

# COUNTRY LIFE

EVERY WEEK

OCTOBER 26, 2022

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# In fine form

Lucy Denton investigates how art incorporated in development adds or detracts from property appeal

**I**T'S all about place-making', says Hamish Mackie, the Oxfordshire-based sculptor who was commissioned in 2014 to model the six bronze life-and-a-quarter size bolting horses at The Berkeley Group's Goodman's Fields development in Aldgate, London E1. The award-winning landmark composition cleverly references what were once open fields let for livery grazing in 1598 by a Mr Goodman. 'I modelled each without a plinth to make the experience more accessible and emphasised movement,' says Mr Mackie. 'The Russian Arab is rearing, others are running through water and, if you're on a bus, you'll get eyeballed by a Spanish Andalusian.' These exquisitely formed equine figures of different breeds ('which gives interest for international visitors,' adds Mr Mackie) are installed on a sweeping curve flowing through the development's Piazza, overlooked by new homes and offices. 'It was worth the investment,' reveals Justin Tibaldi, executive director at The Berkeley Group, 'and we know it adds value to the apartments above.'

The inclusion of artworks in modern housing schemes, as well as refreshing



Hamish Mackie's horses at Aldgate (above) and Henry Moore's *Old Flo* in Canary Wharf (left) show how art can enhance city living



age-old sites, is a flourishing trend, often very innovatively done, sometimes a wasted gesture. But enhancing the built environment with artistic citations can be powerfully transformative in the right setting. Well-thought-out sculpture, murals, use of enamel work, paints, even historic-style lettering, can have benefits for residents, up-and-coming artists and endangered crafts, as well as enriching the broader public realm. Hugh Petter, director at Adam Architecture, is master-planner and co-ordinating architect of the Duchy of Cornwall development at Nansledan, a new town extension to Newquay, where a bright-yellow, 10ft-high seahorse made by a zinc specialist enhances the highest point of the Chi Morvargh building, a superlatively crisp Art Deco structure that overlooks the square. 'It creates a strong identity, which, in turn, creates a distinctive sense of place, as well as adding aesthetic value. It provides a point of orientation,' notes Mr Petter, 'and you can animate the skyline.'

There are many things to consider when assimilating and installing sculpture, from location and architecture to access and materials. →



# Properties of the week

'Artworks absolutely affect the price of property,' says Nick Vaughan, head of Greater London residential development at Savills, 'but it's best when it means something to everyone. Unless it's done badly, it generally has a positive impact, especially when it's a unique commission.' And size matters: monuments should not be lost among monumental buildings. At Embassy Gardens at Nine Elms, SW11, a development of 2,000 homes, the curatorial programme overseen by art historian Sir Norman Rosenthal and Ballymore Group chairman and chief executive Sean Mulryan has rightly embraced large-scale contemporary works. Artists including Sarah Lucas seek to represent the geographical provenance of an area close to the modern American Embassy on an impressive scale.

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However, Tracy Jenkins, public-art manager at ArtUK, warns that 'although works that are deeply rooted in the history of the area tend to stand the test of time, the concern for many communities is the legacy, how it will appear 20 years down the line, the future cost of maintenance and ownership. Water features are problematic: often they break down or are decommissioned'. Damaged, abandoned, meaningless works that have not been maintained detract from what might otherwise be a pleasing backdrop and do not make for a good selling point. With this in mind, the curated sculpture trail at Chelsea Barracks has been designed as a rolling programme of regularly renewed works, which has included pieces by Barbara Myers, Jason deCaires and, now, Jill Berelowitz. Rupert des Forges, head of prime central London developments at Knight Frank, says that the 'overarching vision here is to allow the public into what was previously closed off', creating an estate environment of low-density, low-rise buildings with seven new garden squares in central London, and an emphasis on good-quality materials. 'The sculptural installation is definitely a more proactive, high-standard approach', he adds, 'and is a serious component of the whole scheme.' With increasing interest in sculptural aesthetics, this could be the shape of things to come. 🐘



A pair of large profile heads by Paul Vanstone is among modern sculptures forming part of a rolling programme of regularly renewed works on the curated trail at Chelsea Barracks

## The shape of things

Consider the historic provenance of a place. Identity is best reinforced via sculpture or other artworks that reference what has gone before

There is potential to create a landmark development using art installations that augment a strong sense of place and character

Be sure to think about long-term impact, durability of materials used and what it will look like in a few years' time: water features require more maintenance and are often the most vulnerable to decline

Have spatial awareness: understand the form

of existing or new architecture, open spaces and the public realm, if there is one, and how to orientate artworks in relation to the built environment

Rotating the artworks, rather than installing fixed sculpture, can also result in increased visual interest on a housing development