



HOMELESS DEATHS MEMORIAL SCULPTURE

A PUBLIC ART & SOCIAL AWARENESS PROJECT FROM MAKING IT OUT

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The homeless deaths memorial sculpture is a public artwork being created to provide a place to remember people who have died whilst homeless. People who lose their lives whilst homeless often have no funeral or remembrance service.

We have 3 key outcomes for the memorial:

- Creation of a peaceful and meaningful artwork that provides solace and a place to mourn.
- Highlight the risks associated with homelessness and encourage people who are homeless to seek help.
- Bring the issue of homelessness to a wider audience and encourage the public to support local organisations and campaign for change.

MAKING IT OUT

Making it Out is a charity that uses art, design, and fabrication to help people move forward from prison, homelessness, and addiction. We work across a wide range of creative disciplines and take on projects that include the design and manufacture of large public artworks, furniture, bespoke metalwork, shop-fitting and smaller series of artworks and commissions. We provide our participants with a platform of opportunities, resources, and support from which they can make their own individual progress towards more independent and purposeful lives.

Making it Out's journey with this memorial began after discussions with partners from a homelessness support organisation The Passage. The idea of a memorial was originally suggested by one of their staff, Greg Headley, who in 2019 proposed the creation of an artwork to remember people who had lost their lives on the streets that could be made by people who had themselves been homeless.

Upon initial research of the idea, it became apparent that this type of public artwork did not exist anywhere in the UK. After discussions several MIO participants felt a strong connection with this concept and were keen to explore ways to make it a reality. The subsequent pandemic delayed the project getting off the ground, but steady progress has been made since 2021 with a deliberately measured approach as we aimed to incorporate ideas from across the homeless community. The delays to the project considerably increased the significance of the project for staff and participants at MIO as 4 participants died before the end of the design phase of the project, all of whom were or had recently been homeless.

In 2021, an estimated 741 homeless people died in England and Wales - 54% higher than when records began in 2013.

The average age at death was 45 for men and 43 for women. This is more than 30 years lower than the average age at death of the general population.

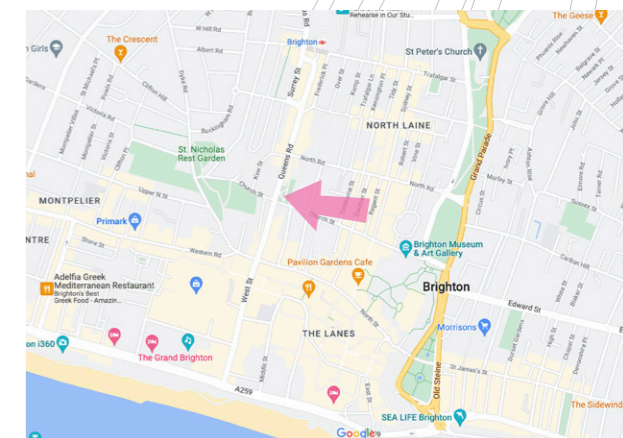
Shelter 2022

LOCATION

The artwork has a provisional agreement to be placed in Brighthelm Gardens in central Brighton. Brighthelm Centre and Church have a long history of supporting homeless groups with one of the earliest support groups operating from the Crypt in the church.

The gardens were originally a burial ground of what was originally the Hanover Chapel. The proposed location for the sculpture is the southwest corner of the gardens which is covered overhead by trees and currently less used than other areas of the gardens. This is a peaceful corner with gravestones lined around the back edge and if positioned here the sculpture will also be visible from Queens Road, where the majority of tourists pass by as they walk down towards the sea from the station. There are multiple access points into this corner of the garden from the North, West and South.

The garden is also frequented by homeless people and locals.



OUTREACH & CO-CREATION

CO-CREATION

From the very start of the project it was clear that the artwork not only had to represent the homeless community but that the design should also originate from people who had experienced homelessness and families and friends of those no longer able to contribute. For this to be possible we set out on a process of co-creation, looking for ways to empower people who wouldn't usually get involved in 'creative' activities or consider their input important.

This ethos has remained throughout the project in the form of a committee, art packs, outreach sessions and the establishment of a workgroup. As the sculpture is constructed, we will create opportunities for further involvement in manufacture and installation.

PANDEMIC AND OUTREACH

As this was being attempted during pandemic restrictions, we looked to find creative ways to engage as many people as possible whilst not being able to meet in groups. To do this we created over 150 'Art Packs' that were sent out to homelessness support organisations across the city. In these we asked for personal responses in the form of sketches, models, poems, and stories.

