



CORPUS

A SERIES OF STANDING STONES TO ENGAGE AND REFLECT ON THE ANATOMY AND PSYCHE OF BEING HUMAN

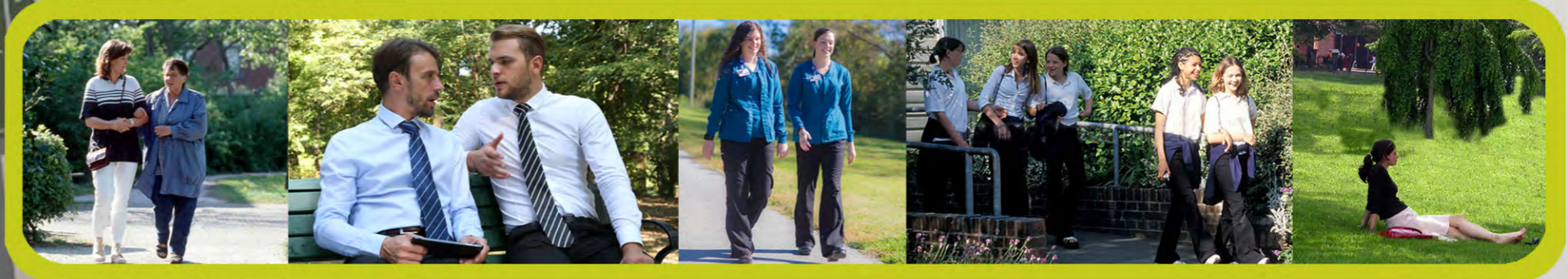


THE OVAL

CORPUS

INTRODUCTION

CORPUS is an artwork proposed for the 'Oval' in the grounds of Addenbrookes Hospital and the University of Cambridge. This grassy field is traversed by a variety of people moving back and forward across the campus. Students, patients, visitors, doctors, academics, all focusing on where they are going or coming from. Some travel swiftly, others meander, a few meet and have lunch, friends stop to chat, others sit alone and deliberate. There are school kids too, larking and laughing as they cut through to a nearby comprehensive.



In April of this year we were commissioned to propose a permanent artwork for the Oval. The work is to accompany the construction of the new Cappella Building, which will draw together four research institutes on one site, each looking at human health at a cellular level, but from the different specialisms of Immunology, Stem Cell Research, Haematology and Therapeutics. The scientific work which will be pursued here would have been hard to imagine just a few decades ago and will no doubt continue to develop in directions we cannot presently conceive of. This ever expanding field of knowledge, facilitated by modernity, is never-the-less focused on our own ancient anatomy and physiology.



HUMAN



DEER



SHEEP



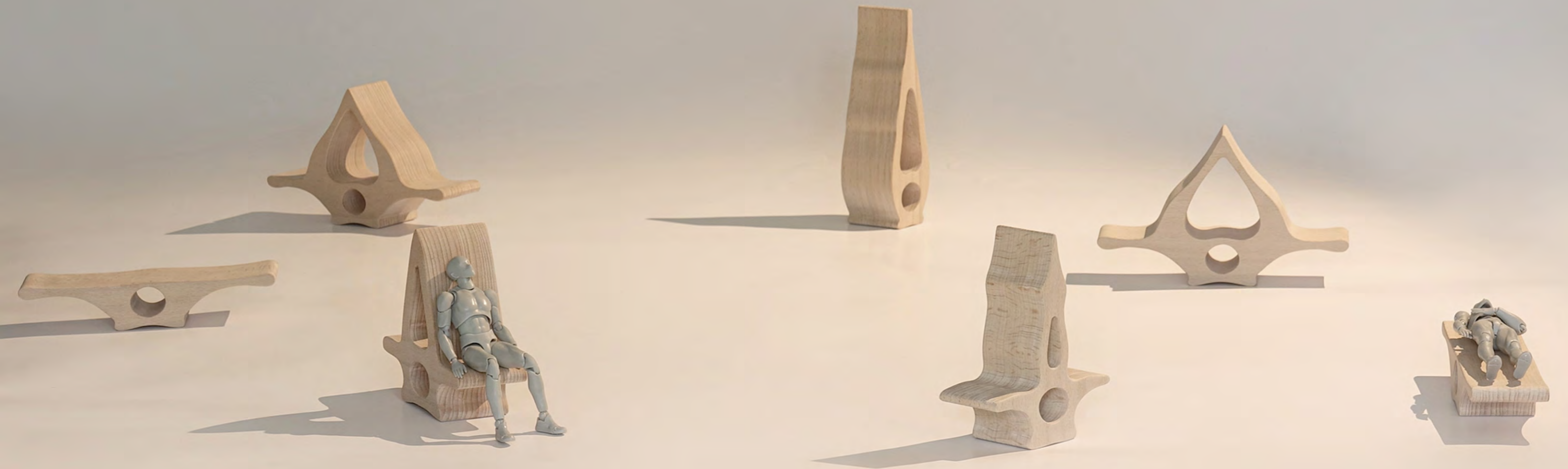
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The artwork we are proposing makes a connection between our ancient physiology and the modernity of our understanding in this field. It draws on the structure of a vertebra bone, a sophisticated design solution which we have in common with many other animals who wander the earth, swim in its oceans or fly through its atmosphere. The spine has come to epitomise inner strength, persistence and determination. It is sometimes conceived of as a single column that stretches, bends and toils, but it is of course made up of multiple linked units that allow complex connections to be made. In the context of the hospital and university campus, the idea of connected units working together seems resonant, the symbol of bone, as both a structural support and the vital source of our life-giving blood production, seemed an appropriate icon to begin our thinking.



PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF THE BODY

On first sight CORPUS will appear like a series of standing stones, reminiscent of abstracted vertebra shapes. As the stones are of human scale, their forms will invite interaction. People who engage with them will discover that the external profile of each has been determined by the proportions of the human figure and echo a series of positions from recumbent though to standing. Whilst the structures effectively act as an individual seat or bench, the various forms will encourage different ways to sit, recline, lie or lean on their cool stony surfaces. The artworks allow the user to experience different perspectives and physical sensations, offering an opportunity to relax and recalibrate.



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In a previous artwork we made, called *Rosnes Bench*, we saw at first hand how transporting the simple act of lying down is for the user. Just letting someone stop, recline and be still, opens them to a heightened sensorial reality, of sound, sight, smell and feelings which allows them to tune-in more intimately to their immediate surroundings. Our proposed work for Cambridge, will offer a range of different resting positions utilising unusual orientation and sight lines within the campus. This will allow the user to see and experience their everyday surroundings in a new and unexpected way. The work urges a shift from habitual behaviour, suggesting that there are other ways to experience and engage with the world.

"I didn't actually mean to do this but it seems to be a genuine enough phenomenon therefore it is worthwhile commenting on. I lay on that bench for about 15 or 20 minutes, then got up and started to walk and it slowed down my perception of the wood, I can't explain it any better than that, I am picking up more in the way of colour, more in the way of textures, smells, sounds, a trickle of water behind me that kind of thing and I don't know if that was deliberate when Dalziel + Scullion came to design these benches if it was it's a simple work of genius but don't take my word for it come and try it yourself. The effect for me was really quite extraordinary."

Marc Stevens BBC Scotland 'Out Of Doors'



CORPUS









CLASSICISM AND ABSTRACTION

Whilst not fully determined at this stage, we imagine the proposed sculptural structures being cast in a composite material that incorporates stone dust.

There are a wide variety of ground minerals available that can be incorporated with cold cure resins and cast in bespoke moulds. Whatever mineral is used will determine the look of the final cast. For example, Portland dust gives a soft, warm hue compared to the cool grey/blue of granite dust. Whilst the granite might emphasise *stoniness*, the Portland version would make more reference to bone. However, we are particularly interested in the possibilities of using a marble dust (again a wide variety are available), visually linking this abstract work to its classical predecessors. 'Cultured' marble, which is in common use commercially, and would have the cool feel and glistening translucency of natural marble. We see this contemporary interpretation of the human profile as having a link to the classical tradition of figurative sculpture that used marble or stone to express ideas and feelings about humanity with real permanency. Here however the human form is abstracted in ways that are both futuristic and ancient.

A UNIQUE PLACE

CORPUS takes its name from the Latin word for body. Its meaning can further extend to suggest: entirety, the main body or a collection. As such it would seem to encompass the thinking behind this grouping of stones and the meditative environment they intended to create. We imagine the structures being arranged in a loose circle or semi circle, generating a sense of being within a special and resonant place. Such an arrangement recalls the ancient monuments scattered across the British Isles, anchoring our ancestors travels, ways of thinking and beliefs. The exact purpose of their standing stones, henges and hill figures remain a mystery to our modern world, none-the-less we feel a tangible connection with the very human minds that conceived them. The CORPUS stones will similarly encourage people to perceive the Oval as a special place, to relax, reflect, gather in and perhaps recalibrate.

