Is Public Art a Waste of Space? An Investigation into Residents' Attitudes Public Art in Harlow

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Word Count: 10,900

Being a Dissertation submitted to the faculty of The Built Environment as requirements for the award of the MSc Spatial Planning at University College Lc

I declare that this Dissertation is entirely my own work and that ideas, data and well as direct quotations, drawn from elsewhere are identified and referenced.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I'd like to thank Dr HaeRan Shin for her advice and guidance in the undertaking of this project.

I'd also like to thank all those in Harlow who took the time to be questioned, especially the participants of the focus groups whose comments were an invaluable part of my research. I am also particularly grateful to Jason Boyce, Harlow Council's Community Engagement Officer, for his help in the organisation of my focus groups.

Lastly, but by no means least, I'd like to thank my Mum, Dad and brothers, for if it wasn't for their unconditional support this dissertation wouldn't have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

Public art has undergone somewhat of a renaissance over the last 20 years, with now over 70% of urban planning authorities including policies for artwork. With this renaissance, public art has moved into the realm of urban design and regeneration, with advocates claiming public art helps in developing a sense of place, identity and community. Public art is also attributed to functioning as a landmark for improving legibility and navigating. Yet popular press would have us believe that people are somewhat disgruntled with their public art. As the voices of the public are fundamentally absent from critical literature, this study seeks to address this gap through two main questions; firstly, the extent to which the advocacies for public art relate to the attitudes held by the public and, secondly, the degree to which public art functions as a landmark by residents.

In addressing these questions, research was undertaken in Harlow, a new town that has integrated public art in its planning. Resident attitudes were collected through questionnaires followed by two focus groups. This study shows a clear appreciation of local artist Henry Moore, whose sculptures were felt to give something unique to Harlow. Yet the proliferation of 'parachute' art was believed to limit public art's ability to create a sense of place. Residents found it hard to relate to more abstract public artwork, placing value in sculptures that reflected the town's history in order to develop a sense of identity. The study also shows the value placed by residents in participation in the creative process of their public artwork in developing a sense of community. Finally, the study reveals that public art in general is poorly used as a landmark in navigating. Yet certain sculptures did contribute to Harlow's legibility, mainly those with strong associations, form and a contrasting, prominent spatial location.

1. INTRODUCTION

Everywhere in our cities there seems to be public art (Bakewell, 2008). Since the 1980s there has been a renaissance in the commissioning of public art, not just in the UK, but also all over Europe, the USA and beyond (Roberts and Marsh, 1995; Moody, 1990 cited in Hall, 2004). By the late 1990s, over 70% of urban planning authorities in the UK had polices for public art, and its successful integration in the built environment is an issue growing in prominence within the planning profession (Roberts and Marsh, 1995; Roberts, 1998).

With this renaissance, the purpose of public art has moved from merely aesthetic improvements of the townscape to addressing deeper structural adjustments, acting as a catalyst for the social and psychological well-being in cities (Hall and Robertson, 2001). Public art has therefore moved into the realm of urban design and regeneration (Hall and Smith, 2005, cited in McCarthy, 2006), with advocacies claiming that public art can help in developing a sense of place, sense of identity, and a sense of community, as well as addressing community needs, tackling social exclusion, promoting social change and educational value (Hall and Robertson, 2001). Public art can also be attributed to acting as a landmark feature, contributing to the legibility of an urban environment (Lynch, 1960) as well as acting as a navigation aid (Porch, 2000).

However, reports in the popular press and media frequently publicise negative reactions from people towards public art (Senie, 1992). A recent debate at the National Gallery in May 2008 asked 'is public art a waste of space?' The fact that the question was raised in the first place gives an impression that the public are disgruntled with their artwork (Andrews, 2008). Yet the voices of the public are fundamentally missing from research on public art, and the claims for public art assisting in urban design and regeneration remain untested and unproven (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

The first research question of this study is therefore,

1. To what extent do the advocacies of public art relate to the attitudes held by residents?

This question needs to be addressed because little is known about how the attitudes of residents correlate to the literature supporting public art (Hall and Smith, 2005). This

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absence of the audience as a site of meaning is then limiting the ability to properly inform policies and strategies (Hall and Smith, 2005; Hall, 2007). The new town of Harlow, which has incorporated public art into its planning and development since near conception (Cork, 1992; Whiteley, 2005), will provide the case study for this research. Therefore, the focus of this question will be to investigate those advocacies more relevant to new towns; developing a sense of place, a sense of identity and a sense of community (Petherbridge, 1979).

The second research question of this study is,

2. To what degree does public art function as a landmark by residents?

The importance of this second research question is highlighted by Hall and Robertson (2001) who argue a need to examine how public art is incorporated into the lives and daily experiences of the public. By researching how residents use public art as a landmark, this study will be able to investigate how public art functions in navigating as well as creating a legible urban environment.

In order to research these questions, the study is divided into the following five sections. Chapter two is a literature review providing a theoretical understanding of the dissertation topic, beginning first with a definition of what is meant by the term 'public art' and ending by identifying previous preliminary research on attitudes towards public art. Chapter three presents the research design for the study, explaining why Harlow was chosen as a suitable case study followed by an explanation of the research methods. The analysis of information collected forms chapter four, critically discussing the results through the questions of the research. Finally, chapter five forms the conclusion, asserting the main outcomes of the study as well as proposals for future work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature on public art in order to gain an understanding of how public art is valued in urban design and regeneration. However, the literature review will also provide a critical exploration, highlighting arguments regarding the flaws of public art. The review will show that whilst public art is clearly valued in the literature, it seems that not all public art is valued to the same extent. The chapter will end by identifying the need for more research into the audience as a site in which meanings towards public art are made.

2.1 Defining Public Art

Public art is notoriously difficult to define with many varying definitions in the literature (Selwood, 1992; 1995). Selwood (1992) argues public art's meaning is deeper than merely art in the open air but, instead, is art that is primarily intended for the public's benefit. Artist Lucy Lippard (1995, cited in Massey and Rose, 2003: 12) further defines public art as 'accessible work of any kind that cares about, challenges, involves...the audience for or with whom it was made'. Whilst this definition can include both permanent and temporary works of art, Selwood (1995: 7) adopts a more exclusive meaning, concentrating on 'permanent, static and object based works sited in public places rather than transient manifestations', which will be applied in this study. The term 'public' can also bring about philosophical debates (Roberts, 1998), as there are few genuinely public places (Petro, 1992). This study will take on an all-embracing definition of areas that are physically accessible to the public (Selwood, 1995).

2.2 The Renaissance of Public Art

Over the last 20 years or so, interest in public art has grown substantially in Britain, as well the rest of Europe and USA and beyond (Roberts and Marsh, 1995; Moody, 1990 cited in Hall, 2004). The visible presence of contemporary public art is increasing (Selwood, 1995), and between 1993 and 2000, over 3,000 works of public art were installed across the country (Porch, 2000). Whilst there are various reasons stated in the literature for the renaissance of public art, such as government initiatives and Millennium and lottery funding (Roberts, 2000), the most widely reported is the Percent For Art scheme. In 1991,

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the Arts Council launched a campaign to implement a Percent For Art policy among British local authorities based upon the successful US model, where 1% of total major development costs is put towards the commissioning of public art (Cork, 1991; Hall, 1995; Roberts and Marsh, 1995; Miles, 1998). By 1995, 70% of urban planning authorities in Britain had policies that encourage the provision of public art, demonstrating how important the successful integration of artworks into the urban environment had become (Roberts and Marsh, 1995; Roberts, 1998).

Whilst the extent of public art has changed over recent time, its style and purpose has also developed. There is now a clear distinction between the historically commemorative bronze and stone memorials that have traditionally, yet passively, occupied public space to the more contemporary and secular designs of public art today (Andrews, 2008). Rather than being located in but independent of the urban space, since the 1980s the purpose of public art has moved from merely aesthetic improvement of the townscape to addressing deeper structural adjustments in constructing social and psychological well-being (Hall and Robertson, 2001). In other words, public art has moved into the realms of urban design and regeneration (Hall and Smith, 2005, cited in McCarthy, 2006).

2.3 Advocating Public Art

Hall and Robertson (2001) argue that public art is widely advocated to help develop a sense of place, a sense of identity, a sense of community; as well as also addressing community needs, tackling social exclusion, promoting social change and educational value. This study will focus on the first three advocates for public art in urban design and regeneration, which will now be critically explored in further depth.

2.3.1 Developing a Sense of Place

Advocates have claimed that public art can help develop a sense of place through the creation of a unique physical character and enhancing the links between communities and places (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

The concept of sense of place refers to an emotional attachment and belonging to a particular place, which goes beyond its sensory or physical properties (Carmona *et al.,*

2003). Relph (1976 cited in Carmona *et al.*, 2003) argues that a sense of place cannot be discussed without consideration of the contradictory notion of placelessness. Through processes such as globalisation (Pattacini, 2000; Carmona *et al.*, 2003), British cities are suffering from placeless townscapes where 'one high street or shopping centre looks exactly like another' (Crosby, date unknown, cited in Bianchini *et al.*, 1991: 47). Because of this banal sameness, spaces never become places because we travel through them without any meaning or connection to the urban environment (Flemming and von Tschamer, 1981).

Flemming and von Tschamer (1981) claim that public art acts as 'place-makers', which can be used by planners to capture and reinforce the uniqueness of a space, thereby combating placelessness. By introducing public art that is exclusive to site, a distinctive physical character can be created (Hall and Robertson, 2001). Flemming and von Tschamer (1981: 17) further assert that public art can help make 'meanings of places accessible to people'. Public art does this by projecting images related to the town, such as its community and stages of the town's development, which can enhance a sense of belonging (Flemming and von Tschamer, 1981). In particular, Bianchini *et al.* (1991) argue that using local artists to commission public artworks gives a more distinctive feel to the town, as these artists are better able to reflect the locality in their work. Artwork with such a distinctive 'local iconography' allows residents to be aware of local tradition, therefore articulating and strengthening the connection between people and place (Hall and Robertson, 2001: 13).

