

Introduction

Grizedale Forest Sculpture

Grizedale Forest covers some 8,700 acres which lie between Lake Windermere and Coniston Water in the Lake District. The Forest is largely coniferous with about twenty per cent deciduous cover. The sculpture project was established in 1977 primarily as a working environment for sculptors. This takes the form of artist's residencies lasting up to six months. In addition, several artists have worked on specific proposals. The vitality of the project springs from the sculptors' response to the forest and the questions it poses for their sculptural practice.

Although Grizedale Forest is not a sculpture park, successive

sculptors have built up an exciting body of work, not in any precious sense but rather as part of an evolving situation. Some work is of a temporary nature whilst other sculpture is more permanent. The passage of the seasons has taken its natural toll. The sculpture shows a refreshing diversity of approach which is reflected in the subject matter and working methods. Sympathetic to the forest landscape, the sculptures are all sited by the sculptors, several of whom worked on site. Nearly all the sculptures have tended to be sited near the Silurian Trail, a nine mile forest walk.

Grizedale Forest receives well over 100,000 visitors each year. A notable attraction is the Theatre in the Forest which highlights the recreational use of the forest with its nature trails, camping grounds and wildlife centre, carefully programmed by the Forestry Commission. More to the point, it might not be realised how intensely and efficiently the Commission farm the land – with all that implies. This has a bearing on the public aspect of the sculpture project which is becoming increasingly important.

The charm of Grizedale has inevitably created a memorable

experience for each sculptor. The residencies have been productive and, equally important, have enabled the artists to re-evaluate their work. Indeed, the experience of living and working in a small rural community has perhaps rubbed off in more profound ways. The project clearly fulfils a need and one would like to see many more similar working situations for artists being established across the country. The support of the Forestry Commission, Northern Arts and the Theatre in the Forest has made this project possible.

PETER DAVIES

David Nash

We started in February deliberately so we would be there coming out of winter into spring, the days becoming progressively longer and warmer.

The trees came into leaf, first the larch, then the willows and hazels and the oaks last. I was gently drawn into the metabolism, pace and energy of the forest.

The other foresters did not share Bill Grant's enthusiasm for the Resident Sculptor scheme, nor did the workforce. The foresters knew they would be continually asked by their public for explanation, adding another difficulty to their workload already stretched by the extra amenities offered. The workforce thought it was another waste of public money.

My first project was an attempt to remedy this. I showed the foresters slides of previous work and of Blaenau Ffestiniog where I live, to give some identity to what I did and where I came from. I also outlined several possible projects which were accessible as images ('Running Table') and involved them calling upon their forestry knowledge. To win the respect of the workforce I started work every day when they did at 7.45 a.m. and worked on long after they had finished.

David Nash:
Horned Tripod



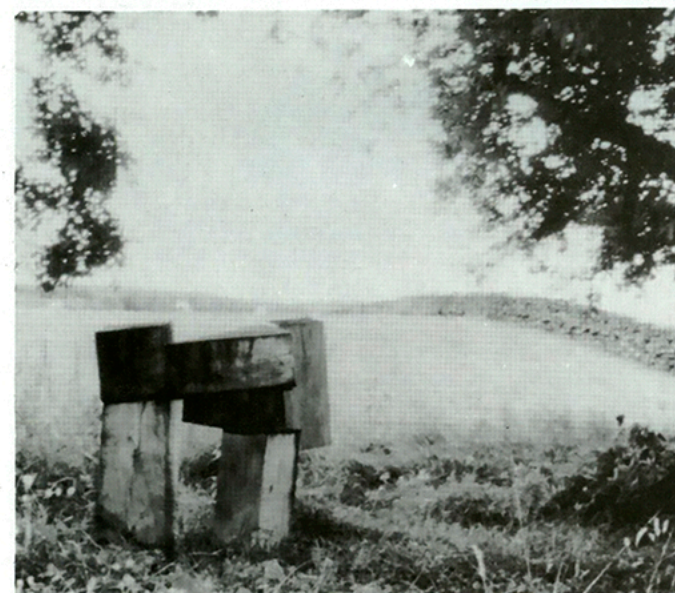
From March 19th-April 14th 1984, Sunderland Arts Centre exhibited the *Photographs of the Grizedale Sculptures*, now on tour in England.

