



UOA D32

ART AND DESIGN:
HISTORY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



RESEARCHER

Kenny Hunter

OUTPUT TITLE

The Southwark Memorial

OUTPUT TYPE

Artefact

DATE

2018

FIG. 1
Southwark Memorial, bronze,
6 x 3 x 2.13 m, 2018. Photo
Kenny Hunter.



01 / STATEMENT

The output is a bronze sculpture of a youth and a fallen tree on a low base (dimensions: 6m x 3m x 2.13m). The base bears an inscription by the Scottish poet Hamish Henderson.

The sculpture is installed in London, in Elephant and Castle's recently constructed public space, Walworth Square. The sculpture involved the bronze casting of a fallen ash tree and a bronze figure of a boy made through clay modelling and casting.

Hunter was competitively selected and commissioned by Southwark Council to create a permanent public artwork that would both animate a new civic space and serve as a memorial to war and conflict in the year that marked the centenary of the end of the First World War.

The commissioning committee included the Leader of the Southwark Borough Council, Imperial War Museum curators and members from the Royal Society of Arts. Hunter worked alongside the Contemporary Art Society Consultancy, Lendlease, and Southwark Borough Council to realise the piece.

The output is part of Hunter's longstanding investigation into the contemporary purpose of memorial sculptures, their function as collective sites of reflection and remembrance and their experience by diverse publics.

02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

The output is an outcome of Hunter's longstanding practice research into public sculpture, in particular memorial and commemorative figurative sculpture. The research investigates three key themes.

The first concerns the conflict between the trauma of war and the idealism of childhood. This takes expression as a juxtaposition of a cast of a fallen tree and the life size sculpture of a youth.

The second concerns the relation between the animate and the inanimate – the natural world and nature as ruined by war. This takes expression in the relation between this bronze cast of the tree and the living trees that surround it in its installed site.

Lastly, the sculpture brings together the traditional and the contemporary, in renewing the genre of commemorative figurative sculpture and the medium of bronze for a contemporary social function. It addresses questions about the contemporary function of such sculptural practice and interrogates the ongoing value of traditions such as bronze casting.

FIG. 2
Bronze sections being welded together. Photo Kenny Hunter.