Nevertheless, if public art is to enhance our sense of place, Pattacini (2000) argues it is essential that artwork should relate to its context. Porch (2000: 17) claims that work which could be 'sited anywhere' is the most frequent criticism towards architecture, which can be also be applied to public art. Porch (2000: 19) further asserts that when art came out of the gallery and into the street, 'it found itself 'on' the city rather than 'of' it'. This type of public art is dubbed by Cork (1991, cited in Roberts, 1998: 117) as 'parachuted' in, looking raw and uncomfortable in public spaces, whilst acting as a 'bolt-on extra rather than as an urban design tool' (Porch 2000: 19).

From the literature, support for public art as a place-making tool comes from its ability to combat placelessness by creating a distinctive physical landscape whilst also connecting

people to the place they live. This can be done through establishing a local iconography. However, it's apparent that not all public art has the ability to develop a sense of place. Public artworks that have no relation to the sites they are situated are criticised as being sited anywhere, therefore contributing little in enhancing characteristics specific to a place.

2.3.2 Developing a Sense of Identity

Public art is also advocated for enhancing a sense of civic identity (Hall and Robertson, 2001), helping people understand where they come from, particularly through historical connections (McCarthy, 2006), as well as projecting an external image of a place.

McCarthy (2006: 245) defines the concept of identity where 'people themselves endow places with meaning, leading to identification with shared characteristics between groups within a locality'. Flemming and von Tschamer (1981: 9) claim that public art can strengthen this local identity by examining connections with our roots and aspirations, thereby helping us to 'understand where we come from, what we care for, and, consequently, who we are'. In order to do this, McCarthy (2006) argues that public art needs to reflect the history and circumstance of a town.

However, public art can be criticised when its proposed identity is incompatible and unrepresentative to that of the local public (McCarthy, 2006). When the subject or form of public art is inaccessible to residents (Senie and Webster, 1992), or when there is a conflict between the private vision of the artist and that of the local public (Petro, 1992), tensions may arise. Such tension is exemplified by Picasso's sculpture in Chicago (figure 1), where people compared the public artwork to a 'baboon' (Senie, 1992). In giving the artwork a nickname, Senie (1992: 243) argues that people are saying:

> 'You...have put this strange object in my space...How does it relate to my world, me, my life?'
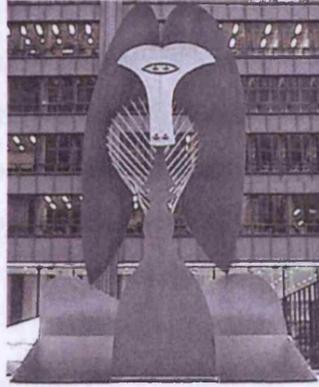
Figure 1. Pablo Picasso's 'Untitled' (Source: Shelton, date unknown)

Senie (1992: 240) further explains that this 'looks like' approach is a 'metaphorical process' of trying to identify their lives in the public art.

Civic identity can also be equated with the area's externally projected image (Hall and Robertson, 2001), which 'relates to the summation of the impressions that people have of a city' (McCarthy, 2006: 245). Public art is often used as a promotional tool, assisting in urban regeneration (McCarthy, 2006). A successful example of this is Antony Gormley's Angel of the North (figure 2), which since its instalment in 1998 has rebranded the image of Gateshead from a post-industrial town into a centre for culture (Sharp *et al.*, 2005).

Figure 2. Antony Gormley's 'Angel of the North' (Source: Cook, date unknown)

Yet these expressive and expansive images are often deemed inappropriate when placed in areas of social fragmentation (Hall, 1995). McCarthy (2006) argues that it is important to prioritise the identity of the local population over its external image, which will help avoid contention from inappropriate symbolism (Hall, 1995).

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There is a strong argument for public art to help develop a sense of identity, enabling people to develop shared characteristics through connecting to their town and understanding its history. Nevertheless, the literature suggests that the appropriateness of symbols needs to be carefully considered. Artwork that is inaccessible to the local public, both in form and subject, or projects an image that is deemed inappropriate, can lead to tension.

2.3.3 Developing a Sense of Community

The final advocate for public art to be discussed in this chapter is developing a sense of community, defined as 'an awareness of a social body occupying a shared space' (Hall and Robertson, 2001: 10). It is claimed that public art can help develop a sense of community by revitalising poor quality spaces as well as building a sense of pride and ownership through involvement in the creative process (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

Brown (1991) argues that shared spaces are important for communities because they represent that we do not live as isolated individuals but as part of a wider society. However our shared public spaces are feeling increasing inhumane due to an alarming loss of meaningful scale in development (Miles, 1989). This has led to people believing that they have 'no claim to the spaces of daily public living' (Miles, 1989: 1).

Cork (1993: 17) supports public art on the grounds that these brutal public spaces need the 'humanising force of the artist's imagination'. Not only can public art improve poor spaces but can also provide a focus for public culture (Sharp, *et al.*, 2005). This in turn will encourage communication across public space and between those that live there (Sharp *et al.*, 2005), a factor considered important in sustaining viable communities (Swales, 1992, cited in Hall and Robertson, 2001)

But there is a concern in the literature that the communication public art stimulates is exclusive, involving an elitist language that is not accessible to the local community (Petro, 1992; Sharp *et al.*, 2005). As Pattacini (2000: 46) explains,

> 'the ideas behind artworks are often only known to the artist or to the elite who read art literature. For most people art remains virtually inaccessible objects to look at'

This concern is reiterated by Senie (1992: 240), who claims that artwork will remain a 'foreign object on familiar turf' for those unable to make sense of the public art due to a lack of an art education. People's lack of empathy is then visually expressed through vandalism (Roberts, 1998).

Petro (1992: 38) claims that improvements are needed 'on the way in which mediation between the (art)work and the public is conducted'. Cork (1991; 1993) emphasises, through the example of community murals, how public art can move away from its elitist connotations of arrogant and imposing artworks by consulting with the local population. Public participation in the creative and decision-making process of public art can encourage a sense of community through teamwork and the formation of tangible networks with their neighbours (Hall and Robertson, 2001). Being involved in the public art's process can also help engender pride, ownership and respect for their public art and public spaces, thus reducing vandalism (Hall and Robertson, 2001; Sharp *et al.* 2005).

However, Sharp *et al.* (2005) highlight that this participative process does not guarantee community ownership of future generations. Critics have also voiced concerns over the compromise of artistic integrity and high standard of design through an overly democratic decision making process, believing in the autonomy of the expert artist over the opinions of the public (Petherbridge, 1979; Cork, 1991; 1993; Miles, 1998).

The literature claims that public art helps develop a sense of community by improving and humanising public spaces whilst providing a catalyst for communication within a local population. However, this communication has been criticised as involving an elitist language, therefore countering rather than encouraging a sense community. Yet through the inclusion of the local public in the public art process, artwork is advocated to engender a sense of pride and ownership for locals towards their neighbourhood.

2.4 Landmark Public Art

Landmarks have always played a key role in the design of urban landscapes (Montgomery, 1998). This sub chapter will look at the arguments for how public art is valued as a landmark, by creating legible environments through evoking a strong image and acting as a navigational aid.

Lynch's (1960: 9) study investigated the mental image people had of their city, its 'imageability', to determine the legibility of an urban environment. Lynch (1960) argued that a clearly identifiable image of paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks, established through a mental mapping technique, enabled the successful way-finding of a city, as well as enhancing a sense of balance and well-being.

Lynch (1960) defines landmarks as external points of reference, such as sculptures (Carmona *et al.* 2003), which must have some unique or memorable aspect in order to contribute to the image of a city. An element located by contrasting backgrounds is argued as the principal factor in creating landmarks (Lynch, 1960). Spatial location can also establish landmarks by allowing the element to be visible over time and distance, such as on a hill, whilst locating at junctions involving path decisions can strengthen further its image (Lynch, 1960). Lynch (1960) also stresses that meaningful and historical association with the landmark will result in a more vivid mental image. Finally, Lynch (1960) claims whilst landmarks need not be large but they must be clear in form.

In an article by Porch (2000), public art is praised in its ability to act as a landmark. According to Porch (2000: 18), public art can act as 'inspired pieces of urban sign-making', which can be used as effectively as 'walking inside a very memorable 3D map of the environment'. Porch (2000) uses the case study of Newport town centre as having public artworks that are successful landmarks, due to their tactility and historical associations.

In contrary to Porch (2000), Philips (1989: 194) criticises public art's ability to act as a landmark due to the 'minimum-risk' art that pervades our townscapes. Philips (1989) argues that the level of bureaucracy in commissioning pieces has resulted in tame and bland work, which impinges little on our lives (Hall, 2007). Instead of trying to side-step controversy, Philips (1989) believes public art should enliven spaces by igniting debates and disagreements. Public art can be further criticised as adding to the clutter of the urban environment rather than acting as individual landmarks (Pattacini, 2000).

The literature highlights the key role of public art as a landmark, which can evoke strong and memorable images and act as a navigational aid. Public art's form, contrast, spatial

location and strength of association all contribute to its role as a landmark. However, artwork that does not challenge the observer or further clutters the urban environment is criticised as impacting little on people's consciousness and therefore limiting public art's ability to act as a landmark.

