

U3A Bikers
Sculpture in the City
Friday 29th September 2023

The Group enjoyed this annual event last year and so an outing was organised for the current exhibition of some 15 sculptures which are dotted around the City of London.

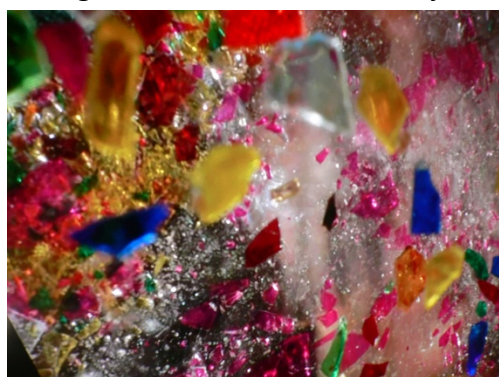
The group, minus one, met at Brockwell Lido for the ride to Kennington Park and the café. By arrangement, Daniella met us there and we welcomed her to her first ride with us.

In addition to the exhibits, we would be at close quarters to some of the iconic architecture, both old and new, which more commonly are viewed at a distance from Dulwich.

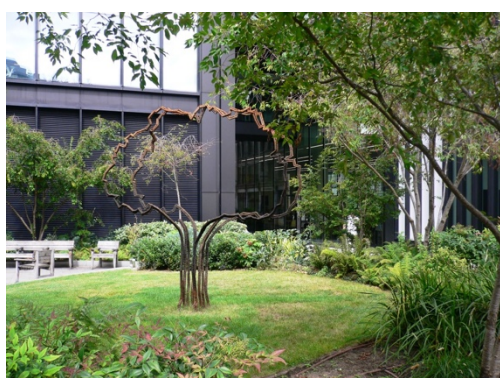


Our route took us around the Elephant & Castle (on cycle paths), along the cycle-friendly route on Blackfriars Bridge Road and over the bridge. The cycle route continued along Upper and Lower Thames Street before we headed into the City and 120 Fenchurch Street to see the first one. This is *Untitled Ceiling Projection* which is a film looking upwards through a clear table on which colourful lightbulbs are being smashed! An inverted kaleidoscope.

A short ride away in Aldgate Square was *Earthing*. Human body parts are seen emerging from giant molluscs. Bizarre and just a little spooky!



A short ride around the corner took us into Mitre Square to see *Habitat*. This piece of ironwork presents two different figures when viewed from different angles. In Creechurch Lane is *Untitled*.

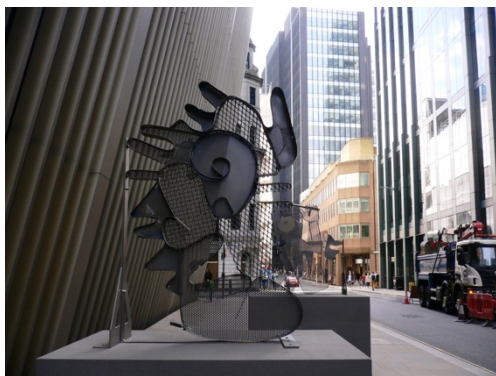


Then to *The Granary*, a sculpture of a traditional English grain store, in shiny red metal.

To reach the next exhibit we crossed busy Brevis Marks. The 'marks' of the name was just that – a boundary, or something that marked the edge of a property. In this case it was the 12th century mansion and gardens owned by the Abbots of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. The modern name is a corruption of Bury's Marks. The abbey is yet another on the long list of those dissolved by Henry VIII.



The exhibit is alongside 70 Mary Axe (aka "The Can of Ham"), *The revolution will not be televised*. Around the corner is *The Garden of Floating Words*. It would be interesting to see this sculpture after dark because the words would then appear to be floating in space.



To see the next exhibits we had to negotiate, on foot, the busy junction of Bishopsgate and Wormwood Street. *Muamba Grove 1 & 2* is in the grounds of the church of St Botolph Without Bishopsgate, two curious figures; one could have been modelled on a piece of intestine, perhaps?

This church lies outside the City's eastern walls (hence the name) in London's East End. The first record of the church is from 1212. The Knights Templar were examined here in 1307 by an inquisition on charges of corruption.



