

## The Story of *Dream*

The idea of creating a gateway public art feature on the site of the former Sutton Manor Colliery was first expressed in 2003.

The chance to realise this aspiration came in 2006, when it was chosen as one of only seven UK sites from more than 1,400 publicly nominated locations to be part of “The Big Art Project”, a Channel 4 initiative supported by Arts Council England, the national development agency for the arts and The Art Fund, the UK’s leading independent art charity.

The site was selected thanks to its rich cultural resonance as a former colliery, the passion of the ex-miners who nominated it, its prominent location beside the M62 motorway and its potential regeneration impact.

*Dream* was conceived and designed by world-renowned Spanish artist Jaume Plensa.

Jaume has completed major commissions across the globe, his hitherto most famous work being *The Crown Fountain* in Chicago. His public artworks in the UK include *Blake* - a light sculpture at the Baltic Centre for

Contemporary Art in Gateshead, and *Breathing* – the illuminated glass dome of BBC Broadcasting House in London.

*Dream* takes the form of a girl’s head with her eyes closed, in a seemingly dream-like state, resting on a plinth inspired by the small, circular tally each miner carried as a means of identification. The notion is simple but profound, for in Jaume’s own words “in our dreams, anything is possible...”.

This concept was inspired by ex terra lucem (“from the earth comes light”) - the former motto of St.Helens and the pit itself. It was also directly informed by dialogue with ex-miners and other members of the local community who, rather than a mining monument, wanted a forward-looking piece that would provide a beautiful, inspiring, contemplative space for generations to come.

The intention from the outset was equally to put St.Helens “on the map”, symbolise the area’s positive post-industrial transformation, become an iconic new regional landmark, and generate direct economic benefits, while also serving to reinvigorate local pride.

*Dream* is made of pre-cast concrete with Spanish dolomite aggregate, the whitest marble there is, to give it an almost luminescent finish in marked contrast to the black of the coal that still lies below.

It was constructed in 14 levels out of 90 unique pieces, each crafted using cutting edge technology combined with skilled, time-honoured working methods.

The plinth is over 17m in diameter, while the head itself is 20m high and its apex stands 100m above sea level.

The entire sculpture weighs 373 tonnes and is supported by 8 piles, each driven 38m down through the colliery spoil to the solid earth below.

Onsite construction began in October 2008 and was completed in 2009 when *Dream* was officially launched by Jaume on 31st May.

*Dream* was commissioned and delivered by St.Helens Council, with the support of Channel 4, Arts Council England, and The Art Fund, plus the close involvement of local ex-miners.

Curated by Liverpool Biennial *Dream* was also funded by the Northwest Development Agency, the Merseyside



Objective 1 ERDF Programme, Forestry Commission, the Northwest Coalfield Communities Regeneration Programme, and the St.Helens Local Enterprise Growth Initiative.

*Dream* has already won the prestigious 2009 Marsh Prize, awarded annually to the UK’s best public sculpture.

# *Dream:*

Jaume Plensa’s landmark sculpture on the former Sutton Manor Colliery in St.Helens, Northwest England

st.helens

*The Heart of the Northwest*

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