2.5 Attitudes Towards Public Art

Despite this wealth of critical literature on public art, Hall and Robertson (2001: 19) argue that 'it is apparent that the voices of the public are almost universally absent'. Whilst literature has focused on the production and text of public art, this seems in stark contrast to the writing on the audience as a site in which meanings are made (Hall, 2004; 2007).

However, there is some research that has investigated audience's attitudes towards public art. Selwood (1995) examined the social, cultural and political benefits of public art, whilst also incorporating some research into people's attitudes. Selwood (1995) established that public art faced the same preoccupations and concerns as mainstream art over appearance and costing. A range of implicit conclusions also came about from Selwood's (1995) study, including a desire from people that public art should be figurative rather than abstract and conceptual.

Milton Keynes has been the subject of more recent work on audience's attitudes towards public art. The first was a 'soft' research project in 2002 where residents were invited to narrate their stories of public art in Milton Keynes, from which a series of comic strips were drawn (Artpoint, date unknown). This showed the strength in which residents associated public artwork with their lives (Artpoint, date unknown). The second approach involved a complementary academic research project (Artpoint, date unknown), in which Massey and Rose (2003) hypothesised three theoretical reflections on how audiences perceive artwork. The first proposes a continuum of registers, 'weak' to 'strong', in how public artwork may evoke a response from its audience, with 'strong' public art making people stop and pause (Massey and Rose, 2003). Secondly, Massey and Rose (2003) claim that usual social variations are not needed in studying public art, with the exception of age, where children have a more tactile relationship and adults tend to be more distant. Finally, Massey and Rose (2003) suggest that public art has the potential to engage the audience through colour, composition and texture.

Responding to Massey and Rose's (2003) study, a street survey was conducted by AMH in 2006 on audience's understanding, perceptions and awareness of public art in Milton Keynes. The report found that there was a high level of recognition of public art among residents, especially towards artwork that was figurative or animal related, rather than more abstract or conceptual forms (AMH, 2006). The study also found that an awareness of public art was highest in young people. Residents felt that public art had the potential to send out positive messages about Milton Keynes, readdressing preconceived misconceptions of their town, as well as engendering a sense of pride in where they lived (AMH, 2006). When asked to rate the importance of public art in Milton Keynes, respondents rated giving Milton Keynes a positive image as highest, followed by creating well-designed spaces (AMH, 2006). The use of public art as a navigational tool received the highest number of negative responses. However, the study concludes that whilst useful information had been collected, the meaning and reasoning behind residents' choices were absent (AMH, 2006).

Despite the undertaking of these research projects, Hall (2007) argues that this is just the beginning and still more work needs to be done in investigating audience's attitudes and values towards public art.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents the research design for the study, firstly justifying the choice of Harlow as a suitable case study. The second part of this chapter details the research methods, explaining the questionnaire and focus group approaches.

3.1 Case Selection: Harlow, England

Ward (1993, cited in Harding, 2004) argues that if you want to see contemporary public art in the urban landscape then it is our new towns, rather than the historic, that it would be necessary to tour. In particular, Harding (2004) recommends visiting Harlow, which has invested in public art since the very early stages of its development and now showcases a collection of national significance (Cork, 1992; Whiteley, 2005).
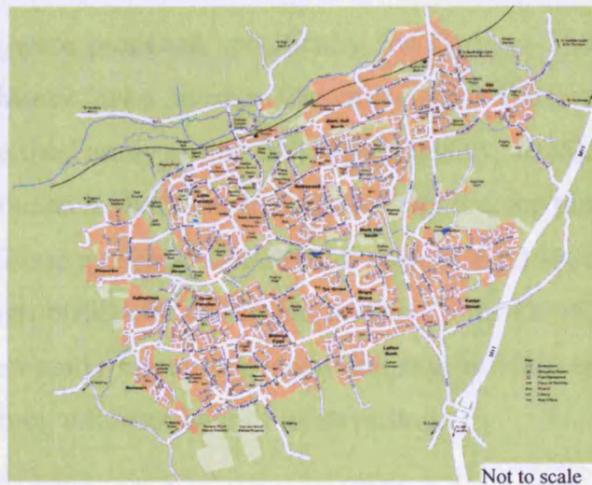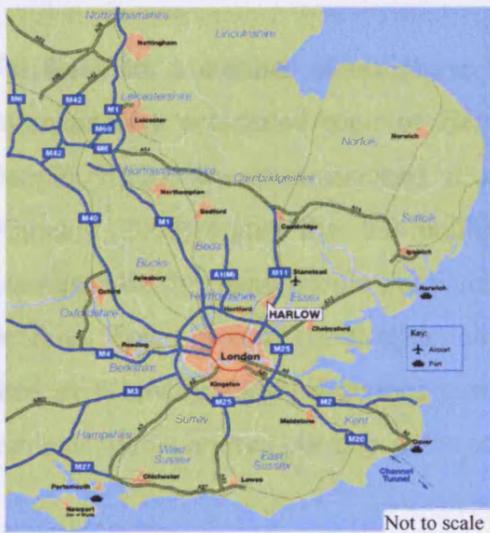
Figure 3. Map of Harlow's Location in England   Figure 4. Map of Harlow (Sources: Harlow Council)

Harlow is a new town in Essex, England, situated 27 miles outside London (figure 3). Proposed as one of 14 towns under the New Town Act 1946, Harlow formed part of the programme of post-World War II construction (Bateman, 1969; Whiteley, 2005). With the creation of these new towns came the opportunity 'to implement radical ideas and policies', key to which was the integration of public art into the 'very heart of the physical and social development of the towns' (Harding, 2004: page no. n/a). In reference to town artists, Petherbridge (1979) claims public art was established in new towns to give a sense of identity, celebrate a sense of place as well as stressing the importance of community

projects. Public art was also recognised by Petherbridge (1979: 126) as important in functioning as a landmark feature in new towns, acting as 'navigational aids within the anonymity of the new-townscapes'.

Harlow's commitment to public art can be accredited to Sir Frederick Gibberd who, as master planner of Harlow, was keen to have public art integral to the design of the new town (Moore, 1973; Whiteley, 2005). The Harlow Art Trust was established in 1953 to purchase sculptures for Harlow, to which Gibberd advised on possible sites for the public art, focusing particularly on places where people meet in the town centre (Moore, 1973; Harding, 2004; Whiteley, 2005). Though Harlow's policy of acquiring pre-existing work and inserting them around the town has been criticised as 'parachute art' (Harding, 2004: page no. n/a), by failing to integrate into the physical and social context they are intended to enliven (Cork, 1992;).

Yet there are a number of sculptures that were produced specifically for Harlow. The internationally acclaimed sculptor Henry Moore, who lived a few miles from Harlow (Moore, 1973), was commissioned to create the Family Group in 1956 (Whiteley, 2005). Whiteley (2005) argues that this public artwork is the most important sculpture for the town because for many people the Family Group symbolises Harlow, known in the 1950s as 'Pram Town' due to its exceptionally high birth rate. An article in The Times (1956, cited in Whiteley, 2005) describes how the Family Group was soon adopted by Harlow residents, with children playing on the sculpture within an hour of its unveiling.

Harlow's unique position of having incorporated public art into its design and development, whilst boasting a sculpture collection of national significance, makes it an ideal case study for this research.

3.2 Research Method

In order to investigate the aims of the study, a triangulation of two research methods were undertaken. Firstly, street questionnaires were collected in Harlow by face-to-face interviews, which were then followed by two focus groups for more in-depth discussion of issues.

3.2.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a key research method for gathering information on the attitudes of a population (Parfitt, 1997; McLafferty, 2003), forming an important research method in this study.

- Questionnaire Design

Two types of questions formed the main body of the questionnaire: the attitude battery, which asked for fixed-responses, and open-ended questions.

Parfitt (1997) argues that attitude batteries are particularly useful for measuring strength of opinion, consisting of a series of statements to which respondents rate the extent they agree on a five-point scale. Five responses was chosen for the questionnaire as they are considered the optimum number for an attitude battery; more and the respondent loses the ability to differentiate between the opinions, and the middle point can represent a neutral opinion (McLafferty, 2003).

Whilst fixed response questions provide quick and comparative data (Parfitt, 1997), they 'lack the detail, richness and personal viewpoints that can be gained from open-ended questions' (McLafferty, 2003: 90). Open-ended questions can enable respondents to express their attitudes to their fullest, unlimited potential (Parfitt, 1997; McLafferty, 2003), therefore forming the main design of the questionnaire.

As the 'content of questionnaires needs to be firmly rooted in the research' (Parfitt, 1997: 85), each question related to an aspect of the study's research questions: questions 2 and 3 addressed the issue of developing a sense of place; 4 to 6 developing a sense of identity; 7 to 9 developing a sense of community; and finally 10 and 11 related to landmark public art.

General questions formed the beginning and the end of the questionnaire, with the first acting as a 'warming-up' exercise (Parfitt, 1997: 86) asking the respondent what they thought of public art in Harlow. As questions relating to age and address were more personal, these were left to the end of the questionnaire (questions 12 and 13) in order to minimise information lost if respondents refused to continue (Parfitt, 1997). Age was

classified under broad categories so that people felt more comfortable in giving this, more personal, information (Parfitt, 1997).

A pilot questionnaire was conducted on Monday 14th July 2008, forming the final yet critical part of designing the questionnaire in order to reveal flaws that might not have been particularly obvious (Parfitt, 1997; McLafferty, 2003). From the pilot test, more open-ended questions were added in order to ensure the most comprehensive answers would be given.

- Questionnaire Strategy

The questionnaires were conducted by face-to-face interviews, which were audio recorded. The interview technique was chosen because it is one of the most flexible questionnaire strategies (McLafferty, 2003), allowing for both fixed response and open-ended questions to be asked. In particular with open-ended questions, the interviewer can clarify any vague responses (McLafferty, 2003), as well as probing for answers to be developed in further depth. Although care was taken to ensure wording of questions were as clear and coherent as possible, the interviewer could also clarify any unsure questions.