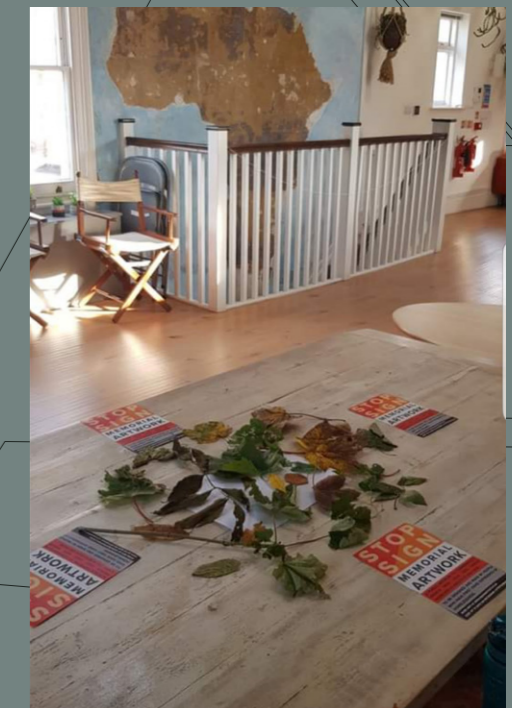
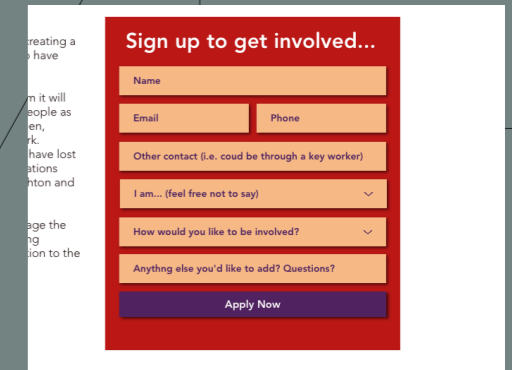
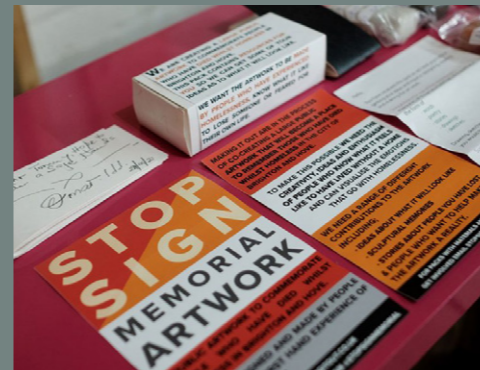
As restrictions lifted, we were also able to run sessions in small groups and are thankful for the cooperation of partner organisation including; St Thomas Fund (CGL), Just Life, YMCA, St Luke's Church, Safehaven at St Peters Church and The Choir With No Name.

This gave people who had never discussed the impact of having friends and loved ones that had died whilst being street homeless, a safe space, through the medium of creating art and design ideas to talk about and express the impact that had on their lives.

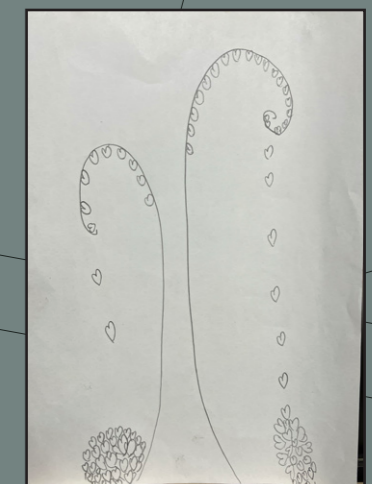
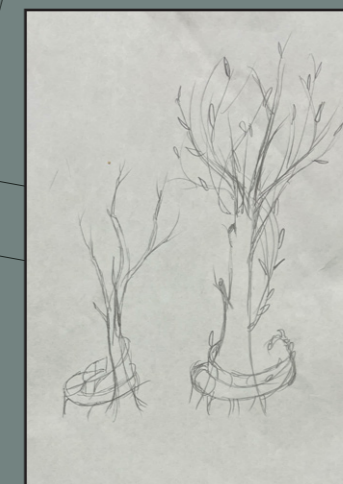
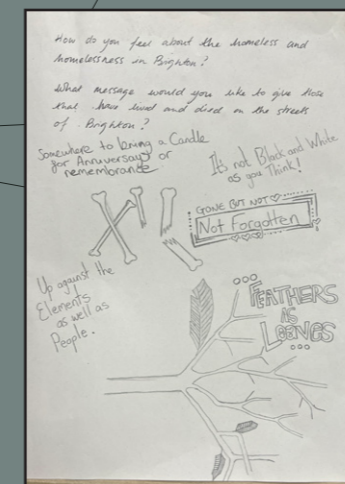
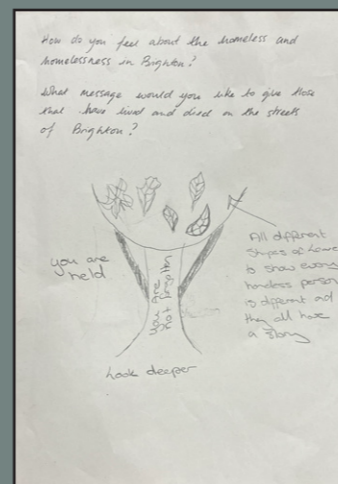
It also opened up an environment where participants, whilst making art could discuss the various ways that homeless had affected their lives.

