

David Cotterrell: Hill33 (v)

Date: 9th September 2010

Dimensions(m):12m, 12m, 15m

Materials:

Hesco Concertainer Units & coal waste

The first stage of work is complete for Hill33 - a 1,300 tonne, 12-metre tall earthwork for the Forest of Dean.

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair! Nothing beside remains. Round the decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare. The lone and level sands stretch far away. Ozymandias, Percy Bysshe Shelley

Now the structure and the forest will continue to form the work as it settles into the woodland, finding its place in the world. Hill33 is the result of a very unusual coming together of people and places, some literal and some alluded to.

David Cotterrells vision evolved from numerous personal experiences. When tasked by the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust to respond to the unique character of the Forest, it evoked for David memories of seeing Mayan temples hidden in the rainforests of Central America. These memories merged with those of being a war artist at Camp Bastion and Sangin, Afghanistan. During Davids early research in the forest, the military and industrial heritage of the Dean became apparent, and eventually these seemingly disparate experiences informed the development of Hill33, resulting in an equally (seemingly) disparate group of people working closely together for almost a year.

Hill33 was envisioned by an artist; funded primarily by the Gloucestershire Environment Trust; located in a woodland managed by the Forestry Commission; constructed with a material engineered for other uses; and built by the 100 Field Squadron of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers. It is one of the most ambitious land art projects in the UK in recent times.

With passion and determination, and a degree of risk, the works existence has moved from being geometrical CAD drawings on a computer to the monumental sculpture that is now Hill33. Nature does what nature does, and to borrow a term that our structural engineer introduced to us, all materials will find their angle of repose.[1] This can be seen in the structure now, as it finds its place in the world. The HESCO Concertainer units frame and direct the movement, which will gradually cease as the coal-spoil settles and the landscape recovers from the assault of the build. As the ground dried, the growth returned, eventually embracing Hill33 and surrounding it. It has been designed to return to the forest, and given time it will do so. Like Shelleys Ozymandias, it is destined to return to its source, obscured by the plant life that takes root in its soil.

The journey for Hill33 is just beginning - we will watch it with interest over the years to come as it gradually shifts from geometric architecture to organic industrial archeology. It is designed to be redundant at the moment of its completion. In the absence of war, the constant maintenance required to maintain its unnatural geometry ceases and it succumbs to the inexorable forces of gravity, erosion and nature. Hill33 references the quiet and ambiguous legacy of historic fortifications abstracted from the conflicts that once mandated their existence. Hill33 reminds us of the transience of war, architecture and human manipulation of landscape.



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