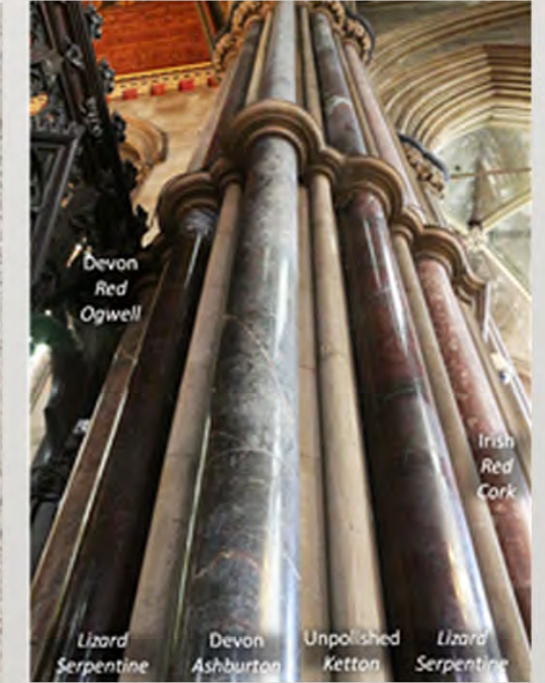
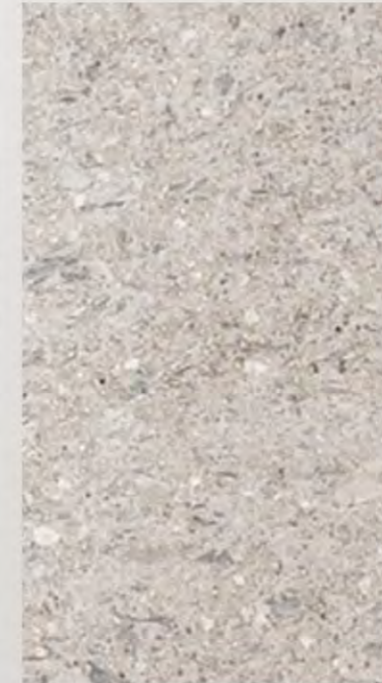
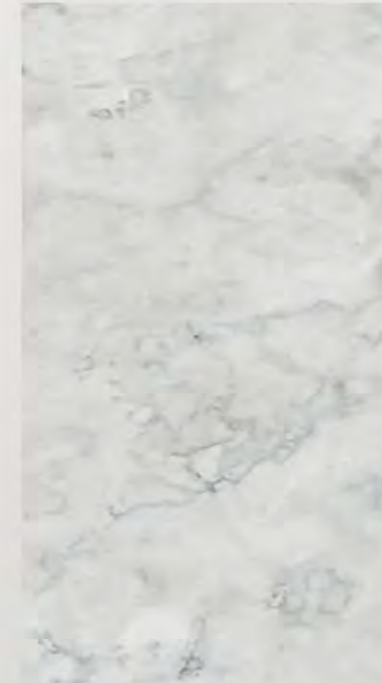


THE CHAIR

The proposed artwork is designed to first attract the visual attention of passers-by and then to encourage a more physical engagement through first touch then leaning, perching, reclining or lying flat out on the stones smooth surfaces. This will require an acknowledgment of ‘chair’ functionality within some of the forms. Ergonomic considerations will be important in the design of each stone so that it creates an appropriate profile to support this human interaction.

