

Sam Sherborne

Sam Sherborne makes sculptures to process memories and concerns, clarify his ideas, and generate 'flow'. Beginning with a lot of quick sketching to produce drawings that are spontaneous and lively, tapping into serendipity and the unconscious. Using precise technical blacksmithing skills, he brings the sketches' energy and immediacy into forged metalwork.

His work embodies themes that can be categorised as either 'family', such as memories, emotions, dysfunction, and dynamics, or 'everyday', including the scourge of modern technology, work, impoverished modern-day rituals, and worry. Having an element of humour is essential, even when the subject matter is quite serious. Combining opposites such as humour and worry, Sherborne forges an unusual alloy.

"We put those in charge who are incapable of empathy, who are entitled and loyal only to their own. Who appear strong on the surface but are brittle and easily snapped. Entirely cut off from their own feelings."

Why did you choose to be an artist?

38

I'm not sure I chose to be an artist; it just seemed to happen. Maybe the family values that pervaded my childhood pushed me in that direction. In many ways, being an artist is like an illness you can't shake off. Most likely, it would be possible to earn a lot more money and have a great deal more status by doing something else. The trouble with being an artist is that the goal of making something that transcends the everyday and can lift you to a more enlightened state is both disarmingly brilliant and impossible in equal measure, making sure you are unlikely to give up or to be successful in an unequivocal concrete way.

How do you define success as an artist?

Initially, success meant being able to pay the rent in the forge with the fruits of my art or craft. This could mean a lot of batch production and time spent talking to customers and delivering products. Success could also be measured in articles, magazines, newspapers, and prestigious customers.

After a while, this seems less important, and the ability to generate 'flow' becomes a measure of success. Without it, I may as well do another job that is better paid. Therefore, 'flow' becomes the most influential measure of success. I get transported to a different place, time becomes unimportant, and my mood is lifted. It is more than just a distraction. I thought this would be enough, and I had this affirmed to a certain extent by a statement by Picasso, who stated that 70 percent of the justification



for making art did not involve a client or audience and was rather an internal journey. For a while, I decided just to enjoy this 70 percent and not have an audience.

This worked for a while, but I now feel I need to show my work, and success is to a greater extent defined by positive words and external validation. I can hope for both 'flow', and some recognition, as long as a fixation on the latter doesn't make the former dry up!

What advice would you give to yourself from 10 years ago?

My advice would be patient and take each day at a time. Enjoy the journey, and dwell less on obtaining quick results.

Does art help you address other areas of your life?

The subject matter I choose for my artwork is what I am thinking about, or even troubling me at any one time. Through making the artwork I can explore the topic thoroughly, and clarify how I feel about it. I'm not sure if this is catharsis, or just a means to processing information. If the topic isn't one that is captivating me, the artwork is in danger of not getting finished. I need a good topic to power me through many hours of labour intensive work. The combination of metalworking and mental processing delivers the psychological state of 'flow', which make the days in the workshop blissful.

What is your message to people outside the art world?

My message to those outside the art world is that we need art so as to engage with the mysteries and difficulties of being human. Art is a very practical way of navigating life in difficult times, and ignoring it will leave us depleted.

(bottom left) Wounded Leader, Forged Steel, 2019, 38 x 6 x 25 cm. (top right) Sulky Arrogant Saves My Life, Forged Steel, 2021, 40 x 40 x 20 cm

