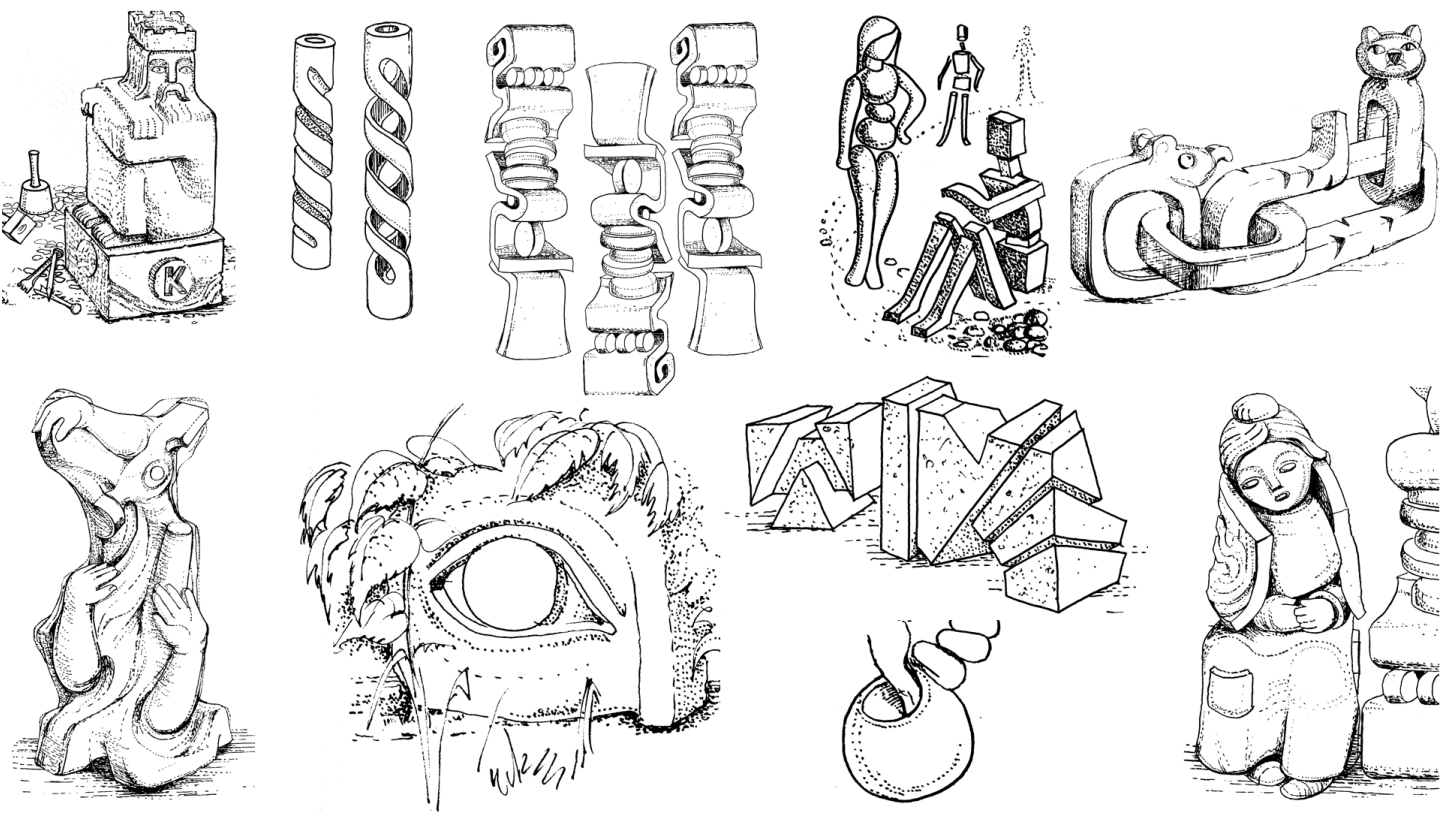




Dennis Huntley

1928 – 2021

Welcome to this special exhibition celebrating the work of the Sutton sculptor, Dennis Huntley (1928 – 2021). We are thrilled to bring together two of his most notable creations: the nave altar of St Nicholas and his Otto Beit Medal winning sculpture of Ann Boleyn.

We are pleased to include images of his other work including those of captivating stone figures gracing the exterior of Guildford Cathedral and the ethereal angels adorning its Children's Chapel. Huntley's artistic process was as remarkable as the sculptures themselves. Often working directly "in situ," he would carve his figures directly onto the building, ensuring a perfect harmony between artwork and architecture. This meticulous attention to detail, along with his ability to capture both the physical and spiritual essence of his subjects, is what continues to resonate today.