Whilst interviews are the most time-consuming questionnaire strategy, they guarantee a higher rate of response than postal questions, whilst the 'personal contact between interviewer and respondent often results in more meaningful answers' (McLafferty, 2003: 93). In order to administer the questionnaires in the most standardised way possible (Parfitt, 1997), every interview began with the following opening line:

> 'Hello I'm Clare from University College London (show ID card). I'm carrying out a questionnaire for my dissertation about residents' attitudes to public art in Harlow and I would be grateful of you would answer a few questions. Any information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential' (adapted from Parfitt, 1997: 86).

- Sampling

McLafferty (2003: 95) argues that 'sampling is a key issue in survey research because who responds to a survey can have significant impact on the results'. As the sample is a subset

of the population, it is important that the sample individuals selected represent the larger population of interest (McLafferty, 2003).

As questionnaires were conducted by face-to-face interviews, a random sample procedure was chosen approaching respondents on the street. Civic Square (figure 5) in the town centre was identified as a suitable location to administer the questionnaires. Although not everyone may go to the town centre, this area is the most likely to be visited by the widest spatial spread of Harlow residents. Civic Square also had no visual links with any public artwork in Harlow, so not to influence answers.
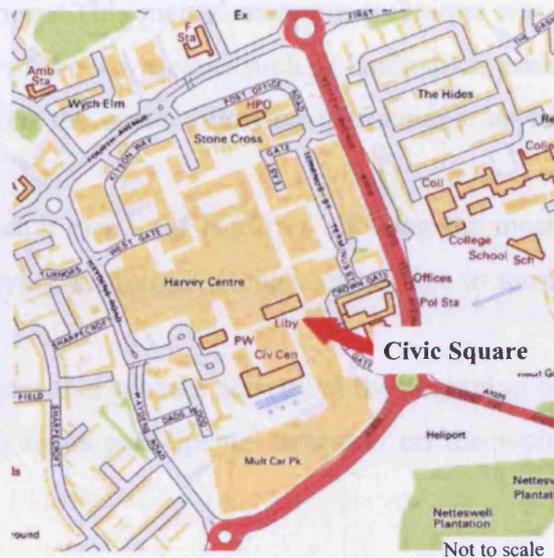
Figure 5. Map of Sampling Location: Civic Square, Harlow Town Centre (Source: Harlow Council)

A balanced timetable was drawn up so as not to introduce bias (Parfitt, 1997), and questionnaires were conducted for a seven days between Saturday 19th July and Friday 25th July. This allowed both weekday and weekend users to be sampled (although no significant difference in opinions were found). Questionnaires were administered systematically at 11am, 3pm and 5pm with a total of 42 respondents audio recorded, lasting between 5 and 15 minutes in length.

3.2.2 Focus groups

Focus groups are a useful research method in investigating complex opinions, emotions and experiences (Longhurst, 2003). In order to discuss key issues of this study in greater depth, two focus groups were conducted.

As participants are more likely to be relaxed if they already know the other members of the focus groups (Longhurst, 2003), established local community groups were approached. The first focus group was conducted on Wednesday 30th July, lasting 30 minutes and consisted of five volunteers from the Harlow Re-Use Community Project. Four participants formed the second focus group, organised by Harlow Council's Community Engagement Officer and conducted on Friday 1st August, lasting 50 minutes. Both groups had residents that lived in a range of locations across Harlow and a mixture of ages and gender.

At the start of each focus group, participants were given 5 minutes in which to draw a map of Harlow from memory. This mental mapping technique was used by Lynch (1960) to establish which parts of the townscape, such as landmarks, evoked an image on residents. Participants were given the same following instructions, as taken from Lynch's (1960: 155) study:

> 'Draw quick sketch map...(of Harlow), showing the most interesting and important features, and giving a stranger enough knowledge to move about without too much difficulty.'

Longhurst (2003) argues that such an activity at the beginning of a focus group is a useful technique in order to focus participants' attention on the topic, whilst also providing a catalyst for debate.

Discussions were allowed to flow allowing participants to explore issues they felt were important. However, a schedule of questions was compiled if conversation needed to be directed back to the topic and to check certain points were discussed (Longhurst, 2003). Both focus groups were audio recorded to allow for meaningful pauses and stresses to be noted (Longhurst, 2003).

The results of the focus groups will be used in conjunction with data collected in the questionnaires, a process known as 'triangulation' (Parfitt, 1997: 112; Longhurst, 2003: 120), and will be discussed in the analysis (chapter 4).

4. ANALYSIS

This chapter presents an integrated analysis of the questionnaire and focus group results, discussing the findings within the two research questions of the study. The first research question asks: to what extent do the advocacies of public art relate to the attitudes held by residents? This chapter will argue how residents valued public art in developing a sense of place, identity and community, but felt that these advocacies for public art were limited depending on the style and type of public art.

The second research question asks: to what degree does public art function as a landmark by residents? This analysis will argue how this landmark function is strongest when public art has meaningful associations, a clear from and located in a contrasting and prominent site.

4.1 Residents' Attitudes Towards the Advocacies of Public Art

This subchapter will investigate the first question of the research, the extent to which people's attitudes correspond to the advocacies of public art: developing a sense of place, developing a sense of identity, and developing a sense of community.

4.1.1 Attitudes Towards Developing a Sense of Place

Public art is claimed to help develop a sense of place by both creating a local iconography unique to the town, whilst also connecting people emotionally to where they live (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement 'public art makes Harlow a distinctive place to live' (figure 6). Respondents were fairly evenly split, with 43% of respondents agreeing with the statement and 54% disagreeing, of which 7% of respondents felt strongly both for and against this statement.

Public art's influence in making Harlow a distinctive place to live
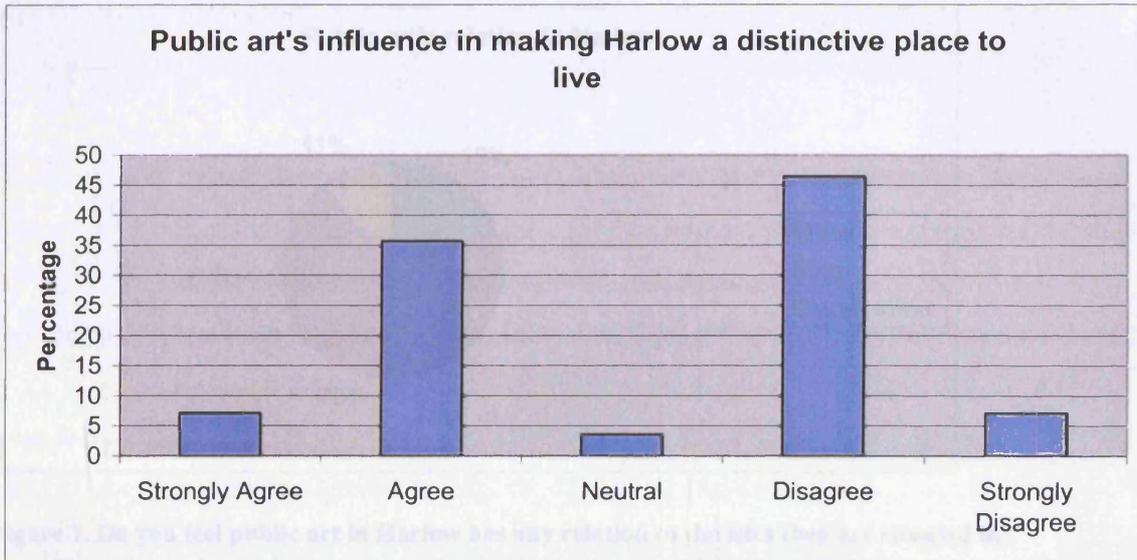
Figure 6. Attitude battery to statement *'Public art helps make Harlow a distinctive place to live'*

When respondents were asked to explain why they felt public art didn't help make Harlow a distinctive place to live, a common theme was the lack of distinction between the artwork situated in Harlow compared to other new towns nearby. As one questionnaire respondent explained,

Basildon is exactly the same as Harlow, they have the same sculptures (respondent 21)

Both focus groups also thought this to be true, adding that,

Other towns, like Stevenage, have similar type of art that Harlow has (respondent C)

This would suggest that Harlow's distinctiveness is limited by the fact that public art in Harlow could be sited in Basildon, Stevenage or in fact anywhere, a common criticism of public art (Porch, 2000). A total of 70% of respondents felt that public art had no relation to the sites they are situated (figure 7).

Public art's relation to Harlow

11%   19%

70%

- yes
- no
- don't know
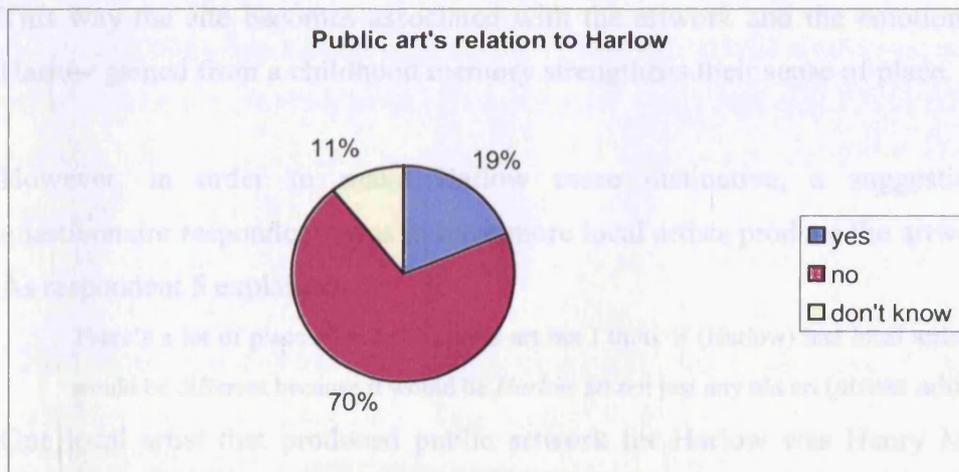
Figure 7. Do you feel public art in Harlow has any relation to the sites they are situated in?

