

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

MONTAGU-BAZELEY

OPEN SANCTUARY



Montagu-Bazeley (British, Contemporary), *Open Sanctuary*

London, 8th – 29th October 2021
6 Duke Street, St James's, London SW1Y 6BN

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

AN OPEN SANCTUARY OF PEACE, NATURE AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

During 2020, artists Fiamma Colonna Montagu and Samuel Selwyn-Bazeley faced a crossroad in their art practice. Up until then, their joint work had focussed on large public sculptures and mass installations, such as *Migration*, *Hive* and *Pilgrimage* and zen sculpture gardens. When faced with the temporary closure of museums and institutions, they were forced to reconsider what they could compose as artworks, which were intensely personal and relevant to the times. Both artists were interested in the work over the last ten years of architects who were creating “spaces for contemplation, reflection and introspection” and so *Open Sanctuary* was conceived.

In order to make the first *Open Sanctuary* as personal and biographical as possible, they carefully made one piece each day to represent the five minutes of time spent that day “occupying” the work. The act of making the ceramic sections became a meditative practice for the artists.

“It became obvious that each piece we made reflected the mood and feeling of the day for each of us. By the end of six months, we had made our first *Open Sanctuary* comprising 365 pieces, one for each day of the year,” says Colonna Montagu.

“Socially, it felt really important in 2020 to create a place for people who wanted to find some peace at a time of great difficulty, when suddenly all the public spaces and places of worship were not available, and everyone needed a refuge to escape from the noise of domestic life.”

As sculptors, commission-led works such as *Open Sanctuary* allow Colonna Montagu and Selwyn-Bazeley to understand their clients and their chosen surroundings better. They often make adjustments to the clay pigments, including naturally occurring clay from a specific area, which allows for the work to feel visually in tune with and intimately connected with its natural environment.

“As pigment from the earth is different all over the world, we often find small amounts of iron oxide, cobalt or copper oxide can add natural hues of red, brown, black and white. This can be added to the base clay to make the meditation circles feel like they have almost emerged from the environment in which they are placed.”

Colonna Montagu also recounts that most people who commission an *Open Sanctuary* are looking for “something similar to what we intended when we first started working on it: a place to go for some peace”.

“As we started Montagu - Bazeley as a joint practice focusing on public artworks, we hope one day to be able to make specific larger works, which can reach larger groups of people with the aim to be as inclusive as possible. For the moment, we have given these larger meditation circles, the working title of *One at a time and all Together*.”