



The varying lengths of the stems glinting in the sun give the impression of movement, like a sparkler

“Against a dark sky all flowers look like fireworks. There is something strange about them, at once vivid and secret”

G K Chesterton, *The Glory of Grey*

possibility of using different colours. A piece I’m working on at the moment is going to have three different lengths of stem and then flowers in silver and two different tones of gold, so the colours will change over the surface of the piece.”

The flowers have either a bright satin or mirror polish finish, depending on the type of sheets of metal they were cut from. This gives contrast and draws attention to the outer sphere. It also means the allium reflects natural light, its appearance shifting as the light brightens and fades throughout the day, and with the flow of the seasons. The finish also ensures that its immediate surroundings are reflected in the allium, drawing it into the landscape.

Showpiece

Choosing the final setting of the allium is very important. “I always design them specifically to suit the site, so they hopefully become a talking point,” she says. “One of the things I’ve always found pleasing about them is that they suit any environment. You can put them indoors, or in a country garden.”

Ruth has often been asked to resite sculptures when the owner has moved house. “They take them with them when they move,” she says. “Sometimes that has involved a crane. People become very attached to the alliums. I think it’s the spherical shape. It’s somehow so appealing and easy to live with. It’s a piece you’ll always enjoy. You’re not going to get tired of it.” ■

• Words: Diane Wardle • Photographs: Clive Doyle, Andy Labrow

then I’ll need fewer than if they’re going to overlap or interlock.”

The flowers are laser cut from Ruth’s sketched designs. “When working on a design, I’ll start with quite a rough sketch to enable me to understand the flower’s structure and forms,” she explains. “I’ll then separate and draw all the different parts that will be recreated within the sculpture, and do precise sketches for scanning. I deliberately have repeat forms within the work, just like in nature. In the alliums, I show no variation in the petal sizes in a flower, although with other flowers I may use more than one form in a repeated pattern.”

Once cut, it takes approximately a week to clean the allium flowers by hand, then bolt them onto the stems. The bolt heads create the centre of the flower. “The flowers can also be welded on, but bolting them means they can be changed more easily, should any ever get damaged,” she says. “It also opens up the

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Prices start at £130 for a 10cm allium stem to £20,000 for a 2m allium. The flowers can be commissioned in any size.