

THOMAS J PRICE

Gareth Harris, 'Sculpture carves out a new market in London', Financial Times, 12 July 2018



Thomas J Price, *Numen (Shifting Votive) One and Two*, 2016, Installation view at Sculpture in the City 2018, Under the Leadenhall Building, London. Photo by Nick Turpin

Many members of the public pondering, appreciating and touching the sculptures dotted around Regent's Park in London are probably unaware that the works sited in the popular green space for this year's Frieze Sculpture project are for sale. The free alfresco display of 25 pieces organised by Frieze art fair will be on show in the park until October 7, extending its presence into the summer months for the second year running.

Fifteen artists have made new works for the show, including Rana Begum, whose "*No. 814*" (2018) — a phalanx of coloured laminated glass panels — throws a rainbow of colours on to the parched lawns. Other new pieces include the cartoonish "*Holiday Home*" (2018) by Richard Woods, a wry comment on the second-home market in holiday hot spots.

Woods is evangelical about the power of art placed in the public realm. "When we view public artworks, we are often doing so without premeditated opinions or assumptions," he argues. The work is available for £35,000 (mini versions of "*Holiday Home*" are available with Alan Cristea gallery in London for £4,000).

Fifty proposals were submitted for Frieze Sculpture, which Clare Lilley, the display's curator and the director of programme at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, whittled down to

the final selection. "This indicates how Frieze Sculpture, in its three-month summer form, has become an important platform for outdoor sculpture, enabling galleries to garner collector interest prior to the art fair in October," she says.

"*Senzenina*" (2018), by the South African artist Haroon Gunn-Salie, a stand-out piece, commemorates the 34 miners killed in the Marikana massacre of 2012. "As a social activist and a sculptor, showing his work in public settings is central to Gunn-Salie's practice," says a spokeswoman for Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg. "There are four editions of the work. One is sold. Two editions in MI are priced at \$150,000. Two editions in bronze are priced at \$275,000."

It is all about exposure, says Matt Watkins, the co-founder of Parafin gallery in London, which is showing Hugo Wilson's bronze, baroque sculpture "*Pact*" (2017-18). The gallerist says that it is a financial commitment for a "young and relatively small gallery but a great opportunity to be bold, and show work for a much longer duration than a classic fair position". Wilson's bronzes are priced between £20,000 and £200,000.

Parafin has also shown works in Sculpture in the City, another free sculpture event located across town in London's Square Mile. There is crossover between the two initiatives: UK artist Thomas J. Price showed his "*Numen (Shifting Votive*

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One, Two & Three)” works (2016) — imposing busts depicting majestic black men — last year at Frieze Sculpture. The same pieces are on show in the eighth edition of Sculpture in the City, which fills the streets and alleys of the capital’s financial hub with an eclectic array of sculptural pieces.

Price’s stately busts, sited under the Leadenhall Building, are turning heads in the City. His “Numen” works are available for acquisition, says a spokeswoman for London-based Hales Gallery, which represents the artist (his large, outdoor sculptures are priced between £50,000 and £200,000).

The initiative is a lucrative platform for galleries and artists. “It is a rotating urban sculpture park,” says the project’s co-founder Stella Ioannou. “Last year, 421,000 people viewed the works, which are seen and re-interpreted in a new context.” She stresses that 357 project submissions from 54 countries were put forward in 2017 (an advisory committee selects the final roster).

Nancy Rubins, Miroslaw Balka and Gabriel Lester are also among the 19 participating artists in Sculpture in the City. Rubins’ assemblage of aluminium and iron animals, “*Crocodylius Philodendrus*” (2016-17), looks like a tornado of beasts picked up and set down in the shadow of the Gherkin.

The works, on show until next April, seep into the consciousness of City workers, who come to see the pieces as local landmarks. A local business owner makes sure, for instance, that she always listens to Marina Abramovic’s birdsong piece, “*Tree*” (1972), outside Bishopsgate. “At 7:10 one morning it made me smile and now I make sure I listen every day,” she says.