This type of 'parachute art' (Cork, 1991, cited in Roberts, 1998; Cork, 1992; Harding, 2004) was largely unappreciative by the residents,

> It's very important (that public art relates to the sites they are situated in) otherwise it is a novelty act
> and you have to ask yourself 'what is the point?' (respondent 2)

Far from enhancing the link between people and places (Hall and Robertson, 2001), respondents felt that public art in Harlow was more of an 'afterthought' (respondent 32), which was reiterated in the second focus group,

> It seems to me like an afterthought, once the town's built we've got 'x' amount left and this is the best
> piece of art we can find (respondent G)

Yet 19% of respondents still felt that it wasn't important for public art to relate to the sites they were situated in (figure 7). Even if the artwork could be sited anywhere, some residents felt it could still contribute to the character of the place, as highlighted in the first focus group,

> If you took all the sculpture out of Harlow it would be a very dull town (respondent B)

This point was also expressed in the second focus group, that without any form of public art in Harlow, all you're left with is concrete (respondent I).

The second focus group then went on to discuss that attachment can be felt towards Harlow through any style of public art, not necessarily those specific to Harlow,

> I know someone who can still remember when they used to play on (the public art), so if you took that
> away then you're taking away something of Harlow (respondent I)

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This way the site becomes associated with the artwork and the emotional attachment to Harlow gained from a childhood memory strengthens their sense of place.

However, in order to make Harlow more distinctive, a suggestion repeated by questionnaire respondents was to have more local artists produce the artwork for the town. As respondent 5 explained,

> There's a lot of places that have public art but I think if (Harlow) had local artists doing it... then it would be different because it would be *Harlow* art not just any old art (stress added by author).

One local artist that produced public artwork for Harlow was Henry Moore (Whiteley, 2005). Looking back to figure 6, a total of 43% of respondents felt that public art did help make Harlow a distinctive place to live. This agreement, including those who strongly agreed, was largely attributed to the work of Henry Moore in the town, whose close relations to Harlow as a local resident were found to be very important to residents,

> I think it was important that (Moore) was a local artist, he knew the area well...it gives something special that is unique to Harlow (respondent 42)

This supports the argument by Bianchini *et al.* (1991) that local artists contribute better to a sense of place, as they are more able to reflect the locality in the public art.

One of Henry Moore's public artworks that respondents felt particularly related to Harlow was the Family Group (figure 8). Residents felt the Family Group symbolised the local tradition of Harlow, which was dubbed 'Pram Town' in reference to its above average birth rate (Whiteley, 2005). As one resident explained,

> Harlow was built as a family town and that was part and parcel for the artwork to be put there for the family (respondent 33)

Figure 8. Henry Moore's 'Family Group' (Source: Portlock, 1973)

Therefore, the Family Group projected an image that related to Harlow, which enhances a sense of belonging to their town (Flemming and von Tschamer, 1981). The Family Group was also felt to give a character to Harlow that was unique and distinct from other towns, causing respondent 33 to argue,

> If you moved the Family Group and stuck it in Milton Keynes or Stevenage it wouldn't look right

Respondents clearly believed that by having local artist Henry Moore's sculptures around the town a local iconography has been created unique to Harlow, which is a critical aspect in connecting people and place (Hall and Robertson, 2001). Whilst any public artwork was recognised as having the potential to reduce the blandness of the town, Harlow's criticism of having mostly 'parachute art' seems to be felt by residents as limiting the potential to make Harlow a distinctive town. Artwork that created images relating to Harlow, such as the Family Group, seemed to connect people better with their town and further develop a sense of place.

4.1.2 Attitudes Towards Developing a Sense of Identity

Public art is also advocated to help gain a sense of identity, by helping understand shared characteristics with our neighbours, whilst also projecting an image of the town (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

Questionnaire respondents were asked the extent to which they believed that 'public art helps me gain a sense of identity' (figure 9). A majority of 63% of respondents disagreed with the statement, of which 11% strongly disagreed, whilst a total of 30% of respondents felt that public art did help in developing a sense of identity, of which 7% felt strongly.
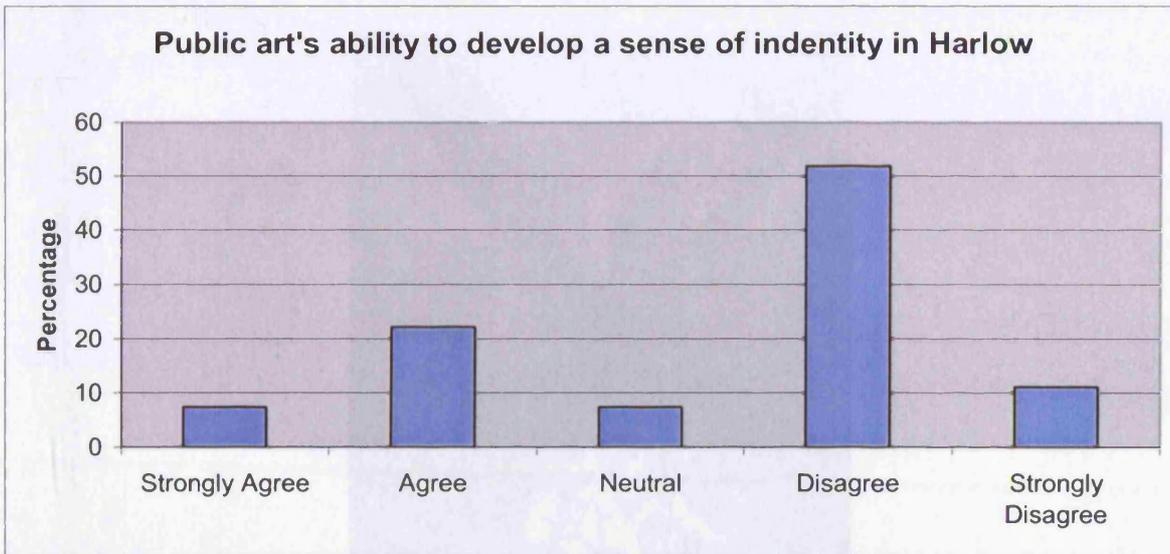
Figure 9. Attitude battery to statement '*Public art helps me gain a sense of identity*'

When asked to explain these negative feelings towards public art's ability to generate a sense of identity, it became clear that residents had trouble relating to the more modern and abstract pieces in Harlow. The sculpture situated outside the local doctors surgery, Simon Packard's Shenzou (figure 10) caused particular aversion from respondents, with residents commenting that,

It looks like its done out of tinfoil (respondent 8)

By using this 'looks like' approach, residents are attempting to identify themselves and their lives in the sculpture (Senie, 1992), which is true of Shenzou, as respondent 21 emphasises,

(Shenzou) doesn't give me any sense of identity because it means nothing to me, it has no relevance in my life

Figure 10. Simon Packard's 'Shenzou' (Source: Author's own photograph)

However, for 30% of respondents the public art in Harlow did help them develop a sense of identity (figure 9). As with developing a sense of place, Henry Moore's Family Group (figure 8) was referred to as an important piece of public artwork, in both the questionnaires and the first focus group,

> The thing with the Family (Group) was that when Harlow was built it was for young families so it represented what Harlow was about and why it was built (respondent B).

This would suggest that the Family Group therefore helped residents to understand 'where they came from, what they cared for and who they were' (Flemming and von Tschamer, 1981: 9). This visual image of a family was found to bring a 'warmth' (respondent 15) to the residents of Harlow, in which they could endow meaning and shared characteristics with, a key component in creating a sense of identity (McCarthy, 2006).

McCarthy (2006) argues that in order to give a sense of identity, it is important that public art relates to the area's history. 60% of respondents felt that the public art in Harlow had no reflection of the town's history. Yet the importance of this was strongly felt by respondents, as 74% of those completing the questionnaire thought that even though Harlow is a new town, public art should still reflect its origins (figure 11). As respondent 7 explains,

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I think it's a nice thing to pass on to the children... for them to see what's gone on (in Harlow) and make their own choices and decisions
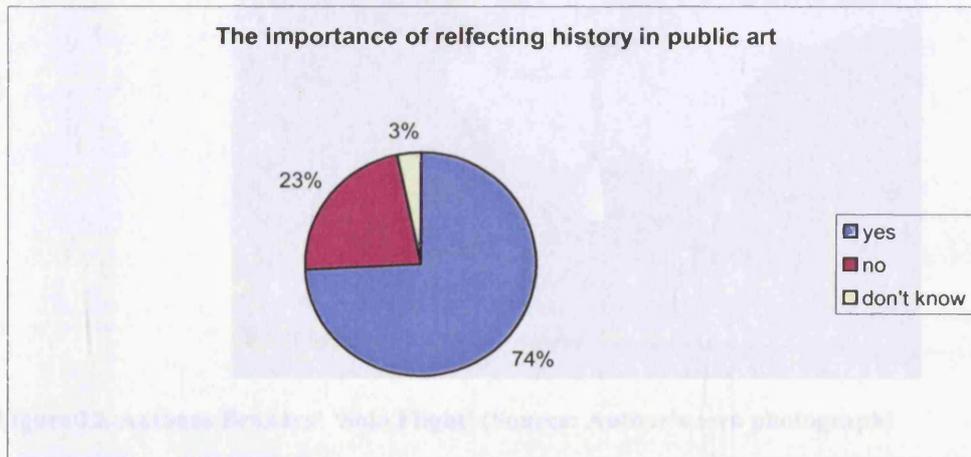
Figure 11. Do you think it's important that public art reflects Harlow's history?

