



Jeff Stratton was trained as an artist at the Medway College of Arts and at Goldsmiths College, University of London, in the 1960s. Jeff is an educationalist and an artist. In 2011 he won a Lifetime Achievement Award in the national category of the Pearson Teaching Awards ceremony, recognising his work in schools and colleges over a period of fifty years.

During his career at Lipson Community College Jeff was designated as "Master of Imagination", a title that encapsulates his amazing scope of talent.

Jeff has been an associate of Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council for the last twelve years, voluntarily undertaking a variety of work from designing tee shirts for Respect festivals, to illustrating children's books with an anti-racist message.

Ann Wilkinson says of Jeff, "He is an amazing artist, who has always been able to interpret and translate my ideas for Respect pieces into beautiful and creative art work. His relationship with PDREC has enriched our anti-racist message, and given us different and exciting ways to challenge racism and discrimination."

For more information about this piece of artwork, Plymouth Respect Festival, or the work of Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council, please contact:

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Hope is not enough...



Qui tacet consentire

Artwork created for Plymouth Respect Festival 2013
By Jeff Stratton



An interview with the artist

Jeff Stratton

Jeff, can you please describe this sculpture for us?

The sculpture is based on the mythical story of Pandora's box. On the lid of the box is written the mythical story of Pandora's box, which is written in Back-slang, which is an English coded language used by poor and oppressed peoples to have private conversations.

Can you remind us of the story of Pandora and the box?

In essence, the story of Pandora's box is this: In classical Greek mythology, Pandora was the first woman on earth. The gods endowed her with many gifts. Aphrodite gave her beauty, Hermes gave her speech, Athena clothed her. Zeus gave Pandora a beautiful box, with instructions not to open it under any circumstances. Impelled by her curiosity, Pandora opened the box and all the evil that was contained there escaped and flew over the earth. She hurried to try to close the container but the whole contents had escaped except for one thing, the spirit of hope, named Elpis.



Jeff, what was your inspiration for this sculpture?

My original brief was to create a sculpture that would encapsulate the themes of this year's Respect festival, which included 'Stepping Up' for Respect and the specific theme of flying. I wanted the sculpture to be a catalyst to open debate and discussion on issues that we are often uncomfortable with and that we therefore shy away from. One of the most important of these is obviously racism, but I also wanted to think about the causes and effects of racism, hatred, fear, bullying, prejudice, genocide.

Can you tell us about some of the symbolism of the sculpture?

The sculpture has two elements, the box and the bird. The inside of the box is about

hatred and fear and all the horrible things about the world, but the bird symbolises hope and positivity.

All over the box there are little birds, and these are the symbols of troubles flying all over the world. But there is ambiguity about these troubles. For example there is a cockerel. Cockerels can be a real nuisance, they crow very loudly, but they can also be a force for good... they wake people up and herald the dawn of something new.

So the bird represents hope?

Yes, the bird is a kite, and represents the spirit of hope. But the point of the box is to say that that the spirit of hope is not enough... we have to do something about these evils. The motto on the front of the box says, "Evil will prosper when good people do nothing." We have to step up to the mark.

There are other quotes on the box in different languages. Can you tell us something about these?

Again, they are deliberately ambiguous. The languages that I have used are Arabic, Mandarin, hieroglyphics, Latin and English.

You have obviously created this piece of art for the Respect Festival 2103. Do you want it to be used in the future to inspire anti racist work?

Yes, very much so, particularly for young people. Issues like racism and discrimination

are so difficult to discuss or debate, so I want the sculpture to provide a starting point for people to examine these things, and to consider how we do something to counteract the forces of negativity, fear and hatred... as I said earlier it is not enough to hope, we have to do something. That is exactly what the Respect festival reminds us about every year.

You have mentioned the notion of ambiguity several times. Can you expand a bit on this?

Yes, it's important to me that this piece of work is seen as a mystical object, and one that is underpinned by ambiguity. I don't want to give definitive answers about the meaning of the sculpture because that limits people's imagination. I want the box to pose questions about our common experiences, our universality and the things we share as human beings.

