



# Slate Bust

Daniel Harvey

---

## On display

**Title/Description:** Slate Bust

**Artist/Maker:** Daniel Harvey

**Born:** 1985 - 1990 circa

**Object Type:** Sculpture

**Materials:** Slate

**Measurements:** h. 550 x w. 420 x d. 300 mm

**Accession Number:** 1127

**Historic Period:** 20th century

**Copyright:** © Dan Harvey

---

*Slate Bust* is composed of broken roof slates bonded with car body filler and powdered graphite. It was constructed by stacking slate shards inside a mould of the artist's upper body in horizontal layers, like a brickwork lattice. The bust slots into a wooden base with a single metal bar incorporated into the slate matrix; it is not fixed to the base. It is a heavy object of approximately 20kg. [1]

Harvey's environmental sculpture was included in Peter Greenaway's 1988 film *Drowning by Numbers*, and the following year his living sculpture was featured in Derek Jarman's film *War Requiem*. From then on, Harvey worked with Heather Ackroyd, whom he married, after they had met at an event she was curating, and they discovered that they were using similar materials. [2]

Harvey and Ackroyd are acclaimed for their work that investigates the light-sensitive properties of seedling grass, working with the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research. Their first joint project was *L'altro lato*, in 1990, in Italy. Ideas of nature and structure, control and randomness are juxtaposed in their work to reveal a time-based practice with intrinsic bias towards process and event. [3] They have exhibited in galleries, museums and sites worldwide and their research has included a series of expeditions to the High Arctic with Cape Farewell, looking at the effects of global warming on the ecosystem.

Robert and Lisa Sainsbury also commissioned a 1996 monumental work titled *Seven Slate Towers* from Harvey (at Kew Gardens). They had seen his work at his degree show at the Royal College of

Art in 1986 and wanted a central water feature for their 'Secluded Garden' they were donating to Kew Gardens. *Seven Slate Towers* is a group of seven coiling towers of different heights made of angular slate pieces, culminating in circular rings at the top. The twisting and layered character of the towers was originally inspired by cutting away the surface of a pinecone. The towers have the appearance of chimneys or termite mounds and refer to the plant life of Kew Gardens, particularly cacti, and to the DNA spiral. [4]

Katharine Malcolm, March 2023

[1] Conservation notes from Maria Ledinskaya, Sainsbury Centre

[2] <https://artuk.org/discover/artists/harvey-dan-b-1959>

[3] <https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/profiles/ackroyd-harvey/>

[4] <https://www.vads.ac.uk/digital/collection/PMSA/id/1457/>

---

---

## Further Reading

'Artists in Britain Since 1945' by David Buckman (Art Dictionaries Ltd, part of Sansom & Company)

---

---