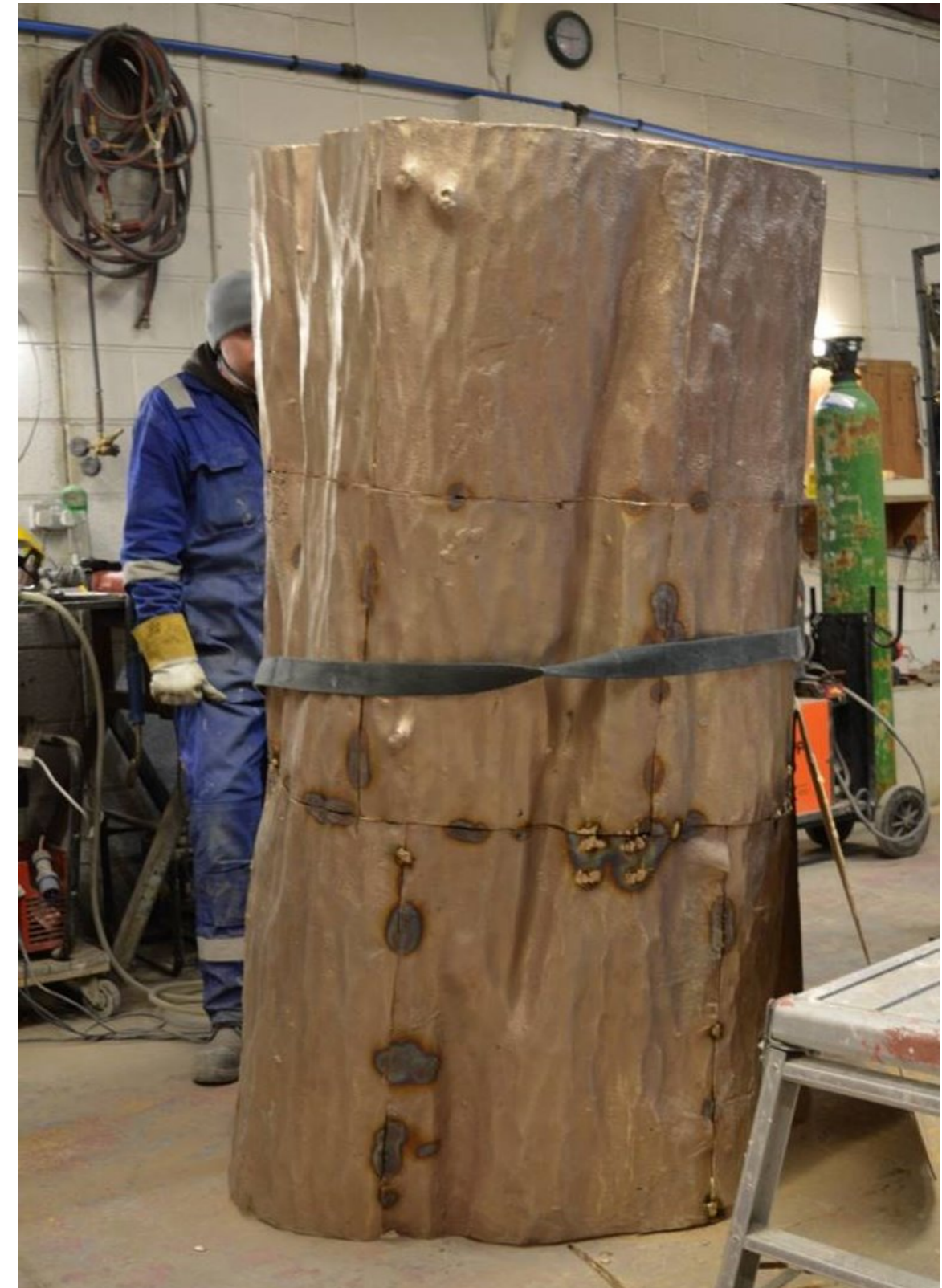


FIG. 3
Southwark Memorial, bronze,
6 x 3 x 2.13 m, 2018. Photo
Kenny Hunter.



03 / ORIGINALITY

Research into the history of commemorative sculpture informed Hunter's decision to foreground empathy over reverence as the primary register of the work, and his decision to embrace a horizontal rather than vertical compositional format as a means of encouraging a more immediate, affective engagement.

By embracing a horizontal format, Hunter subverts the customary verticality associated with the 'heroism' of commemoration. By placing at its centre an anonymous youth, a figure who could belong to many ordinary families, Hunter challenges the customary association of public memorials with public figures or groups of combatants, inviting us to instead see the heroic within the everyday individual as well as the 'anonymity' of suffering. Empathy displaces reverence as the dominant affect of sculpture.

In this way, Hunter's work can be contextualised within the lineage of the 'Counter-monument' movement, which challenged the way traditional public monuments upheld the ideologies of state authority. Whereas many of the counter-monument works were performance-based, Hunter insists on the critical potentials of the traditional media and genre of monumental sculpture (figuration; bronze). By staging a critique of the function of memorial sculpture from within its established materials and forms, the research brings new knowledge to our understanding of public sculpture, and the relation of contemporary sculpture to its histories.



FIG. 4
Example of Hunter's previous works of public sculpture: *I Goat*, 2011. Aluminium, paint and concrete. Spitalfields, London. Photo Kenny Hunter.