MATERIALS

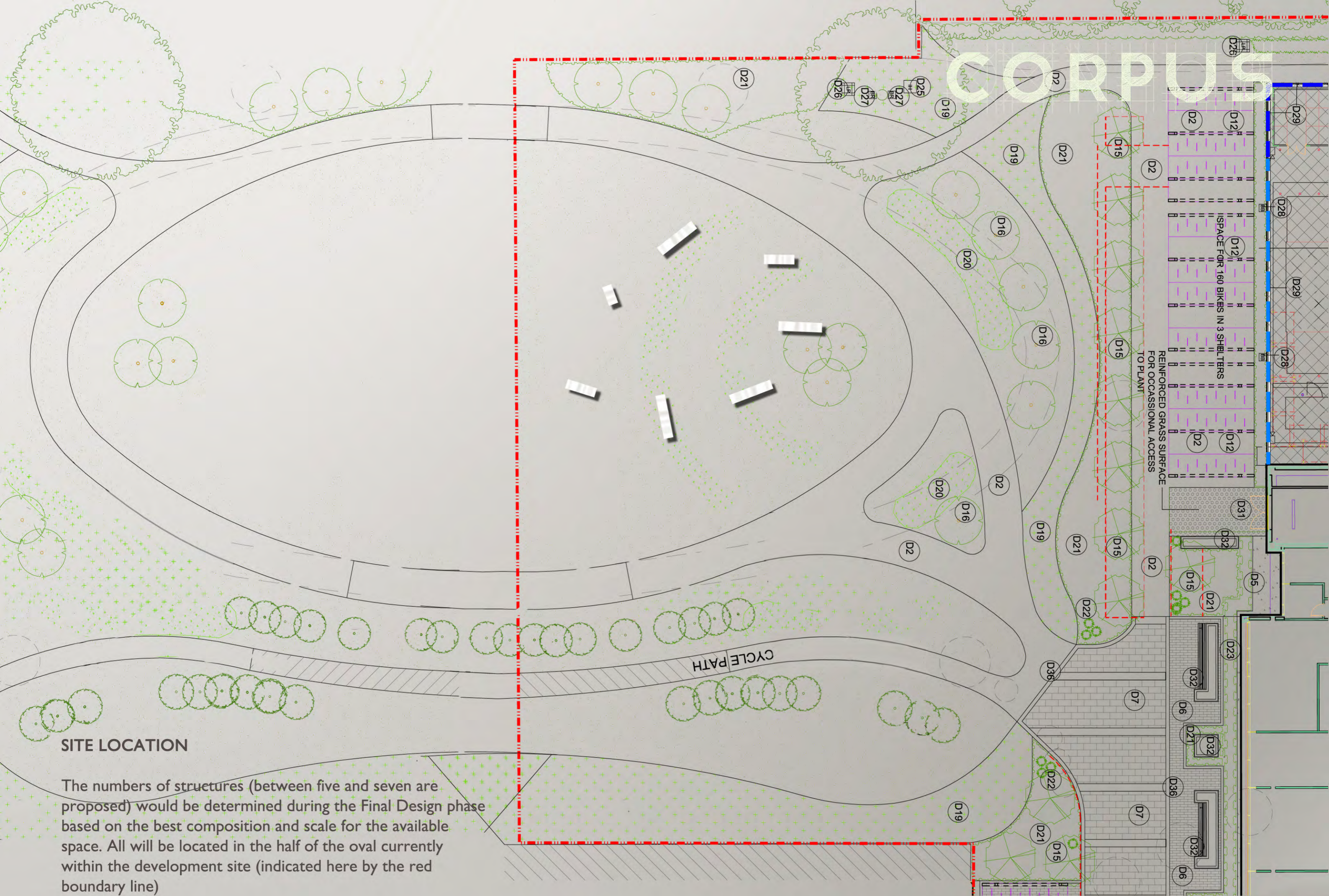
There are various options open to us in the methods and materials involved in realising this sculptural work. We anticipate this will incorporate bespoke artisan construction of the primary initial shapes, moulds will be made from these that will then go to a commercial caster, after which they would be hand finished to achieve the smooth surface we require. These options would be fully explored and costed should our concept proposal be invited to proceed to the final design stage.



We propose to use a fine stone powder mixed into a gypsum composite and would experiment with ways to produce a beautiful subtle finish throughout the forms. The surface would be of a silky nature, pleasing to touch, neither glossy nor matte but somewhere in-between. No joints or seams would be visible on the forms.

As previously mentioned, there would be scope to experiment with the choice of stone dust that could be incorporated into our casting mixture each dust producing quite marked differences in appearance. If we decided on marble there are only four types of ‘true’ marble that occur in Britain, all are in Scotland and only one is still quarried (at Ledmore in Assynt). There are however other kinds of stone which when dressed have been used decoratively and look like marble. A wonderful example of these can be found in St John’s College Chapel in Cambridge, which features stone quarried in Devonshire and polished to a marble-like finish. If however it was felt beneficial to reference a more classical association, then Carrera marble has been imported into Britain since Roman times and is relatively easy to obtain. Should our proposal be accepted we would start to enquire after and develop tests using a range of powdered marbles and other stones to create the best aesthetic and conceptual finish for the work.

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SITE LOCATION

The numbers of structures (between five and seven are proposed) would be determined during the Final Design phase based on the best composition and scale for the available space. All will be located in the half of the oval currently within the development site (indicated here by the red boundary line)



FABRICATION AND INSTALLATION

Extensive research would be carried out to determine the most ergonomic shapes to form the proposed 'vertebrae' sections, these would first be constructed in wood, then silicon moulds made of each of them with a GRP supporting jacket and specified structural restraints to accommodate the weights and forces involved in casting each specific mass.

Each structure will be sited in an arrangement agreed with the client group. Once an agreed arrangement of the artworks is arrived at, discussions with the landscape designers can take place to determine if any planting or cutting back is required within the Oval and if there is, how this might best complement the artworks and surrounding context.

Foundation pits will need to be excavated for each form and a concrete pad poured, the depth and size to be specified by the project engineers. Each of the CORPUS stones will have fixing bolts cast into their bases that will be located in prepared holes in the concrete foundation pads. The latter will be at a depth to allow topsoil and turf to be reinstated around each structure. The artworks will look as if they are simply sitting on top of the grass.

We would propose to work with a group of fabricators and engineers whom we have already built up successful working relationships with. Further information on these companies has been supplied in a separate document.



* **CORPUS** is a working title