David Evison

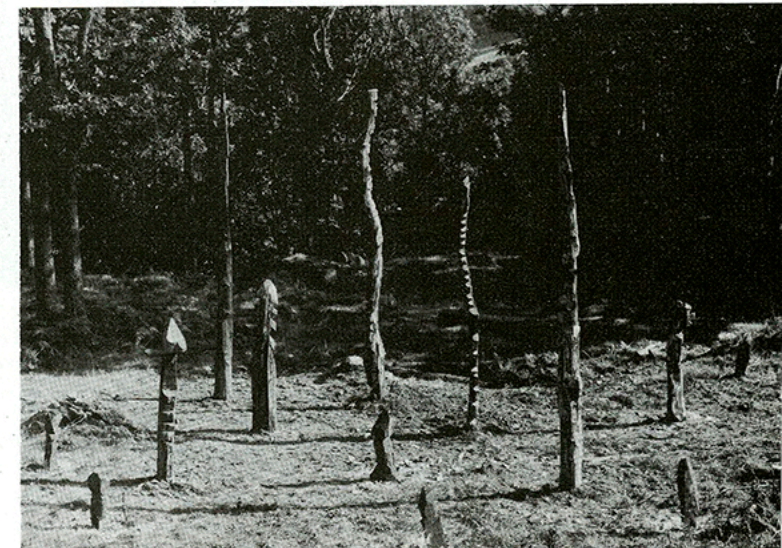
I have frequently been asked to put sculpture into group exhibitions in parks and open air situations and I consider that I'm fairly experienced at this, but Grizedale was quite different. Compared to parks, there is nothing self-conscious or artful about the forest landscaping as it has to function and make money. (Not that the forests are an eye-sore. They are in fact extremely well landscaped and the planners have succeeded in making rows of conifers look as though they belong to the land.)

I didn't make my sculpture at Grizedale with a specific place in mind, but found positions by trial and error. I tried the obvious places like grassy knolls, ponds and rounded hollows and then found that they looked better in a more dramatic situation. Like, when you turn a corner and unexpectedly come across a sculpture or when you suddenly see a piece at close quarters because long views are hidden by trees. I was very surprised by how a piece no longer than a person would not appear insignificant which has to do with the sense of enclosure in the forest. One becomes acutely aware of unusual things in this setting and these factors together with the very human scale of trees, paths and roads give a sculpture its scale.

In this sense Grizedale forest is a very exciting place to put abstract sculpture. Better than beautifully landscaped gardens where you expect to see nineteenth century marbles or grandiose sculpture parks where even the best work looks forlorn. As far as I know this is the first time that a collection of sculpture has been put in such a place. Sculptors and those interested should pay attention as there is something to be learned.



David Evison: (Untitled) 1979



Robert Koenig: *Compound for Redundant Symbols*

Robert Koenig

Q. Why did you site the pieces where you have?

A. The general plan was to find a site with fallen trees nearby. All of the sculptures were thus created and sited close to the original source of timber. The first three sculptures, *Triangular Suspension*, *Trophies* and *Multiple Arch* were grouped together on a plateau halfway up a long gradual slope. They overlook two valleys on either side and a stream. They are each separate sculptures and yet by grouping them together I was hoping they would be seen as evidence of some sort of activity or event of the past. So together they look like remnants of a once occupied site.

Compound for Redundant Symbols was created on top of a plateau overlooking a valley. Trees were cut down to create a view on to the valley below for the benefit of the Ranger who had a hide in a tree close by. It is this timber which was used for the sculpture. The site is a steady climb away from the forest trail.

Working in the forest was a great joy for me. I felt it was a most natural way of making sculpture where even a studio was not really necessary. The forest was a source of all materials, it produced an endless variety of sites. I also worked on all the sculptures in the forest itself.

Studio International wishes to thank Mark Prior for making available to us his photographs of the sculptures as illustrations for the above article, as well as for his general organisation of material from the sculptors for this publication.