

## Jai Redman: *The Making of Engels' Beard*

*The Making of Engels Beard* attempts to bring to life the story of how the sculpture was made – from initial concept, through prototypes and construction to final installation. It is accompanied by a short film. The work was commissioned as part of the public realm surrounding the New Adelphi building – the home of the School of Arts and Media and the School of the Built Environment. The lead artist is Jai Redman, who with his business partner Ian Brownbill set up Engine, an arts production company based in Salford that aims to deliver ambitious public art projects made ‘with people, rather than at people’.

The exhibition includes the original books that inspired the work: *Manchester, England; The Story of the Pop Cult City* written by former Hacienda DJ Dave Haslam (2000). In this book Haslam refers to a thwarted plan to bring a statue of Friedrich Engels from a former Eastern Bloc country to Manchester. Jai Redman, Ian Brownbill and Simon Chislett came up with the concept of Engels Beard after reading this book – but it took over a decade for the right opportunity to realise it.

Engels wrote *The Condition of The Working Class in England* after observing the conditions of people living in slums in Salford and Manchester in 1845. It is also rumoured that he drank in the Crescent Pub with Karl Marx, with whom he later wrote *The Communist Manifesto*.

Redman has painted lines from the opening of the chapter *The Great Towns* in *The Conditions of the Working Class* by Friedrich Engels on a length of domestic wallpaper, reflecting a protest banner. The paper was first soaked in water from the Manchester Ship Canal and the words painted in red watercolour, in the original German. The bottle that contained the water is also on display.

The small bust of Engels was bought by Engine from an online supplier. Redman used this cast as the basis of all his work – the base was smashed when he dropped it on the studio floor. The original plan had been to digitally scan the bust – however it was too small to get a perfect scan. Redman then decided to make the sculpture the ‘old fashioned way’ – the pencil marks indicate his proposed design. He experimented with different materials including expanding foam, plaster and cardboard and then expanding foam on a Polystyrene shop window dummy. Here he is trying to work out the how to get the head to lean back without falling over. The framed drawings show his research into classical sculptures with beards, and his own subsequent drawings using white pencil and Tipp-Ex.

Redman bought a large block of Polystyrene and using a Perspex template made from photographs of the bust carved the large prototype shown here. Then using complex maths, and careful measurements (the ‘flags’ provide the depth, height and width at specific key points) he worked with fellow artist Joe Hancock and over several weeks carved the mould for the final artwork out of around 20 huge blocks of Polystyrene. These blocks were cut firstly with hot wire cutters before the detail was painstakingly added with the ‘handmade’ craft knife. The photographs by Dan Walmsley show the

scale of this job. Although he started off wanting to use digital technology to make this work Redman found that 'the artist's eye is more lyrical - it is more honest to trust your own eyes rather than a camera'. Redman wanted the beard to look like traditional sculpture, with deliberate gestural marks.

These cut blocks were then transported to climbing wall manufacturers Entre-Prises in Earby near Blackburn. Here the jigsaw was put back together and 5 coats of PVA sprayed over the mould, followed by layers of fibreglass. Redman then used hand tools to fill in the gaps. After this had cured a layer of Rockcote was added, to ensure the required level of detail before the whole sculpture was covered in sand. The sculpture was then undercoated and finally painted by the artist. The gold tear was the final artist flourish. Redman is clear that it is open to interpretation. He feels that Engels was writing from the heart - if Engels were alive today what would he make of the ongoing transformation of Salford?

Jackie Kay, Chancellor and Writer in Residence at the University of Salford, and Scottish Makar (National Poet of Scotland) has written a poem *Thinker* in response to the sculpture - the last lines are incorporated into the landscaping surrounding the sculpture. The full poem can be found in the Clifford Whitworth Library.

**Friedrich Engels** was born in 1820 in Germany and died in 1895 in London. He was a social philosopher and completed some of his most important work close to the now University of Salford. As a young man, he was sent to work in the offices of the Victoria Mill in Weaste, writing *The Condition of The Working Class in England* after observing the conditions of people living in slums in Salford and Manchester. Engels and his friend Karl Marx, with whom he went on to write *The Communist Party Manifesto*, were rumoured to have drunk together in the nearby Crescent Pub.

**Jai Redman** is a visual artist whose practice extends across sculpture, painting, digital illustration and socially engaged public art. Redman's work deals with his personal experiences as an environmental direct activist and social justice campaigner in the UK over the last 25 years. As such it forms a unique, honest, emotional and often satirical commentary on our dislocation from politics and planet. Jai formed Engine an arts production company with Ian Brownbill in 2014.

*Jai Redman: Paradise Lost* is on display at Manchester Art Gallery from 29 September 2016 - 24 September 2017. <http://jairedman.co.uk> [www.weareengine.co.uk](http://www.weareengine.co.uk)

*The exhibition has been curated by the Arts Collection Team: Lindsay Taylor, Jennifer Iddon and Stephanie Fletcher.*

*We would like to thank the following people for their contributions to the realisation of this project:*

*Jai Redman, Concept, Lead Artist, Engine Director; Ian Brownbill, Concept, Engine Director; Simon Chislett, Concept, Technical Development, M3 Productions; Joe Hancock, Artist.*

*From Entre-Prises Craig Taylor, Danny Hodgson, Steve Williams and Vicky Morris.*

*Emma Ford, Head Teacher, and the pupils from Clarendon Road Primary School.*

*Meg Woods, Artist and University of Salford graduate.*

*From the University of Salford: Prof. Allan Walker, Dean of School of Arts and Media; Jackie Kay, Writer in Residence and Chancellor; Darren Kibble, Operations Manager and Chris Large, Associate Director of Estates and Facilities; Helen Jones, Marketing Projects Officer and Conrad Astley, Senior Press and PR Officer, Marketing and External Relations; Serena Chester, Academic and Support Manager, Library Services; Colin McCallum.*

*Arthur Siuksta and Peter Gordon, University of Salford graduates, and Craig Whittle for the film.*