Dennis Huntley: An Extraordinary Life

Dennis Huntley, much loved ex-art tutor, volunteer and College friend sadly passed away last week aged 93.

Dennis taught at Sutton College for many years and in recent years returned as a volunteer to assist in art classes alongside fellow tutors in the art department. He was a regular visitor to the College and students in the art studios will remember his kind nature and wealth of knowledge, talent and experience.

He studied at Wimbledon School of Art and London University and through the years his career became Head of the Sir John Cass School of Art and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Sculptors.

His sculptures can be seen at Guildford Cathedral and more locally there was one in Carshalton Village as he designed the statue of Anne Boleyn that was located at Church Hill. In 1967, his statue of Anne Boleyn was awarded the Sir Otto Beit Medal.

Dennis also designed the Communion table within the nave of St Nicholas Church who the College work with on many projects.

Jeff Richards, Licensed Lay Minister at St Nicholas said:

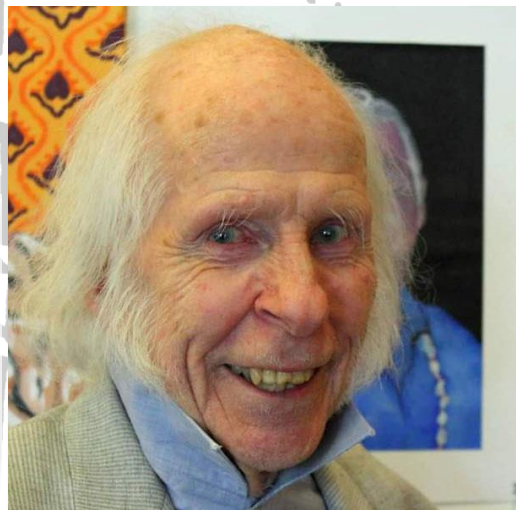
"It is an outstanding work of craftsmanship. The oak altar is simple in appearance. Although massive in size, its open structure means that it doesn't detract attention away from the rest of the architecture of the church. The table is constructed of two layers of oak rather than 3. The expectation is that over the decades the oak will shift and flex like a living being. Echoing the medieval tradition of embedding a relic in the body of the altar, the table between its layers of oak contains a very personal message from Dennis Huntley. Perhaps the most startling aspect of the altar is the jagged cruciform natural wound in the wood of the tabletop. Huntley deliberately chose the imperfect wood to echo the wounds inflicted on Christ on the cross. That visible physical scar reminds those who eat the bread from the table that the imperfect is made perfect by God."

In addition to sharing his knowledge as a tutor, raising a family and creating many other notable works of art, Dennis was an author and appeared on television too.

He will be greatly missed by the College and all that had the privilege of knowing him.

Credit: Sutton College, 2021

<https://www.suttoncollege.ac.uk/news-post/dennis-huntley-an-extraordinary-life/>



Dennis Huntley 1928 – 2021



Dennis's Anne Boleyn Sculpture.
Photo courtesy of [Images](#)
[George Rex](#)

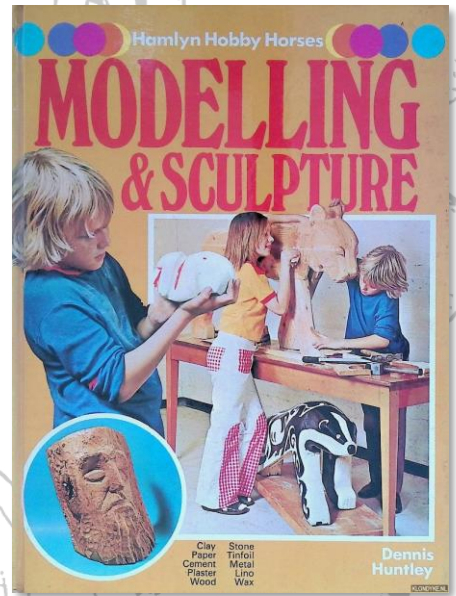
Huntley, the Educator

Huntley's passion for art extended to education. From 1958 to 1965, he served as the Head of Art at the Elliott School, where his dedication and unique arrival on a blue Lambretta scooter made him popular amongst his students. Later, he became a School Inspector (Art) for Inner London Education. He held the position of Principal at the Sir John Cass School of Art in Whitechapel, London.