The church survived the Great Fire of London in 1666, and was rebuilt in 1724–29. Adjoining the buildings is a substantial churchyard, running along the back of Wormwood Street, the former course of London Wall.

On the corner of Bishopsgate and Wormwood Street. was *Miss*, carved from a piece of fine white marble from Carrara, Italy. Across Bishopsgate and down a side alley we found *Pacific Red*.



At St Helen's Churchyard stood *Rain Mountain Duo* Neo-Lithic.

Perhaps *Summer Moon* had more appeal, a life-size sculpture of an ancient olive tree in white-painted aluminium.

The church, St Helen's Bishopsgate, is Grade 1 listed, first mentioned in the mid-12th century. The largest surviving parish church in the City of London, it is sometimes referred to as the "Westminster Abbey of the City" because only the Abbey contains more monuments.

It was the parish church of William Shakespeare when he lived in the area in the 1590s. It is one of only a few churches in the City of London to survive both the Great Fire of 1666 and the Blitz.

Along the road, in the Undershaft we found *Untitled: Megaphone*, and nearby was *Pittu, Pithu, Pitoo*, perhaps best described as a pile of rocks.



The last two exhibits were under the huge Leadenhall building towering above us.

We was a sign in neon lights in the building which read "WE ARE ALL ONE" but the "L" flickered on and off so that it changed to "WE ARE AL ONE". So, (we read) it asks the question of us, what do we mean by "we"? The second, *Untitled*, "reflects the dynamic movement of people using the space and the escalator. The designs energise the area under the stairs with an all over composition that mimics the traffic and activity of this large urban space in the City."



Everyone had all brought a packed lunch and found a seat in the very attractive setting of St Helen's Square. We were surrounded by remarkable buildings, some historic, other iconic examples of contemporary architecture.



Panning right there was the "Gherkin", the Church of St Andrew Undershaft, "The Scalpel", the "Inside-Out Building" (Lloyds): "The Cheese Grater" (Leadenhall Building).

Dwarfed by its neighbours, the church is a rare example of a City church that survived both the Great Fire of London and the Blitz. It was built in 1532 but records of a church here go back to the 12th century. The church's curious name derives from the shaft of the maypole traditionally set up each year opposite the church. The custom continued each spring until a student riots put an end to it in 1517; the maypole itself survived until 1547 when it was seized by a mob and destroyed as a "pagan idol". The church had one of London's few surviving 17th century stained-glass windows but this was destroyed in the Baltic Exchange bombing in 1992.

The Lloyds building, architect Sir Richard Rogers, was very controversial when it was built. To the right is the original entrance, just a façade. The modern building occupies the site of the East India Company. Here's a picture of it in the 19th century



Nearing the end of the tour, we headed across to Leadenhall Market, busy with lunch-time drinkers and diners. Riders chose their preferred destination and headed home in groups across London or Blackfriars Bridge. Another successful tour enjoyed by the group on a fine warm autumn day.

All the exhibits can be found at: <https://www.sculptureinthecity.org.uk/>

Riders: Alex, Daniela, Jane, John, Judy, Julia, Martin D, Martin G, Niesje, Valerie.

NOTES: *St Mary Axe* was a medieval parish in the City of London whose name survives as that of the street which formerly occupied it. The Church of St Mary Axe was demolished in 1561 and its parish united with that of St Andrew Undershaft. The site of the former church is now occupied by Fitzwilliam House.

The street name may derive from a combination of the church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and a nearby tavern that prominently displayed a sign with an image of an axe.

Alternatively, it may simply be from the church name itself, which may have come from the axes used by the Worshipful Company of Skinners, who were patrons. The sign of an axe is reported to have been present over the east end of the church.

The street St Mary Axe is now most notable for the Baltic Exchange at No. 38, and the "Gherkin" built on the site of the former buildings of the Baltic Exchange and the UK Chamber of Shipping (destroyed by an IRA bomb in 1992).

Acknowledgement: source material from Wikipedia

Ride Leader, report and photos: John Clements, 30th September 2023



*The view in St Helen's Square.
the Church of St Andrew Undershaft and the Gherkin reflected in the Scalpel*