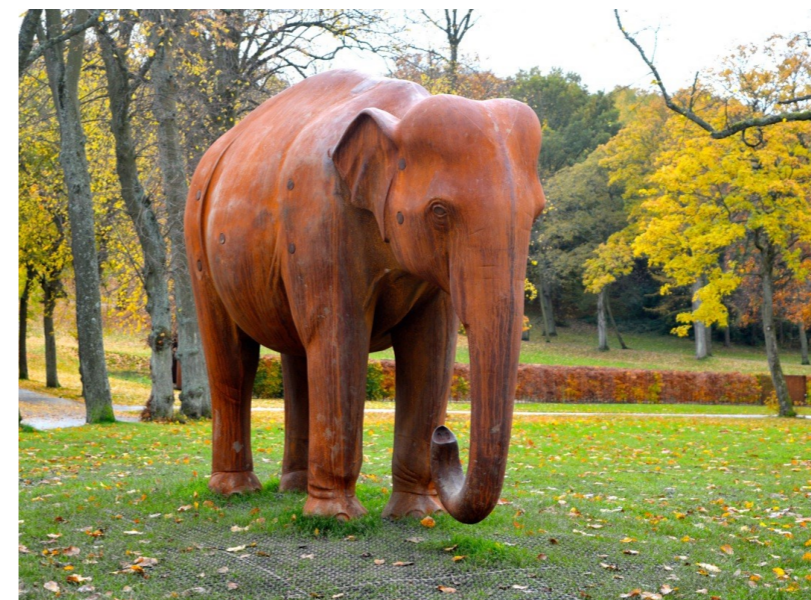


FIG. 5
Example of Hunter's previous works of public sculpture: *Elephant for Glasgow*, 2015. Iron. Bellahouston Park, Glasgow. Photo Kenny Hunter.

04 / RIGOUR

The sculpture was made through three processes. The figure of the boy was modelled in clay, then cast in polyester resin and further modified before being passed through the lost wax bronze casting process. A fallen ash tree was sourced through Edinburgh City Council and cast and copied into polyester resin sections before being used to produce bronze versions through sand casting.

The casting of the tree was a particularly challenging and laborious process, which involved the following stages: initially, plaster mould sections were taken from the original tree from which polyester resin sections were cast. These sections were reassembled and the tree was further refined and altered, before being used to produce bronze versions through sand casting method. These bronze sections were then reassembled and welded together again to create a single form. Once the tree was completed, the figure of the boy was attached with an internal substructure. Finally, the base was fabricated from stainless steel box sections and welded copper sheet with a cast bronze inscription. The patination was achieved using a cold copper nitrate solution.

Throughout the design phase, Hunter worked closely with Gillespies Landscape architects to ensure that the memorial and the surrounding planting of mature trees were treated as interdependent elements.

Hunter also had access to community engagement work undertaken in 2016 that considered the impact of war and conflict within a domestic context, the importance of civic spaces that enable quiet reflection and remembrance, and the contemporary role of public sculpture in community settings. The steering group that oversaw this project included representatives from Southwark Borough Council, the Imperial War Museum, the Contemporary Art Society and the British Legion.



FIG. 6
Hunter modelling the clay figure.
Photo Kenny Hunter.



FIG. 7
Mould making for the ash tree.
Photo Kenny Hunter.



FIG. 8
The resin cast of the ash tree.
Photo Kenny Hunter.



FIGS. 9 & 10
Moving the cast tree to the workshop. Photo Kenny Hunter.

FIG. 11
Work in progress. Photo
Kenny Hunter.



FIG. 12
The figure being attached to
tree form. Photo Kenny Hunter.



FIG. 13
Sculptors model of Southwark
Memorial 2017 early design stage.
Model by Kenny Hunter.