OUTREACH EXAMPLES

The outreach phase of this project was funded by Enjoolata, you can [read their story about this on their website](#).



Outreach packs and sessions gave people an option to open up about people they had lost and a space to contribute ideas through sketches, models and poetry. These images show the packs and some responses.



FOCUS GROUP & DEVELOPMENTS

To keep the collaborative ethos of the project into the development phase a 'focus group' was created from people who in the outreach stage had expressed an interest in further involvement.

This group met regularly over 2022 to develop the concept, taking on board ideas from the outreach stage and collaborating on idea generations, sketches and model making to try and further develop concepts.



OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES CO-CREATION

Whilst we have had wide reaching engagement with the project, we have found the concept of co-creation challenging and time-consuming. Some of the challenges have included;

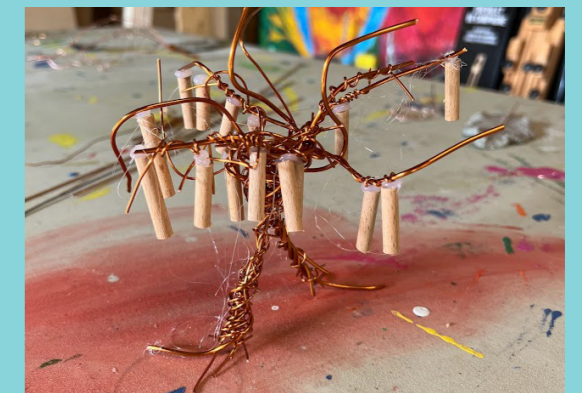
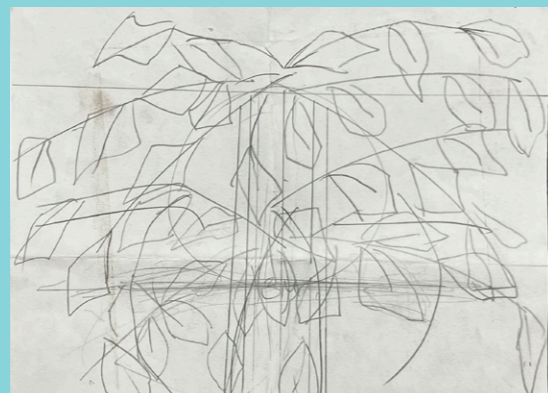
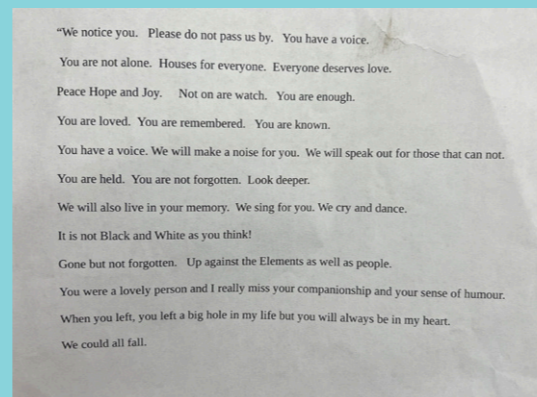
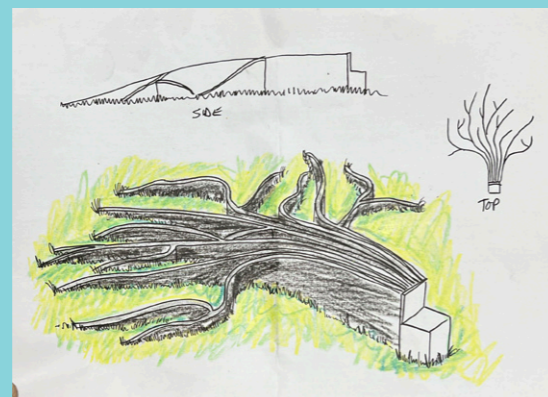
- A lack of confidence from participants to share their opinions
- Difficulty in engaging individuals that often have chaotic lifestyles and timetables,
- Possible participants having other priorities and struggling to see the worth in 'art'.
- Organisations not having time to put aside to the project because of more pressing concerns and low staff numbers.

