

## NEVILLE RAE A TOWN FOR TOMORROW

*Brian Miller came to hold the position of town artist almost by accident. He was working for Rolls Royce at the time, drafting exploded diagrams and other technical drawings, and attending a class on Industrial Design at the Glasgow School of Art in the evenings. He used to spend a lot of his time at work doodling, creating tiny abstract images the size of postage stamps in preparation for future paintings.*

*Brian applied for a job as a draftsman for Cumbernauld in 1962, and took with him to the interview some samples of his technical drawing on tracing paper. As the paper was so delicate, he placed sheets of cardboard between the layers. As chance would have it, Brian had left examples of his doodles drawn across the sheets of cards.*

*During the interview, the interviewer enquired about Brian's evening class at GSA and about his painting and sculpture for exhibitions in Glasgow, asking to see examples of the work. At first Brian expressed regret, saying he had no examples with him. But, as the interview was drawing to a close and he was putting away his drawings, he came across his little doodles. The interviewer became very excited upon being shown the work, and called in Cumbernauld's chief architect, Sir Hugh Wilson. The two conferred over the images, and swiftly offered Brian the role of town artist to Cumbernauld, the town of tomorrow. He was to be the first artist employed on a full time basis within the UK New Town system.*

For the next twenty eight years **Brian Miller** worked as Cumbernauld's first, and only, town artist. After initial doubts over which department he should be placed in, he was employed in the department of town architecture and planning, effectively a civil servant with all the standard terms of contract and retirement at the age of sixty-five. His position within this department meant that he became involved in the early discussions about how to shape the new town. Miller treated Cumbernauld like a blank canvas. He used the masses of concrete as a backdrop before which to explore his own unique form of abstract expressionism. His work varied from large concrete sculptures to paintings on gable ends and underpasses. In some cases he tried to use certain colours in certain neighbourhoods, effectively colour coding the urban landscape in order to help people navigate their way around the town, adding character to the different areas through the simple signifier of the colour palette.

For the past year **Neville Rae** has been working closely with Brian Miller and his archives in order to initially celebrate and subsequently reinstate the unrealised public art proposals. This show brings together a collection of eleven black and white photographs with colour collage, and six original maquettes. These were all proposals for public art within the new town of Cumbernauld, although the majority of them were never realised. By displaying these proposals, Rae has brought new life and recognition to hypothetical artworks which have lain dormant and unseen for nearly fifty years. A native of Cumbernauld, Rae is fundamentally concerned with the exploration of the history of post-war architecture in Scottish new towns. He is interested in the melancholy and sadness of a modernist tradition which never quite materialised. He explores and develops the fictional creations of the town planners, highlighting the presence of imagination and flights of fancy within these seemingly desolate environs in order to emotionally and spiritually reclaim the so-called "town for tomorrow". His exploration focuses upon those unrealised works which transgress the imaginary border between art, architecture and landscape.

For more information about the exhibition, talks and events, please contact Amy Dennis:  
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