



Memorial sculpture of Christie Hennessy

The project came to me via an open competition for which, when shortlisted, I made a model of my proposal. At this stage I knew very little of Christie or his work. I have had the good fortune to have spent the last six months with Christie in my studio. His voice echoes in my head: a mixture of innocence and wisdom, vulnerability and strength, both serious and joyful. Liberated by the guitar from an unpromising start in life, music allowed his genius to flower. He was an inspiring companion.

The true memorial to an artist is his work. To capture something of the nature of this mercurial spirit in bronze was a challenge. Sculpture is mute. To depict a man playing the guitar has its difficulties as it must combine sound and movement. To convey Christie's genuinely humble nature, I show him leaning against his pedestal, not elevated by it, as if the stone plinth were a guitar stool. On one side is carved his name and dates, on the other the words: 'Remember me, and I'll be there with you'. The whole is set on a circular seat, so others can sit and share his music.

Although a portrait, this is more an impression of man and guitar as one. As in music many notes combine to make up 'the sound, so with sculpture, detail must not overwhelm the whole.

My studio contains the plaster copies of many previous sculptures. One that dominates is a larger than life figure of jazz giant Duke Ellington, supported by a fragment of piano. This may have been a 'hard act to follow' - for the sculptor, but Christie proved giant enough in his own unique way. I hope I have captured something of his spirit in my memorial.

Nicholas Dimbleby

Clyst Hydon, October 8th 2009

NB. Other relevant work:

Duke Ellington for Soho Square

Sylvia Plath. Smith College Mass. USA

James Mc Neil Whistler. London, Battersea Bridge.

Capt. Cook . Great Ayton , Yorks

Green Man and Relic. Highgrove House.Glos.

Sir Steve Redgrave.

Biog footnote: N.D. is the son of the late Richard Dimbleby , of whom he made a bust for Westminster Abbey, and brother of broadcasters David and Jonathan.