In his later years he taught at Sutton College.

His work ranged from figurative to abstract, and he incorporated lettering and even furniture design into his artistic repertoire. The materials he used were just as diverse, including stone, marble, wood, and even fiberglass.

Huntley's achievements were recognized throughout his career. In 1967, his statue of Ann Boleyn won the Sir Otto Beit Medal, and he was awarded a Churchill Scholarship to explore the artistic connection between poetry, religion, and music in Mauritius. This trip even led to him being commissioned to sculpt a portrait bust of the island's Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.



Huntley's talents extended beyond sculpture. He authored the book "Modelling and Sculpture" in 1976 and even shared his expertise on sculpture through broadcasts on BBC One and Thames Television.



Head of Art 1958 -1965 Elliot School. Credit: www.elliottonians.com

Huntley's work at Guildford Cathedral



St Cecilia



Lady Margaret Beaufort



St Hubert



Piety

Most of the stone sculptures of Guildford Cathedral, including those by Huntley, were created in the early 1960s. His exterior work is all made of Clipsham stone and include

- St Cecilia, Lady Chapel
- Lady Margaret Beaufort, Lady Chapel
- St Hubert, Tower
- A representation of piety, Northside



Within the Cathedral he also carved two of the angels within the Children's Chapel from limewood.



Carving in Stone



Dennis Huntley's work at Guildford is made of Clipsham stone. Clipsham Stone is a type of limestone quarried across Rutland and Lincolnshire. It is a coarse-grained, shelly limestone that is a popular choice for external sculpture because of its durability, beauty, and versatility.



Huntley carved the statue of St Hubert directly in place. This involved removing large sections of stone to create the basic shape of the sculpture which Huntley then gradually refined with smaller tools.



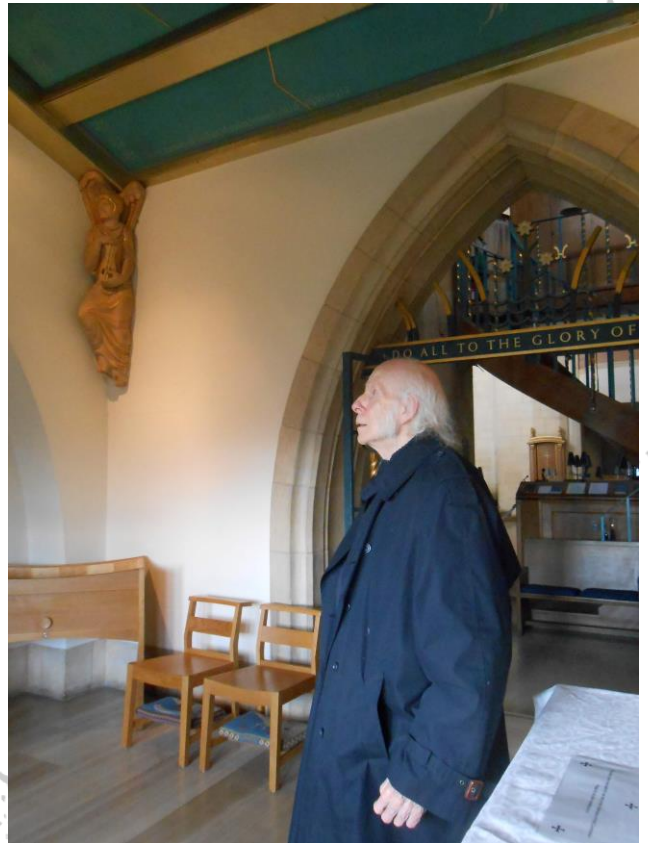
At Wimbledon School of Art and the Royal College of Art Huntley followed a traditional sculpting program and learned various techniques like carving, casting, and working with different materials like bronze or stone. Huntley would create detailed sketches and sometimes models of the sculpture to visualize the final piece in the designated space. His figurative at Guildford Cathedral show a strong understanding of human anatomy.



Guildford Cathedral's construction restarted in 1955 after a pause due to World War II. These photographs from Guildford Cathedral Archives show groups of workmen lifting a stone with rope and a hoist and levering a block split with a wedge.