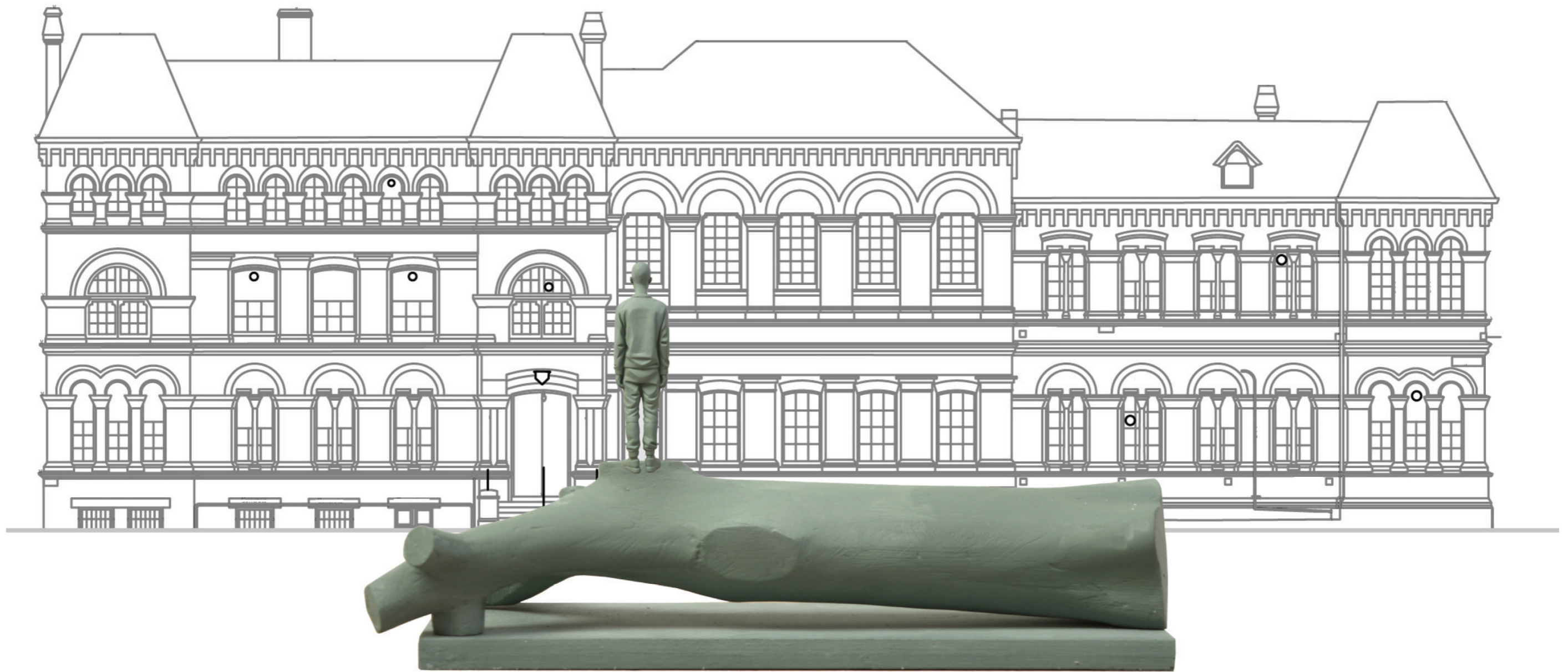




FIG. 14
Detail. Sculptors model of
Southwark Memorial 2017 early
design stage. Model by Kenny
Hunter.

05 / SIGNIFICANCE

Installed in a popular public space in London, Hunter's sculpture has become part of the urban fabric and is experienced by large numbers of people daily. By re-inventing the memorial as a public platform that can connect to a living community in the present, the sculpture acts as a catalyst for collective commemoration and remembrance within diverse communities.

Hunter was invited to present a public lecture at University College London. The work received strong reviews. *Artlyst* commented that 'Hunter's youth still has that reassuring monumental quality we all expect from civic statuary, but without its antiquated period aspect.'

<https://www.artlyst.com/previews/kenny-hunter-memorial-war-reconciliation-clare-henry/>

'The Walworth Memorial demonstrates not only an exemplary work of contemporary art for the public realm, but equally a forward-thinking and socially important methodology for commissioning public art. The process for developing the brief for the sculpture was co-designed by local communities, who through an artist-led engagement programme developed the key themes and aspirations for a 21st Century memorial to war and conflict, focusing on messages of hope and reconciliation as a response.'

