



Gill Gatfield | NZ

X

Black granite, (73cm height x 73cm width x 10cm depth)

“ x can be understood as a sign/symbol and as a sound, letter word, multiplication sign, chromosome, or number (10).”

My sculpture x can be understood as a sign/symbol and as a sound, letter, word, multiplication sign, chromosome, or number (10). It can be simultaneously read, said and seen. x appeals to the senses with smooth polished surfaces, brilliant reflections and details that embrace environment and viewer. Like a mark on a map signalling buried treasure, x offers the excitement of having found the place and the promise of reward. Sited at ground level, it prompts visitors to cast their eyes downwards, directing focus on the ground, the baseline and support for the predominant upright and anthropomorphic worldview.

x references political and cultural contexts. An 'x' is a mark of identity used across centuries by indigenous peoples to sign documents written in unknown foreign languages (e.g. for the assignment of land, governance or rights), and as a universally recognised mark used in place of a signature. At its most elemental level, the ink-black 'x' marks out territory on indigenous lands.

In lower case and of human proportions, x equally renders the essence of humanity – the chromosome x is the universal genetic material shared by all men and women, uniting cultures and races. Like the human body, the black stone warms in the sun and cools in the shade. The sculpture embraces the land – like an 'x' at the end of a handwritten note, a letter, or a text message; x is an act of love: a kiss on the land.

x is a minimalist sculpture of intersecting lines made from one block of granite. The two columns of equal proportions are interlocked at the centre. Industrial grade diamond stone-cutting machines are used to shape the stone as this igneous rock is one of the densest stones on earth. Finishing work is done by hand. The stone is polished to a 'mirror' quality finish because I want the work to reflect light and surrounding images. There are no sharp edges and all exterior faces and sides offer a smooth, even finish when touched.

x is a site-sensitive work developed in 'Tableau' – meaning that the work considers the site, its use, the surrounding land forms and environment, and the context of the exhibition. For example, the position of the sculpture incorporates movements of the sun and moon, orientation of the sculpture to the sea/land, and how people will experience x when approaching and viewing it. Gravity connects the sculpture to the land.

Initial inspiration was drawn from the *Sculpture by the Sea* logo and the SxS Bondi Site Map. Both prominently feature the symbol 'x'. The 'x' links the nouns and concepts of 'sculpture' and 'sea'. In contrast, on the Site Map, 'x' marks unavailable sites where sea swells and ancient Aboriginal rock carving rule out sculpture.

PRIMARY

Discuss the different ways we understand the shape 'x'.

Describe where the sculpture has been placed in the exhibition. Suggest other places where you think the work could be positioned and explain why.

Research the origins of the first shapes used by humans to communicate a message. What materials were used to make the first letter shapes?

Make up your own alphabet using signs and symbols and write your name!

SECONDARY

Relate your initial responses to the work with reference to the artist's statement.

Discuss the concepts and techniques used in the creation of the work x.

How is this work an example of 'Minimalist art'? Refer to two minimalist artworks in your explanation.

Describe how the positioning of x and its relationship to site and audience contributes to its meaning.



From above: Model for x 2013
Gill Gatfield, *Silhouette*, Smales Farm, NZ
Gill Gatfield, *Native Tongue*, Auckland Botanic Gardens, NZ