As we progressed from the outreach stage we created a focus group of individuals who expressed an interest in staying involved. As the manufacturing stage of the project begins we will again reach out, with lessons learnt, offering more easily accessible opportunities to be involved in the making.

TREES A CROWD

During this phase the concept of a tree was settled on, initially the idea of a participant at MIO who had found a tree of life and made a compelling case as to how this related to the memorial.

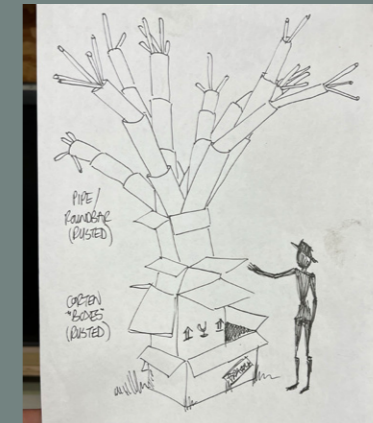
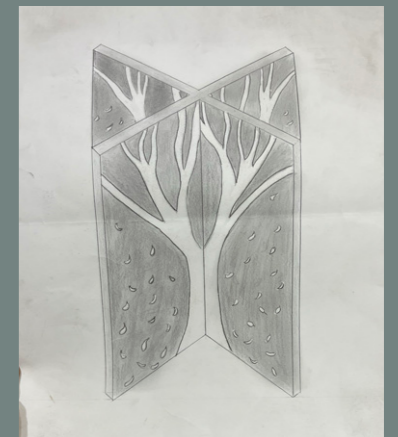
As the concepts developed, we again reached out to partner groups and ran group sessions at Buncton barns to develop specific aspects of the design on a larger scale. These sessions informed the developed designs and helped to progress some of the logistics of the manufacture techniques.



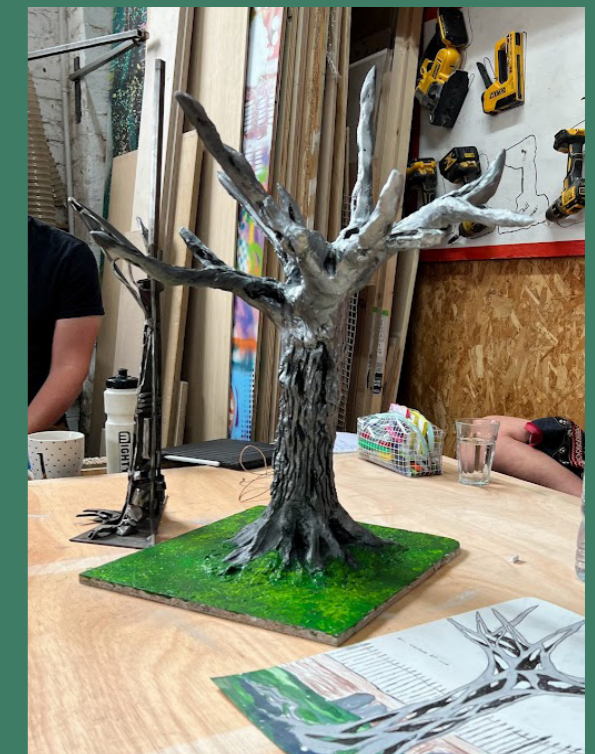
FOCUS GROUP & DEVELOPMENTS



CONCEPT PROGRESSION



These concepts took forward ideas from the focus group, with 2 scale maquettes produced to test the idea in three dimensions. The more spare 'skeleton of a tree' was the overriding favourite of the focus group to take forward to final design stage. The final ambitions of the group were to maintain this concept to add some light, positivity and clearer symbolism to the form.



FINAL DESIGN

The working design shows a stainless-steel framework of a tree combined with the abstracted form of a seated human figure hunched over made from stacked blocks of recycled concrete.

The tree is growing across the back of the figure with branches wrapping around trying to find somewhere a surface to anchor and seemingly surviving despite difficult circumstances.



