - winners:
 - ✓ Triumph design featuring league trophy.
 - ✓ Grandiose statue to celebrate club success: high plinth and large (excessive?) landscaping.

Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 2

Brian Clough, Derby County FC

Foregrounded and backgrounded narratives

- ✓ Redevelopment of area:
 - ✓ Name of stadium plaza dominates top of plinth.
 - ✓ Copious sponsor information on plinth.
- ✓ Clough and Taylor partnership.
- ✓ Future successes partially backgrounded – mentioned on plinth but not where they occurred.

Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 3

Jimmy Guthrie vs Steve Hislop

- ✓ Two motorcycle heroes from different eras but same home town.
- ✓ Statue designs and presentation illustrate differing focus of fans and local people, and changes in presentation over time.

Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 3

Jimmy Guthrie, Hawick

*Jimmy Guthrie
Hawick
February 1939*

*Funded by
Public
Subscription*

*Sculpture by
Thomas
Clapperton*



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 3

Steve Hislop, Hawick

*Steve Hislop
Hawick
June 2005*

*Funded by
Fans*

*Sculpture by
David Annand*



Sporting Statue Design: Case Study 3

Jimmy Guthrie vs Steve Hislop

- ✓ Clear decrease in plinth height: respect and reverence in commemoration less formally defined; interactivity with statue considered more important.
- ✓ Hislop statue has far more interpretative material.
- ✓ Hislop plaques detail every major race win. Statue funded by motorcycle racing fans and biker groups who would appreciate these achievements.
- ✓ Guthrie's achievements were possibly less celebrated: sportsmen less venerated, media coverage far less. His statue reflects a local hero.

Cultural Comparisons

UK realism

- ✓ Every subject-specific sporting statue in the UK is naturalist, figurative.
 - ✓ A political statement against modern art?
 - ✓ An acknowledgement of (perceived) public preference?
 - ✓ A fear of upsetting family and fans?
 - ✓ Statues often commissioned by fans or clubs, not 'art professionals'?
 - ✓ A lack of imagination?

Cultural Comparisons

UK realism

The thing is that people want them to be so traditional... I did designs for John Charles a while back that made it so much more dynamic...but I work quite obediently when it comes to the client and give them what they want really.

The families are so important, with public sculptures it's so important that you don't offend in any way... you've got to be really respectful of the community that the sculpture's going in, your client, and the different clients that are involved. It's a balancing game.

Chris Kelly, Sculptor

Cultural Comparisons

UK realism

People's memories are very strange. They memorise people through other ages, so either TV images or more strikingly the photographic images, the memory of an event is really strong with people, but in terms of details they rely on the still image, which becomes iconic

I don't like working from still images, sculpture is far more complex than that, but because you've got this history, it's generally an image of them lifting up a cup, and it sears within the minds and memories of supporters and the public alike. And to actually step outside that is really difficult.

Chris Kelly, Sculptor

Cultural Comparisons

UK realism

I did the Queen Mother's memorial in the Mall, and the important thing to get right was obviously the sort of stance, the head and the bust, but the rest was just robes.

But with a football sculpture the whole figure is a portrait, because someone like George Best has the very slight body of a ballet dancer, almost. Whereas Bobby Charlton, who was older, had the body of a robust player. If you don't get the body right it doesn't look like the person. It's not the easiest portrait in the world to do. I would sort of liken it to how sculpture started, with Roman athletes.

Philip Jackson, Sculptor

Cultural Comparisons

European surrealism?



Cultural Comparisons

European surrealism?



The Future of Sport Statue Design

The 4th dimension?



The Future of Sport Statue Design

Interactivity: the statue as you want it?

The Future of Sport Statue Design