Angel, southwest corner, Children's Chapel
Guildford Cathedral



Dennis Huntley visiting the Chapel

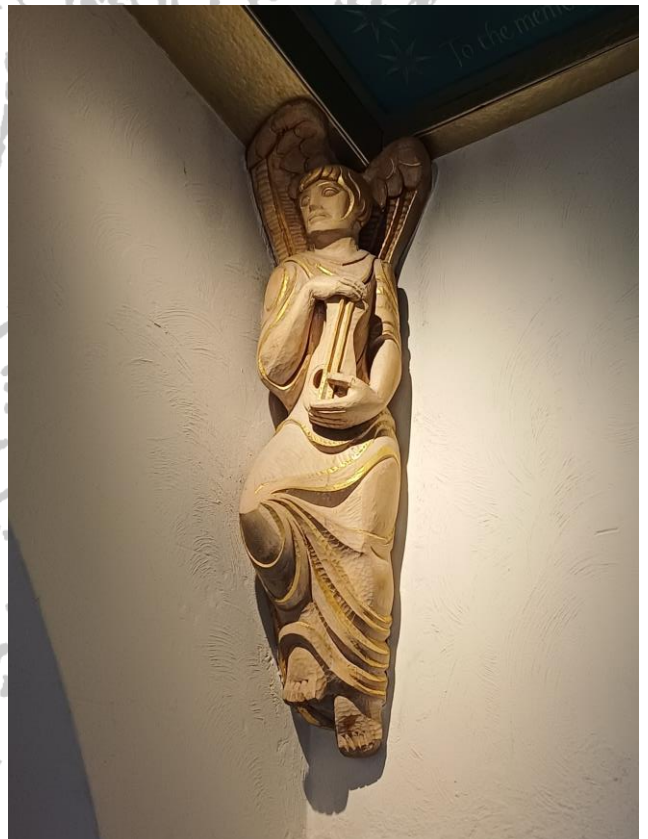
Carving in Wood

Huntley created two limewood figures carved for the corners of the ceiling at the west end of the Children's Chapel at Guildford Cathedral.

The angel on the southwest side of the window is modelled on Huntley's wife.

Lime (Linden) trees produce soft and easily worked timber. Limewood has a fine, light grain and is comparatively light in weight. This makes it a popular material for model building and for intricate carving. Once dried properly, limewood is stable and resistant to warping and cracking. This makes it a good choice for projects designed to last through the ages.

Photo Credit: Frances Williams & Guildford Cathedral Archives



Angel, northwest corner, Children's Chapel
Guildford Cathedral

Ann Boleyn Sculpture Church Hill

The sculpture of Ann Boleyn by Dennis Huntley is his best-known piece. The sculpture is a wooden carving created in 1967 and was officially unveiled by the 2nd Baron Astor of Hever Castle in Kent (where Anne Boleyn and her family once lived) in 1967.

It won the prestigious Sir Otto Beit Medal in the same year.

This prestigious award is given for figurative sculpture created outside of London within the Commonwealth. It was established in 1906 by Sir Otto Beit, a South African-born diamond magnate and philanthropist who was passionate about promoting British art.

Anne Boleyn was the second wife of King Henry VIII of England. She reigned as queen from 1533 to 1536. She was executed on 19th May 1536 in the Tower of London after being the Queen of England for only 1000 days.

The sculpture was initially displayed in Carshalton. It overlooked "Anne Boleyn's Well" and Carshalton Ponds, referencing a local legend about Anne Boleyn.

The sculpture was removed from its original location for restoration. During June 2024, it will be on display at a temporary exhibition at St Nicholas Church in Sutton before being permanently reinstalled on its plinth in Carshalton.

The inscription on the plaque beneath the sculpture mentions the architects who presented it and the occasion of the Sir Otto Beit award.

"This woodcarving, sculptor Dennis Huntley, FRBS, was presented by the architects, Thompson and Gardener, A/ARIBA and unveiled by the Hon. Gavin Astor, 18th March 1967. In that year, in open competition, it won the Sir Otto Beit award for the best sculpture outside London, within the UK and Commonwealth."









ꞵ Acknowledgements Ꞷ

The exhibition has been produced by the Friends of St Nicholas Churchyard. Thanks go to Sutton Housing Partnership for the loan of the statue of Ann Boleyn and the Churchwardens and PCC of St Nicholas Church for permission to stage the exhibition.

The book illustrations included are from Private Collections. Images courtesy of Guildford Cathedral Archives. The help of Frances Williams, Archive Volunteer has been invaluable.

We are grateful to Ian Ellis of Sutton College for sharing his insight into the artistic process of Dennis Huntley.

Many thanks to Premier Relocation for making the display of Ann Boleyn possible.

www.churchyardfriends.com