The separate 'piled' concrete blocks instead of a traditional plinth represents broken foundations that are often a factor in homelessness.

The tree's delicacy and almost transparency contrasts with its determined effort to survive in a hard, unforgiving, and inhospitable urban environment. The growth over the concrete also gives the impression they have been static for a long time, symbolic of a lack of action on homelessness in the UK.

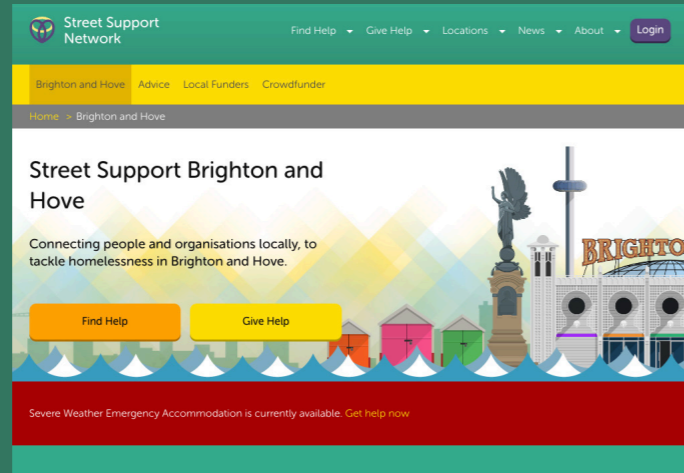
FINAL DESIGN - DETAILS

SIGNPOSTING AND INFORMATION

From the start there was a hope regularly expressed that the sculpture could have a positive impact and act as a beacon of hope for people who came across it.

To do this we intend to provide current information at the site of the sculpture that signposts people towards access food, shelter and further support.

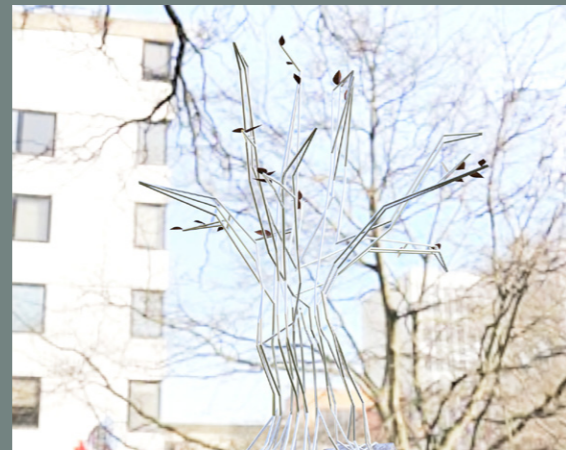
This will be achieved either by placing a screen or update-able signpost that we will kept up to date through collaboration with partner organisations and valuable resources such as the Street Support website.



SIGNPOSTING AND INFORMATION

Leaves on the sculpture represent new growth whilst also portraying fragility, often a key theme of recovery.

The making of the leaves are seen as an ideal outreach activity with each leaf being unique to represent individual lives.



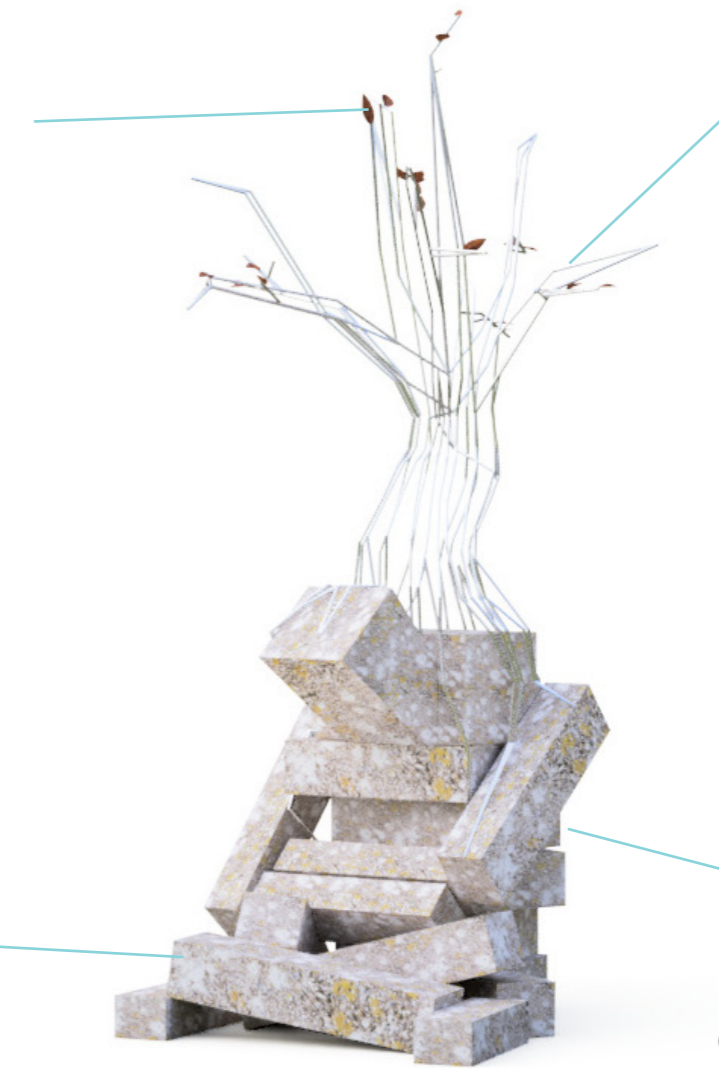
MATERIALS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Aspects of the design may still evolve over the manufacture and as we look for ways to increase opportunities for engagement in the making of the sculpture. Below outlines current material intentions and how these may develop over the manufacturing process.

