

## ***Life***

A 1.8 metre-high aluminium resin figure mounted on a 5 metre-high brushed stainless steel plinth, by Lucy Glendinning

Made in 2007 and commissioned by Redrow Homes and Persimmons Homes

Located at Jennet's Park roundabout on Peacock Lane



### **The tradition of outdoor sculptures of people — and, in particular, of women**

Sculpted human figures can be found on plinths in civic squares throughout the UK. A great number of these sculptures are portraits, often of royal personages or war heroes.

There are also statues — usually of women — which are not portraits, but which serve to personify values such as justice and freedom. Famous examples include Lady Justice (1907), on top of The Old Bailey criminal court in London, who stands arms outstretched holding a sword and a pair of scales, and The Statue of Liberty (1884), who has a broken chain at her feet and who carries a torch.

Sculptures that idealize women as maternal and sexual beings (and also men for their physical strength) adorn many civic buildings — especially those constructed during the nineteenth century.

There's another quite different context, too, in which sculptures of women can be found: decorative female figureheads were traditionally carved onto the prows of ships, to placate the gods of the sea.

The vast majority of these sculptures were created by male artists.

## **What did the artist who created the figure sculpture called *Life* intend it to mean?**

Lucy Glendinning, the artist responsible for *Life*, has said: 'I wanted to make a sculpture that has an uplifting presence for the residents of Jennet's Park. By facing southwards towards the sun, the androgynous figure appears to defy gravity, encompassing life and expressing lightness and optimism about the future.'

She calls her figure 'androgenous' but it is undeniably female, with an athletic build.

## **What distinguishes *Life* from other, more traditional, sculptures of female figures?**

*Life* is noticeably stripped of many clues to her identity. She has no clothes, no hair, no adornments and she carries no objects. She is set free, too, in terms of gesture, and her presence is entirely ambiguous. Her lofty position high on a narrow plinth gives her command of all she surveys and, at the same time, a certain vulnerability.

The artist leaves us to decide what the figure is doing. She is leaning forward, something like a figurehead on a ship. Or perhaps she's about to dive into the air, or even fly? Or perhaps she's walking in a stately fashion with invisible robes trailing behind her?

But one thing is unambiguous: the figure is about to do something. She is forward-looking and full of potential, as the artist intended. She looks up towards the street of new houses to offer inspiration to the inhabitants.

## **Information about the artist**

Lucy Glendinning is based in Somerset and previous commissions include works for Saint John's Square, Blackpool, the docklands development in Portishead, Northampton Town Centre and a Plymouth Shopping Centre. Many of these works are variations on a similar theme to her sculpture in Bracknell.