Whilst public art can help claim a sense of identity through reflecting the history of the town (McCarthy, 2006), the first focus group discussed how reflections of the town's past needs to be incorporated with its future,

You need a balance... I'd like to see more foreign art come in, as we're a more multicultural town and that would reflect what the people of Harlow are becoming (respondent B)

Therefore, as well as understanding where the people of Harlow have come from (Flemming and von Tschamer, 1981), public art can help gain a sense of identity by understanding how Harlow is moving forward.

As civic identity is connected to the external image of an area (Hall and Robertson, 2001), respondents were asked if they felt public art gave an image of Harlow. In particular, Antanas Brazdys' Solo Flight (figure 12) was highlighted by many residents as projecting an image, as respondent 21 explained,

(The council) put a new statue (Solo Flight) here so people drive past it and think 'oh it's great to live in Harlow' when it isn't

Residents therefore felt that such an expressive and modern sculptures, like Solo Flight, were inappropriate in a town they felt was in need of investment (Hall, 1995).

Figure 12. Antanas Brazdys' 'Solo Flight' (Source: Author's own photograph)

Yet residents also thought that having a public art collection raised the profile of Harlow as a cultural centre, which was discussed in the first focus group,

> Public art identifies Harlow as a place where art matters, and I do think that's true of the town. We
> have a theatre group, dancing, ballet… it's an artistic town, despite its bad reputation (respondent B)

This would imply that people value public art in addressing preconceived misconceptions of their town, a key point raised by residents in other new towns such as Milton Keynes (AMH, 2006).

From these results it is clear that the majority of respondents think that public art in Harlow doesn't contribute to their sense of identity. However, the research shows that this is due to the inaccessibility of meaning of the more abstract artwork, in which they use the 'looks like' approach in order to relate to them. Residents also stressed the importance of reflecting the town's history, which was lacking in the public art in Harlow, as well as ensuring Harlow's future was incorporated. Yet the Family Group was felt by residents to be an exception, reflecting what it meant to be from Harlow, known as 'Pram Town'. Residents could also relate to and find meaning in the figurative image of a family. The research also showed that whilst certain public artworks, such as Solo Flight, projected an image of Harlow that was felt inappropriate, Harlow's sculpture collection in general showcased the under appreciated cultural aspects of the town.

4.1.3 Attitudes Towards Developing a Sense of Community

Advocates claim that public art can help in developing a sense of community by improving the quality of public spaces that a community uses as well as providing a focus for public culture. Public art can also provide a sense of pride and ownership in a community through participation in the creative art process (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

Questionnaire respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement 'I would like more public art where I live' (figure 13). 46% of respondents agreed, of which 10% strongly agreed, whilst 33% disagreed, of which only 2% strongly disagreed. 10% of respondents were unsure either way.
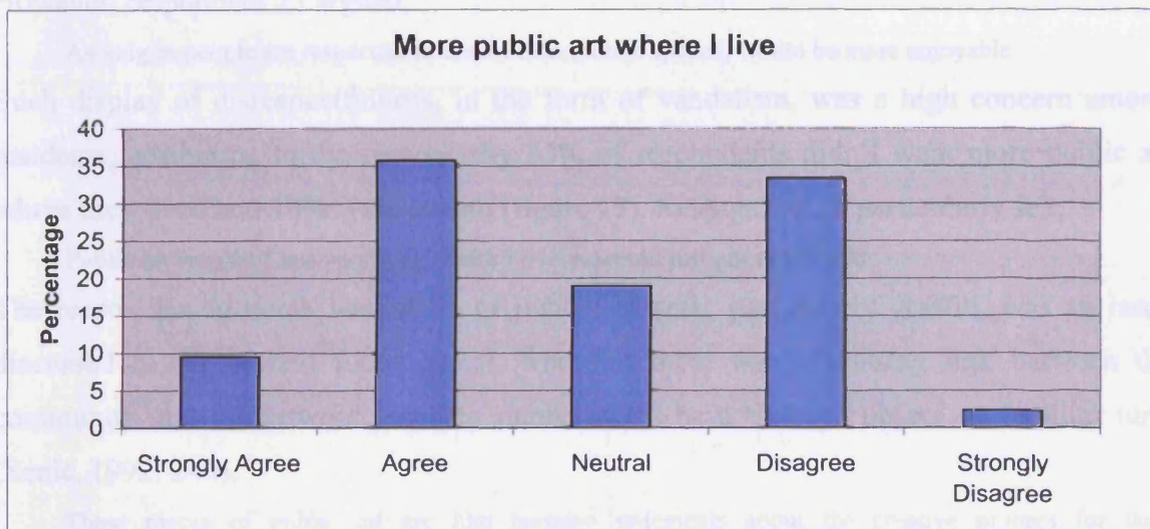
Figure 13. Attitude battery to statement '*I would like more public art where I live*'

Residents who would like to see more public art where they live felt that artwork was brilliant for the younger generation of their community,

(Public art) is something for the kids...they can play with (the sculpture), they love it (respondent 7)

As found in the street survey by AMH (2006), residents felt children had a higher level of awareness of the public art in Harlow, which was discussed in the first focus group,

We have a sculpture down the end of our road, the Sheep Shearer, and my grandson says 'what's that?'...'well how did they make that?' and so you sort of explain about public art ...then they get interested in it (respondent A)

Residents therefore believed that public art was a way of helping children in their cultural development, particularly for those 'that don't have (art) at home' (respondent 28). This, in turn,

was felt would improve the community by providing adolescents with an interest to occupy themselves, as respondent 8 argued,

> If youngsters did more things like (art) then perhaps there wouldn't be so much trouble on the streets...something for them to do

As well as playing an important role in children's lives, 79% of questionnaire respondents felt that public art made them enjoy public spaces more. This were largely attributed to the aesthetic improvements that public art can make, which can 'create a focal point' (respondent 32), 'make public spaces a bit more interesting' (respondent 36) which 'makes you want to be in that place' (respondent 28). By improving public spaces, and therefore increasing their use, residents are therefore more aware of the community in which they live (Brown, 1991).

However, respondent 23 argued,

> As long as people are respectful to the art then (public spaces) would be more enjoyable.

Such display of disrespectfulness, in the form of vandalism, was a high concern among residents, attributing to the reason why 35% of respondents didn't want more public art where they lived and 10% were unsure (figure 13). Respondent 29 particularly felt,

> Public art wouldn't last very long where I live, it would just get vandalised

The reason for so much vandalism of public artwork, particularly graffiti, was an issue discussed in the second focus group, who felt there was a missing link between the community and the artwork, causing public art to be a 'foreign object on familiar turf' (Senie, 1992: 240).

> These pieces of public art are like massive statements about the creative process for their creators...something that is totally alien to people that live (in Harlow) (respondent H)

The focus group felt that public art had elitist connotations and was 'not something that the ordinary person would do' (respondent F). Therefore, far from developing a sense of community, the public art of Harlow actually alienated people from their public spaces, to which graffiti enabled a 'reclaiming back of your space' (respondent H).

However, residents believed collaboration and participation in the public art process would engender a sense of ownership in their public spaces,

> In Harlow especially, it's drummed into you that the street...is the Council's, it's not *your* land...but if you had public art that the community produced then you'll have more ownership, definitely' (respondent F) (Stress added by author)

The quote shows that residents agree with advocates claiming public art acts as a vehicle to developing a sense of community, engendering ownership and thus reducing vandalism (Hall and Robertson, 2001; Sharp *et al.*, 2005).

The support of collaborative public art was also felt in the first focus group,

> We'd be putting something back into the town, ... and our children or grandchildren can say 'oh my grandfather did that (public art)', it's a bit of something for the local community (respondent B)

Residents suggest that a sense of pride would therefore pass down the family, contradicting critics who believe participatory public art does not guarantee a sense of community for future generations (Sharp et al., 2005).

Yet despite these elitist concerns towards public art voiced in the second focus group, 75% of questionnaire respondents disagreed with the statement 'public art only makes sense to those with an art education', of which 17% strongly disagreed (figure 14).

