

An Interview With Renowned Sculptor David Williams-Ellis By Pascale Hayward

by Editorial Team

Published 3 February 2015 at 13:05



For this interview, Pascale Hayward delves into the creative mind of David Williams-Ellis.

In 2014, David Williams-Ellis held a solo exhibition: "ELEMENTAL" in a prestigious London Mayfair gallery. I met up with David at the Portland Gallery and was totally taken by his human form sculptures ranging from delicate small figures for a home to stunning substantial sculptures created to stand forcefully in a landscape or garden.

Vibrance, Power, Grace, Femininity, and Timeless are the words I would use to describe the work of David Williams-Ellis. The larger sculptures in the exhibition: Maelstrom, Squall, Sunrise, The Muses are simply mind blowing. As I had the ideal opportunity, it only seemed right for me to try to get inside the mind of this renowned sculptor. And perhaps in doing so, gain a few tips.

LM: David, what was the outcome of your solo exhibition ELEMENTAL?
DWE: It has been really successful – the opening nights had a great buzz and the response has been incredibly positive.

LM: Why the name: ELEMENTAL?
DWE: I live high on a wonderful escarpment in Cumbria looking towards the Pennines which is constantly subjected to the changing vagaries of the weather. Storms can suddenly erupt from bright blue skies and torrential rain can give way to brilliant sunshine in a matter of minutes. I have tried to put the human figure into that context.



LM: You declare that your work is unique. What makes it unique?
DWE: For a few years now I have been experimenting with new patinations and the effect that the use of different chemicals has on my sculpture. I have tried to bring new challenging and exciting colours into my work, which have been inspired by the elements – fire reds, watery blues and deep golden hues. The results have been phenomenal and I am really excited by what we have achieved. I am not aware that any other sculptor at the moment is working in the way that I do.

LM: This was your first solo exhibition since 1994. What have you been doing in the last 10 years?
DWE: Various directions really. I have been awarded some pretty exciting commissions throughout Europe and Asia. I particularly enjoyed making Ray Gravell "Grav" for the Scarlets Rugby Stadium in Llanelli and am working on a life size sculpture of Lawrence of Arabia for his birthplace in North Wales. I have also been experimenting with working directly with plaster on large pieces such as the Guardians and Sentinels, both of which are now part of major collections.

However, I am never happier than in my studio with a lump of clay in my hand working on a new challenge.

LM: Are there any special stories you can tell us behind some of the sculptures you have created?
DWE: One of my most successful pieces was a life size male nude, called Adam, which I had modelled in clay. During its transport to the foundry in Basingstoke, about 60 miles away, on arrival, the sculpture literally fell apart and only the head, one arm and shoulders were intact. It actually looked rather amazing in its new form so I had it cast, in bronze, as it was!

LM: If you had to keep just one sculpture, which one would that be and why?
DWE: It would be a small, unique terracotta bust which was made from clay dug from a garden, which no longer exists, just outside Florence. It was a beautiful head in wonderful, soft terracotta and was my favourite piece for many years. I kept it in a box and one day, ten years later, I lifted it out to view it and my fingers went right through it and the whole bust dissolved into powder. It was rather like a scene from Fellini's 'Roma' when they opened the catacombs and Roman Frescoes dissolved in the air before their eyes.

LM: In a video made by the award-winning filmmaker, Charlotte Metcalf, a gallery owner in Italy explained that your work is bought mostly by women. How do you explain this?
DWE: Many women have told me that they sense that I have an instinctive feel for the beauty of the female form and that they can relate to the emotion that I express in my work.



LM: The press said your "prestigious commissions have brought international acclaim." Which commissions were those?
DWE: Arethusa at Scone Palace, in Perthshire; Wood Nymph at Rode Hall in Cheshire; The Leapers at the IFC Centre in Shanghai; The Watcher in Swires Building, Oxford House in Hong Kong and The Eagle for C Hoare & Co in The Strand.

LM: Do you create based on your own inspiration or do you think in terms of the market?
DWE: Inspiration drives my creation. I find it impossible to create something which does not come naturally to me. Sometimes an architectural site or a garden will stimulate my imagination but most of my inspiration is derived from working with a model.

LM: What does it take for a painter or sculptor or any artist to reach fame and wealth in his/her lifetime?
DWE: I don't believe that it is a desire for fame and wealth which drives the artist. Notoriety and financial gain do not necessarily produce good art. Integrity is key and I am only satisfied when I have produced a sculpture which has stretched my creative ability.

LM: Do you believe that an artist needs a lot of media exposure or any other form of marketing to be known and recognised as a great artist?
DWE: Art should speak for itself. People will talk about things they like, which excite them, bring them to the attention of their friends, and in this sense, successful art creates its own media exposure

LM: So, David, what now? For this year, the next 10 years?
DWE: I shall continue to seek visual truth and discover new ways to represent that truth.

David Williams-Ellis – where and how?

For more information on [David Williams-Ellis](#) visit: www.dwe.com

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