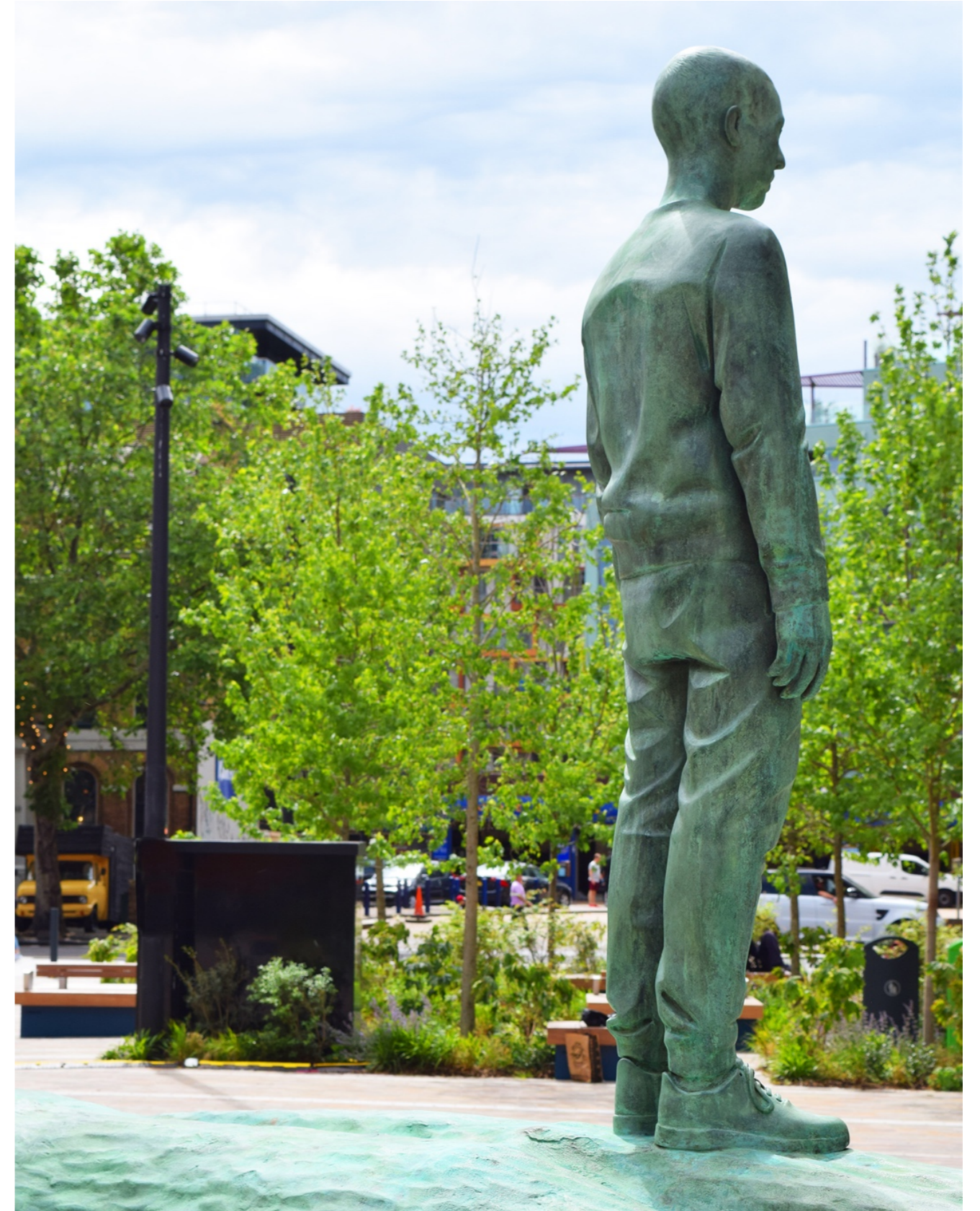
Kenny Hunter's artwork translated these themes into a memorial that celebrates the human, the universal and a sense of looking to the future as much as commemorating the past.'

Fabienne Nicholas,
Head of Consultancy,
Contemporary Art Society,
Mayor of London Design Advocate



FIG. 15
Hunter speaking at the opening ceremony, November 2018.

FIGS. 16–19
Southwark Memorial, bronze,
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