

ALEXANDER BELESCHENKO

'PATH'

2012

Alexander Beleschenko was commissioned by the University of Exeter to create a site specific work for the Forum project. Alexander's inspiration is outlined below together with the alphabetical code index which reveals legends by staff and students.

What was your inspiration for the work?

There are many sources of inspiration for the work and are all based on the university environs and some of its research work. The colours of the stripes derive from research in the university gardens whilst the striped forms created in overlays are specific to the research work on colour by the study of butterfly wings.



Alexander Beleschenko and
Professor Peter Vukusic,
School of Physics

What was your thinking behind the alphabetical colour pallet and does it represent anything in particular?

I wanted to embed meaning that was hidden but could be discovered by an enquiring mind. I also liked the idea that the colour arrangements would be determined by a set of rules rather than a decision making process that would take place in my head. Each of the forms that populate the glass has their own alphabet of colours giving a broader range of hues through cool to warm. The warmer colours are on the sunny side of the building.

Does the work spell certain words and is there a code to the piece?

Yes, there is a code and all the words relate to the University. The text is broken up into blocks and these are themed. For instance there are blocks that refer to the flora and fauna of the gardens. Then there are blocks that have reference to the various teaching disciplines and departments of the university.

I have seen some of your other works in the Southwark Tube Station and Derby Quad Gallery. Why do you enjoy working with glass?

There isn't any other material in my opinion that can have such a dramatic effect on an architectural environment. As a glass artist I not only have a huge range of surface colours to work with I also am able to animate an architectural space with transparency, opacity and light manipulating effects. Creating with light and colour to create positive environments is what inspires me.

It is very interesting to see the work in close up and it made me think about how it is made. What is the actual process for creating this work?

The process starts with sketches that over time become refined with discussions between me, client and architects. Once the idea has been fixed upon it starts its creative path by being developed on a computer. It is necessary to do this because of two factors. The first is to cope with translating ideas that are initially created at a small scale and then have to be realised at full size. Secondly, the method of applying the colour to the glass surface is done through computer driven print technology and it is good to tie into the system at the earliest possible stage.

When the artwork was completed and approved the computer files were sent to a specialist manufacturer who have the facilities to print on glass as well as handle such large and heavy glazed units. The printing process involves the application of special inks that are made up of various metal oxides and glass powders. These are applied onto the glass surface by means of a huge digital printer. Once the colours have been applied and then dried on the surface the glass piece is then passed through a high temperature oven which melts the applied colours into the surface making them permanent. The glass would normally have to pass the heat process in any case so as to make it toughened.

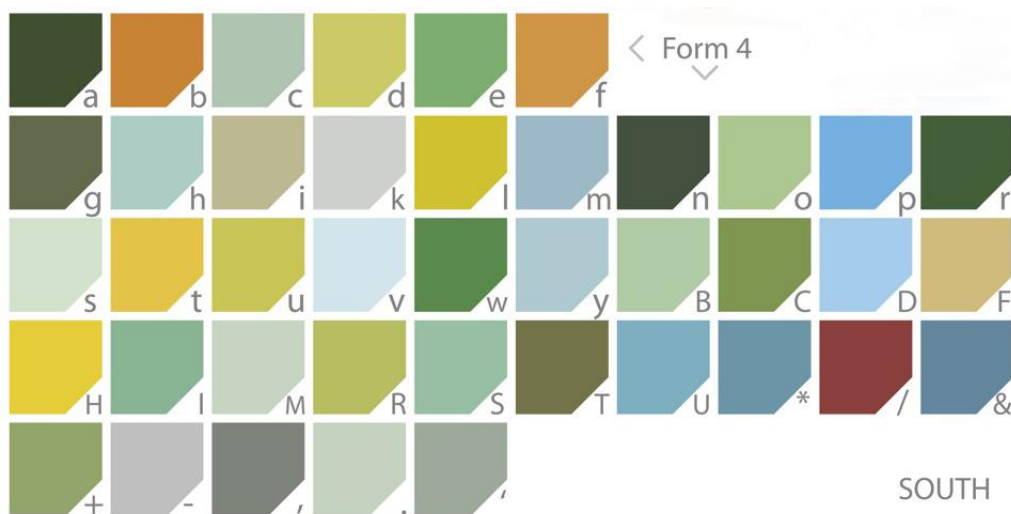
DECODING THE TEXT EMBEDDED IN THE ARTWORK 'PATH'

Colour Coding

Within each facade the imagery of the artwork is subdivided into a collection of major forms. There are three for the Reception area and five each for the North and South facades. Each major form is subdivided into a series of coloured stripes of varying widths and configurations. Each stripe has a colour that is matched to either a letter of the alphabet or a punctuation mark or number. Each major form has a different colour coded alphabet.

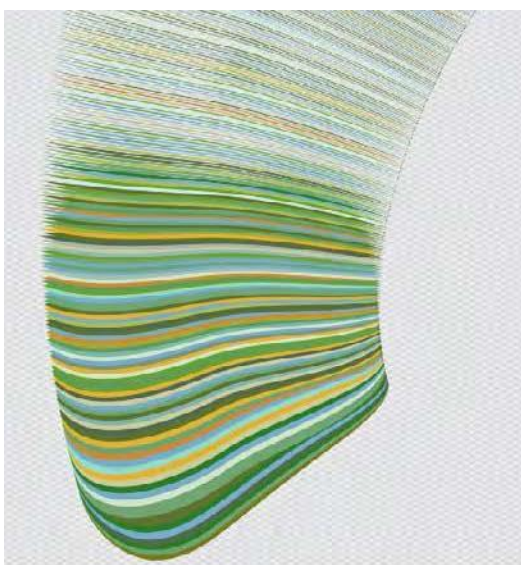
Text Coding

The text has come from different sources but is all related to the University of Exeter. For example, this is colour-coding for *Form 4* in the South facade of the main Forum building.



Reading the Text

Each form has the text flow in a given direction. *Form 4* should be read from bottom to top.



Text contained in Form 4

The text in Form 4, read from the base of the shape, starts;

Town walls with botanical interest, scrub and tall herbs....