Leaves cut and shaped from 'weathering steel' for a contrasting rusty appearance.

Further development on the the shape of these and how they could be created and personalised by people with a range of experience.

Concrete made from waste material with a low cement content. Pieces cast and pinned where necessary for strength. Footings need to be looked at by a structural engineers.



Tree constructed from stainless steel (20mm Round bar polished finish) This will be pinned to the tree as the roots wrap around the body.

Possibilities to be developed around additions of 'memories' of individuals in the form of mosaic reliefs on the back surface.

Footings required for the base of the sculpture and methods for joining concrete pieces will require calculations from a structural engineer.

FINAL DESIGN - IN SITU



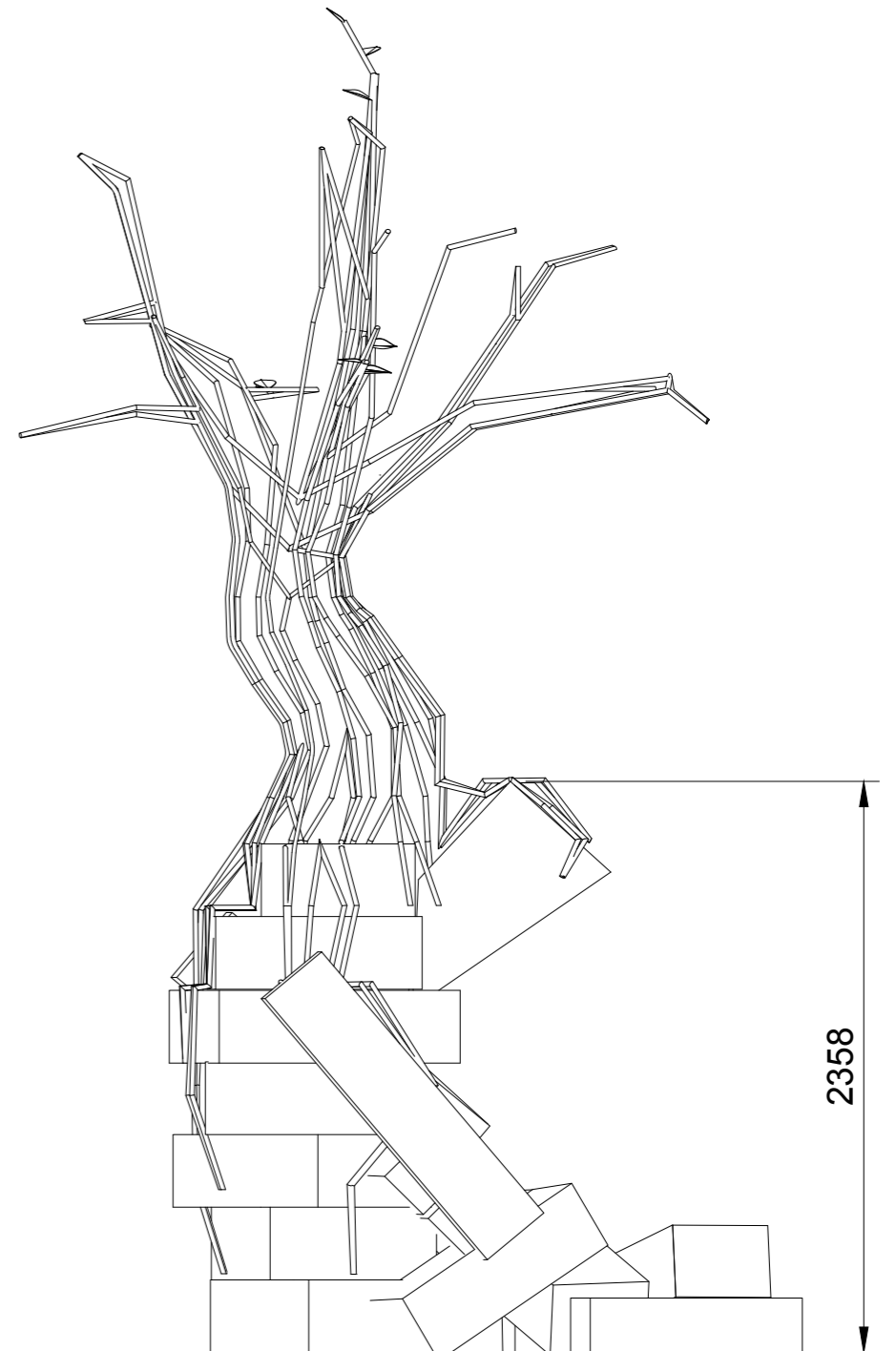
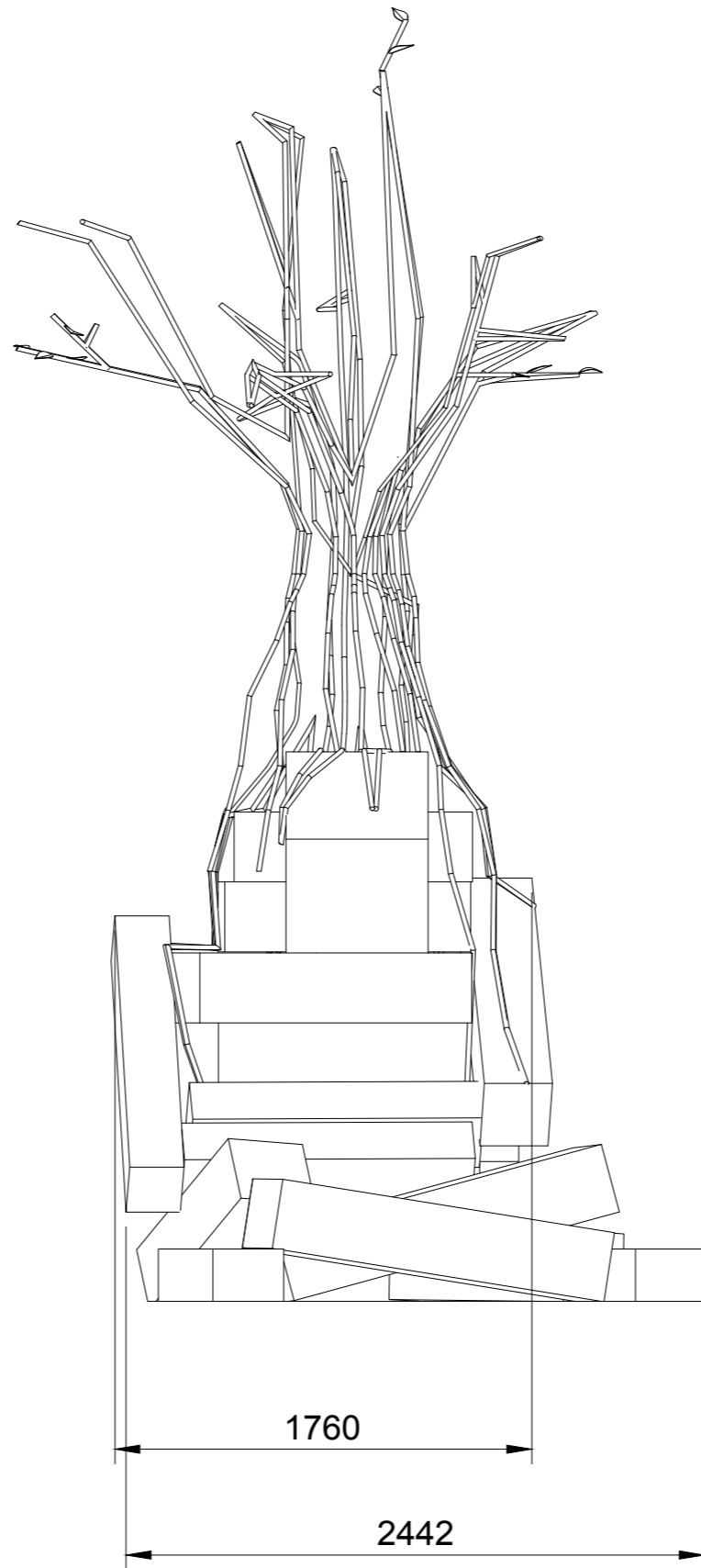
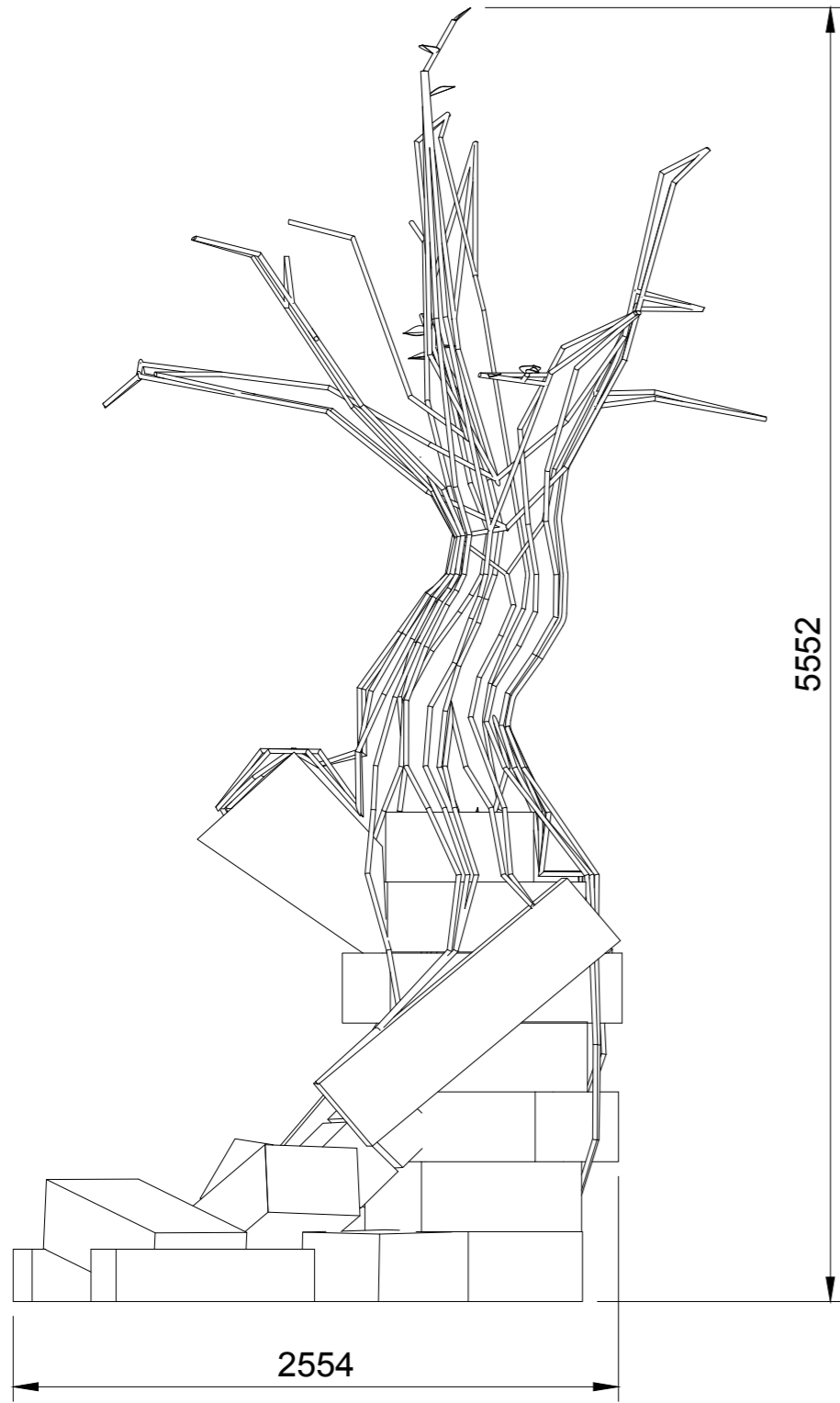
FINAL DESIGN - IN SITU



FINAL DESIGN - IN SITU



FINAL DESIGN - DIMENTIONS



MAKING IT OUT

HOMELESS DEATHS MEMORIAL SCULPTURE MARCH 2023