The importance of an art education in understanding public art
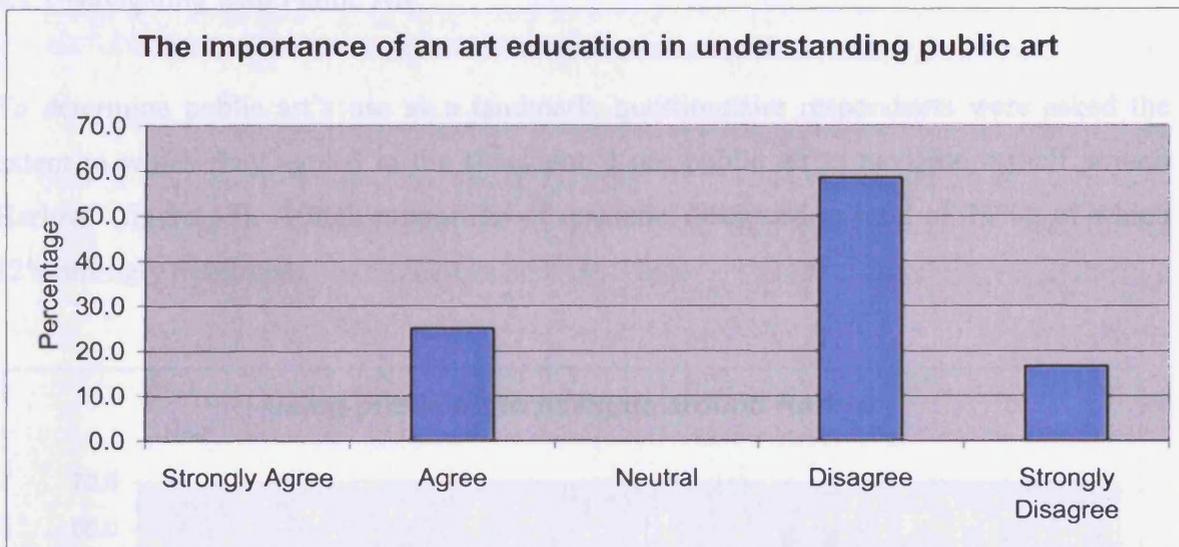
Figure 14. Attitude battery to statement *'Public art can only be understood by those with an art education'*

Residents felt very strongly that 'anyone can appreciate art' (respondent 24; 40) and that 'everyone is entitled to an interpretation' (respondent 7), even without an art education. Far from the meaning behind public art being an inaccessible object (Pattacini, 2000), residents believed 'anybody can respond to art' (respondent 39), with such stimulation of communication vital to sustaining viable communities (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

It is clear residents feel public art has great potential to develop a sense of community, to make shared spaces more enjoyable, especially for the younger generation. Rather than being an educational problem, residents felt dissatisfaction with the way that public art is introduced into Harlow. Through more participation in the creative process of public art, residents believed a stronger sense of ownership and pride in their community could be encouraged, thus reducing vandalism.

4.2 Public Art as a Landmark

This subchapter will investigate the second research question of this study; to what degree does public art function as a landmark by residents? This will be discussed in terms of how public art in general is used in navigating around Harlow, followed by a more specific investigation into the extent public artworks has evoked a strong image in residents.

4.2.1 Navigating with Public Art

To determine public art's use as a landmark, questionnaire respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed to the statement 'I use public art to navigate myself around Harlow' (figure 15). A high proportion of residents disagreed (a total of 73%), of which 12% strongly disagreed.
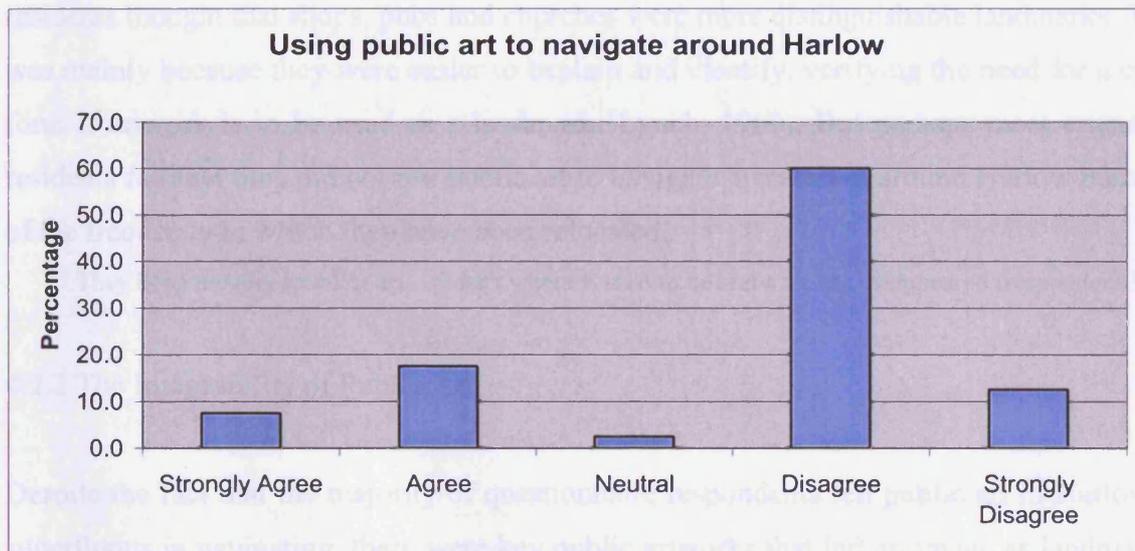

Figure 15. Attitude battery to the statement '*I use public art to navigate around Harlow*'

When residents were asked to explain why they didn't use public art in navigating, respondents felt that they didn't really notice the artworks in Harlow,

> People know (public art) is there but don't take any notice of it, they take it for granted, don't appreciate it (respondent 2)

Public art was consequently felt to have gone unnoticed in Harlow because the form of the artwork doesn't 'jump out' (respondent 12) at residents, with such bland art unable to impinge on the consciousness of daily lives and, therefore, left unnoticed (Philips, 1989, Hall 2007).

The poor degree to which residents noticed the public art in Harlow also became apparent in the second focus group. When failing to recollect a sculpture being discussed, one member of the group expressed,

> It's funny that you can live in Harlow all you're life and be like 'what sculpture opposite M&S?' (respondent F)

The focus group argued that the public artwork was hard to notice in Harlow as it was 'cluttered' (respondent F) amongst the telephone box and other street furniture, resulting in the failure of public art to act as an individual landmark (Pattacini, 2000).

However, even when residents did notice public art it didn't necessarily mean that it would be used as a landmark, as one respondent explains,

> It's a bit more difficult to say that 'oh it's by that (public artwork) which I can't really remember and kinda looks like something...just easier to say 'by the shops' (respondent 5)

Rather than public art acting as inspired pieces of urban sign making (Porch, 2000), residents thought that shops, pubs and churches were more distinguishable landmarks. This was mainly because they were easier to explain and identify, verifying the need for a clear form if artwork is to be used as a landmark (Lynch, 1960). But perhaps most crucially, residents felt that they did not use public art to navigate themselves around Harlow because of the frequency in which they have been relocated,

> They keep moving (public) art... it isn't where it used to be and a lot has disappeared (respondent 30)

4.2.2 The Imageability of Public Art

Despite the fact that the majority of questionnaire respondents felt public art in Harlow is superfluous in navigating, there were key public artworks that left an image as landmarks, thus contributing to the town's legibility (Lynch, 1960). From analysing the mind maps

that were undertaken at the beginning of both focus groups, the following sculptures were drawn from memory:

- Family Group
- Solo Flight
- Meat Porter
- Still Life
- Shenzou
- Obelisk
- Boar
- Philosopher

These public art landmarks can be compared to those identified by questionnaire respondents when asked if they found any public artwork in Harlow particularly memorable (figure 16). Five sculptures - the Family Group, Solo Flight, Meat Porters, Still Life and Shenzou – were identified in both exercises, reasons for which will now be discussed.

Memorable public art in Harlow
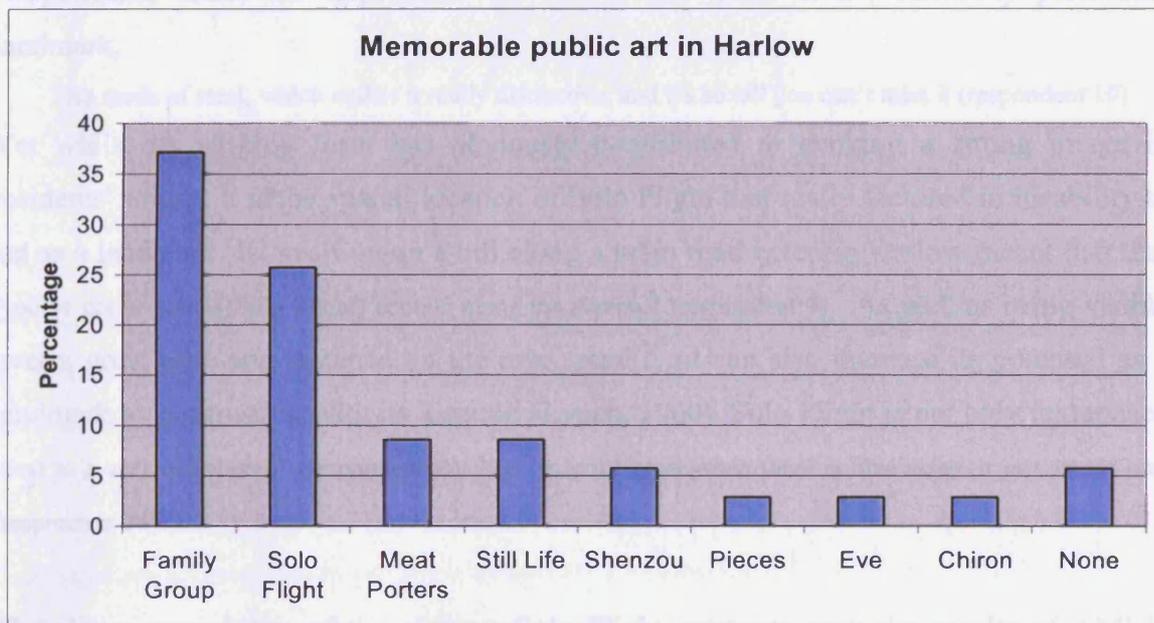
Figure 16. Is there any public artwork in Harlow you find particularly memorable?

Not only was the Family Group (figure 8) by Henry Moore drawn on the majority of mind maps in the focus groups, but also 38% of questionnaire respondents felt that it was their most memorable public artwork in Harlow (figure 16). As discovered in developing a sense of place (4.1.1) and identity (4.1.2), because Henry Moore was a local artist and the

Family Group represented what it meant to be from Harlow as a new town for families, residents felt strong associations with this sculpture. Respondents also had meaningful connections with the Family Group from their youth, in which they used to play on the sculpture.

