

09

Title **Public Figures**

Artist **Do Ho Suh**





09

Title **Public Figures**

Artist **Do Ho Suh**

This plinth looks familiar enough. You might expect to see a famous, heroic figure standing on top of it. However, Do Ho has placed hundreds of tiny figures underneath it instead. The original idea was that after dark, the plinth is moved to a different spot so the next day it appears as though the people have moved it.



Public Figures, 1998

Fiberglass reinforced resin, steel structure
210 x 275 x 290 cm
© Do Ho Suh

Questions for discussion (with possible responses)

- **Where have you seen a plinth like this?** Did it have a figure on top? What kinds of people are normally on top of plinths? Public figures.
- **If you could choose, who would you put on top of a plinth?** What qualities do you admire in them? Maybe a family member or a sporting hero.
- **Are the little figures strong or oppressed?**
- **What do you think the artist might be saying?** Behind every 'hero' are hundreds of others who work hard helping them to achieve; he wants to make us think about 'heroes' in a different way and how we celebrate them.

Developing the discussion through the performing arts

KS1 Drama Statues

Select some of the 'heroes' mentioned by the children and write them down. The children travel around the space without speaking. Every now and again you call out one of the 'heroes' and the children create a statue in response e.g. mother, footballer, Nelson Mandela. Draw attention to good examples noting both posture and stillness.

In small groups, the children create a gallery of statues. One child moves between the statues. When s/he touches a statue it comes to life. S/he asks "What is your name and who are the people who helped you to be a hero?" Each statue responds in turn e.g. "I am a footballer and my teachers and my team mates helped me to be a hero."

KS2 Music Musical Portraits

Using classroom percussion (including some tuned instruments) create and rehearse a short 'triumphal' phrase as a whole class (listen to marches or fanfares for inspiration). This phrase is going to be the chorus. Now, split the children into small groups. Each group will choose one 'hero' from the earlier discussion. They will devise a short musical portrait of this person.

They need to consider what instruments, rhythms, volume, dynamics etc. would portray the qualities that they admire in this person. Perhaps they could incorporate the rhythm of his/her name. To perform, the whole class plays the chorus then group one performs their portrait, followed by the chorus, then group two etc. Finish with the chorus played in a different way e.g. very quietly.

Suggested links to the core curriculum

- **Science KS1** Properties of materials: experiment with plasticine or Lego figures carrying polystyrene or brick blocks (in different combinations).
- **Science KS2** Materials: identify the materials used in this piece and in other statues of public figures. Why have they been chosen? How have they been carved/cast/modelled?
- **English KS1** Writing: draw a portrait of your hero (from the drama activity) and either label it or write a descriptive sentence about him/her.
- **English KS2** Writing: write a profile of your hero without naming him/her. Describe their qualities as well as their appearance. Others read the profile and work out who the subject might be.
- **Maths KS1** Shape: create 3D shapes (e.g. cuboids, pyramids, spheres, cylinders) using blocks or plasticine.
- **Maths KS2** Geometry: using mathematical language (e.g. horizontal, vertical, right angles) to describe this piece.