> when I was younger I used to play on the (Family Group) (respondent 16)

This tactility that residents had with the sculpture when they were younger meant that the childhood memories of the sculpture were particularly stark.

This clear recollection of the Family Group sculpture as Harlow's most memorable public artwork proves the heavy influence that strength of meaningful and associations in creating a memorable landmark image (Lynch, 1960). However, factors other than association contributed to the strength of image of Harlow's second most memorable sculpture, Antanas Brazdys' Solo Flight (figure 12). The main reasons that Solo Flight had created an impression on 26% questionnaire respondents (figure 16), as well as being drawn on the mind maps, was due to the combination of its form and spatial location.

Respondents found the appearance of Solo Flight made it a particularly prominent landmark,

> It's made of steel, which makes it really distinctive, and it's so tall you can't miss it (respondent 10)

Yet whilst its striking form has obviously contributed to evoking a strong image in residents' minds, it is the spatial location of Solo Flight that really factored in its ability to act as a landmark. Its position on a hill along a main road entering Harlow meant that that 'you've got to notice (Solo Flight) coming along the Avenue' (respondent 9). As well as being visible over a great time and distance on the road, public art can also increase its potential as a landmark by contrasting with its location (Lynch, 1960). Solo Flight is not only juxtaposed 'next to a very old church' (respondent B), but 'it looks great when there is blue skies, it just stands out' (respondent 24).

The clear imageability of the abstract Solo Flight contrasts with the results of AMH's (2006) Milton Keynes street survey, which found figurative or animal resemblance sculptures more easily recognisable, increasing the emphasis on spatial location in making good landmarks (Lynch, 1960).

Ralph Brown's Meat Porters (figure 17) and Fred Watson's Still Life were both the third most memorable sculpture in Harlow with 7% of questionnaire respondents (figure 16) as well as featuring on mind maps drawn by the focus groups. As with the Family Group, childhood associations, such as playing on both of the sculptures, featured as reasons why these artworks had made an impression on the residents. With the Meat Porters, its graphic form further contributed to childhood memories, with residents remembering feeling 'scared' (respondent F), 'creeped out' (respondent 29) and 'fascinated' (respondent 2) by the sculpture.

Figure 17. Ralph Brown's 'Meat Porters' (Source: Author's own photograph)

Public art that acts as a landmark doesn't have to be liked either. In fact, artwork that causes controversy impinges on people's consciousness more than tame and bland artwork (Philips, 1989; Hall, 2007). This seemed the case for the Shenzou sculpture (figure 10), whose striking silver form has caused much controversy,

> (Shenzou) is useful if you want to find somewhere but I don't like it, it's horrible (respondent 8)

Further emphasising the importance of spatial location, the second focus group ended their discussion with the suggestion that public artwork in Harlow should be located in the centre of roundabouts to improve their function as a landmark. The focus group felt that these would act as ideal locations for public art as when 'you come into town you'll see the sculpture' (respondent G). Whilst locating public artwork at junctions involving path decisions can strengthen the image of a landmark (Lynch, 1960), the focus group believed it would

additionally help in navigating around Harlow by differentiating between the numerous roundabouts the town has.

The majority of residents found that Harlow's public art, in general, functioned poorly as a landmark to which they could navigate. This was attributed to the majority of artworks having a bland form, cluttered amongst the urban environment whilst frequently changing locations. However, certain public art sculptures did evoke a strong image on the majority of residents as landmarks. The high levels of association that surrounded the Family Group made this sculpture the most memorable for residents. In contrast, Solo Flight's striking form and spatial location meant that residents couldn't help but notice it. The importance of the location in contributing to a successful landmark and improving public art's function in navigating was emphasised with the suggestion by residents of more sculptures located at roundabouts.

6. CONCLUSION

With public art increasing in prominence within urban planning authorities, its successful integration into the urban environment is an issue of growing importance (Roberts, 1998). However, lack of research into the audience's attitudes towards public art is limiting the potential to properly inform policies and strategies (Hall and Smith, 2005; Hall, 2007). This study sought to address the lack of critical literature on the audience as a site of meaning, through two main research questions: firstly the study asked; to what extent does the advocacies for public art (developing a sense of place, identity and community) relate to the attitudes held by the public? The second question asked; to what degree does public art function as a landmark by residents?

The study shows that residents in Harlow believed public art helps in developing a sense of place through local artist Henry Moore's sculptures, which gives the town a unique iconography. However, the proliferation of 'parachute' art was felt to limit public art's potential make Harlow distinctive, as residents believed similar artworks could be found in other new towns nearby.

Residents were less positive about public art's ability to contribute to a sense of identity, using a 'looks like' approach in order to relate to more abstract sculptures. Residents placed an importance in public artwork reflecting the town's history, something thought to be lacking in Harlow, though with the exception of the Family Group. This sculpture was felt by residents to reflect the town's history as a 'Pram Town', enabling residents to understand what it meant to be from Harlow.

Residents believed public art had the potential to develop a sense of community through a collaborative process in the artwork's creation to give more pride and ownership in their neighbourhood, both now and for future generations. Public art was also valued by residents as playing an important role in the lives of the youngsters of a community. Residents felt that because the public art process in Harlow was not participatory, it alienated rather than connected people, and thus subjected to vandalism.

In investigating the degree to which public art functions as a landmark, residents were found not to rely on public art in navigating around Harlow, mainly due to bland,

indistinguishable artworks as well as many being relocated. Yet some sculptures evoked a strong image for the majority of residents, particularly those with clear associations, obvious form and, crucially, located in a contrasting and prominent sites. Residents believed improvements in the spatial location of public art, such as at roundabouts, would enhance their use as a landmark in navigating.

Far from being a waste of space, residents clearly hold value with their public art. Nevertheless, it seems this value can only be attributed with certain public artworks. In particular, public artwork that gives something unique to their town, that residents can relate to and encourages community participation, whilst also having memorable associations and a prominent spatial location, were the most appreciated

Due to the suitability of the case study of Harlow, whilst also taking into considerations the limitations of time constraints on this study, only three of the seven advocacies highlighted by Hall and Robertson (2001) were researched. A logical expansion of this study would therefore be to examine those advocacies that have not been investigated; addressing community needs, tackling social exclusion, promoting social change and educational value.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

1) What do you think of the public art in Harlow / other comments?

2) How far do you agree with the following statement?

Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

'Public art helps make Harlow ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
a distinctive place to live'

    2b) Please explain your choice.

3) Do you feel public art in Harlow has any relation to the sites they are situated in? Why?

    3b) Do you think this is important?

4) How far do you agree with the following statement?

Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

'Public art in Harlow helps ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
give me a sense of identity'

    4b) Please explain your choice

5) Do you think public art in Harlow reflects the town's history?

    5b) Do you think this is important?

6) Do you feel public art gives Harlow a particular image to those who visit Harlow?

    6b) Do you feel this image is appropriate?

7) How far do you agree with the following statement?

Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

'*Public art only makes sense to*   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐
those with an art education'

    7b) Please explain your choice.

8) Does public art make you enjoy public spaces more? Why?

9) How far do you agree with the following statement?

Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

'*I would like more public art*   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐
where I live'

    9b) Please explain your choice

10) How far do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

'*I use public art to navigate*   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐
myself around Harlow'

    10b) Please explain your choice

11) Is there any public artwork in Harlow you find particularly memorable? Why (not)?

12) What is the postcode of where you live?

13) What is your age?   18-25   26-35   36-45   46-55   56-65   66+
    Male/Female: ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Respondent	Sex	Age	Address
Saturday 19th July			
1	Female	36-45	CM19 5PM
2	Male	46-55	CM18 7PD
3	Male	36-45	CM18
4	Female	26-35	CM19
5	Female	18-25	Little Pardon
Sunday 20th July			
6	Male	56-65	CM19 5QH
7	Female	36-45	CM18
8	Female	66+	Hare Street
9	Male	56-65	
Monday 21st July			
10	Male	26-35	CM17 9LN
11	Female	66+	
12	Female	36-45	CM19 4AS
13	Male	56-65	
14	Male	66+	CM17 0LZ
Tuesday 22nd July			
15	Female	45-56	CM18 6SS
16	Male	26-35	CM19
17	Female	46-55	Potters Field
18	Female	26-35	CM20 3LG
19	Female	26-35	
20	Male	18-25	CM17 0GX
21	Male	35-46	CM18 6BJ
22	Female	66+	
Wednesday 23rd July			
23	Male	26-35	CM20
24	Male	56-65	Church Leys
25	Female	18-25	Newhall

Respondent	Sex	Age	Address
26	Male	45-56	Old Harlow
27	Male	25-36	The Stow
Thursday 24th July			
28	Female	18-25	Hornbeams
30	Female	56-65	CM17 0AG
31	Female	26-35	CM19 4QD
32	Male	66+	Brays Grove
33	Female	36-45	CM20 3HS
34	Female	46-55	
35	Male	46-55	CM17 9JP
36	Male	18-35	CM17 9HQ
37	Female	36-45	CM19 4LF
Friday 25th July			
38	Female	36-45	CM20 3RF
39	Male	56-65	Bushfair
40	Female	26-35	CM19 5AD
41	Female	36-45	Latton Bush
42	Female	46-55	CM20 3AF

APPENDIX C: FOUS GROUP RESPONDENTS

First Focus Group – Wednesday 30th July

Respondent	Sex	Age	Address
A	Female	56-65	Church Langley
B	Male	66+	Old Harlow
C	Male	26-35	The Stow
D	Female	36-45	Brays Grove
E	Female	18-25	Latton Bush

Second Focus Group – Friday 1st August

Respondent	Sex	Age	Address
F	Female	26-35	Katherines
G	Male	36-45	Old Harlow
H	Male	36-45	Tye Green
I	Male	56-65	Kingsmoor