

Oxford Swallows

by Andre Stead



A n d r é S t e a d
Oxford Swallows - 31 03 2012

The Oxford Swallows

by André Stead

A contemporary art installation

The progression of colour in the piece simulates the directional movement of the flock of birds and this feeling of movement is what makes the piece so successful. Where different coloured swallows overlap, the result is a mixture of new tones. Some of the plexiglass used are more transparent than others and some have a frosted finish. This variation in transparency throughout the range of colours also creates different effects of depth within the piece. The Oxford Swallows installation is constructed from 3mm laser cut plexiglass and stainless steel. The colours used in the installation are the same as that of its parent artwork at the Delaire Wine Estate in Stellenbosch with the exception of cream coloured birds. A circular stainless steel framework supports the modular branches that suspend each bird in its correct position and alignment. The swallow profiles are bolted to the supporting structure by means of a custom made plexiglass attachment that is permanently bonded to the birds' surfaces.

Swallow profiles
laser cut plexiglass

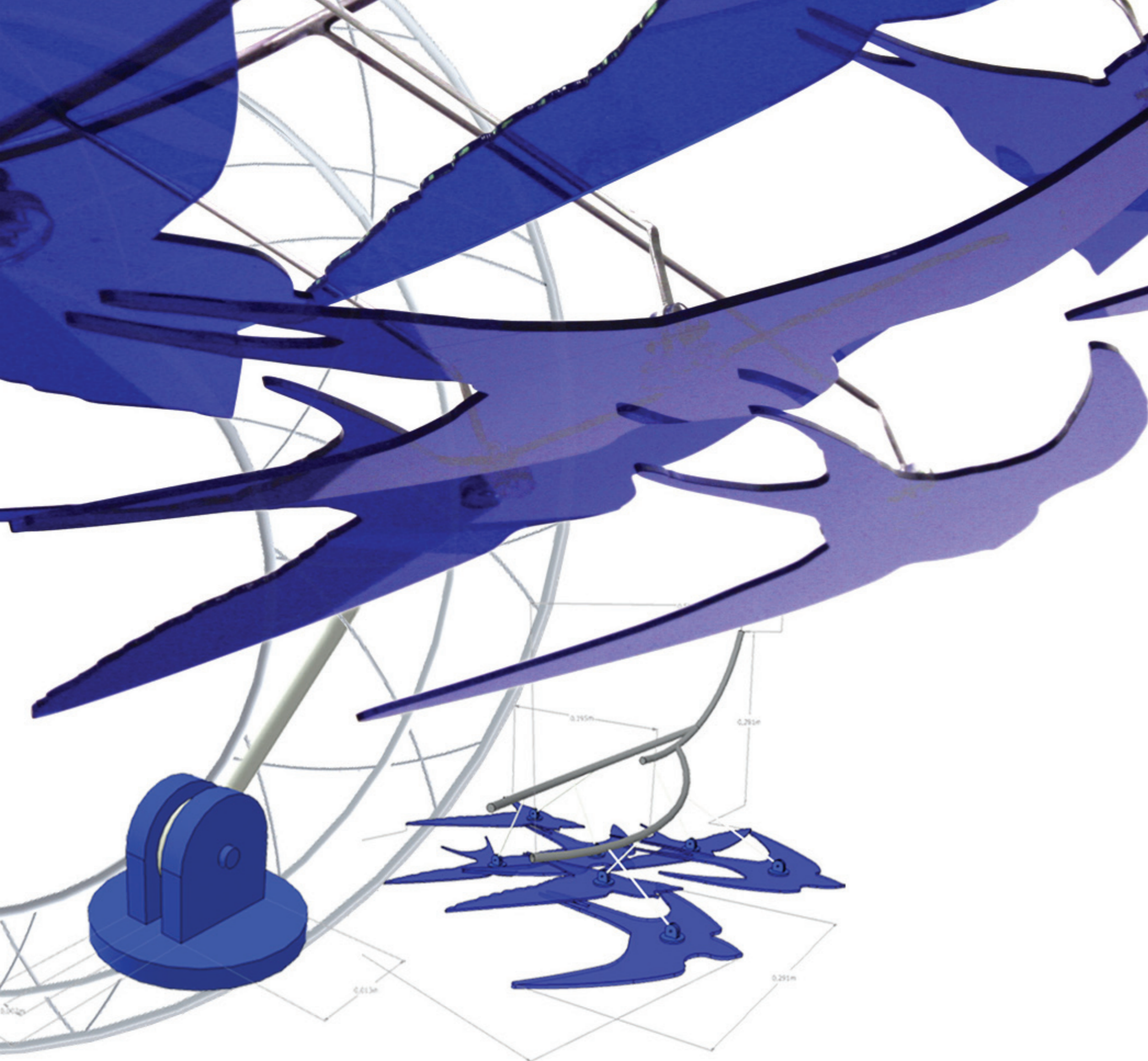




Oxford Swallows

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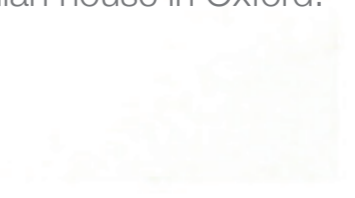
plexiglass and stainless steel
600 x 3800 x 3000 mm



Design and development

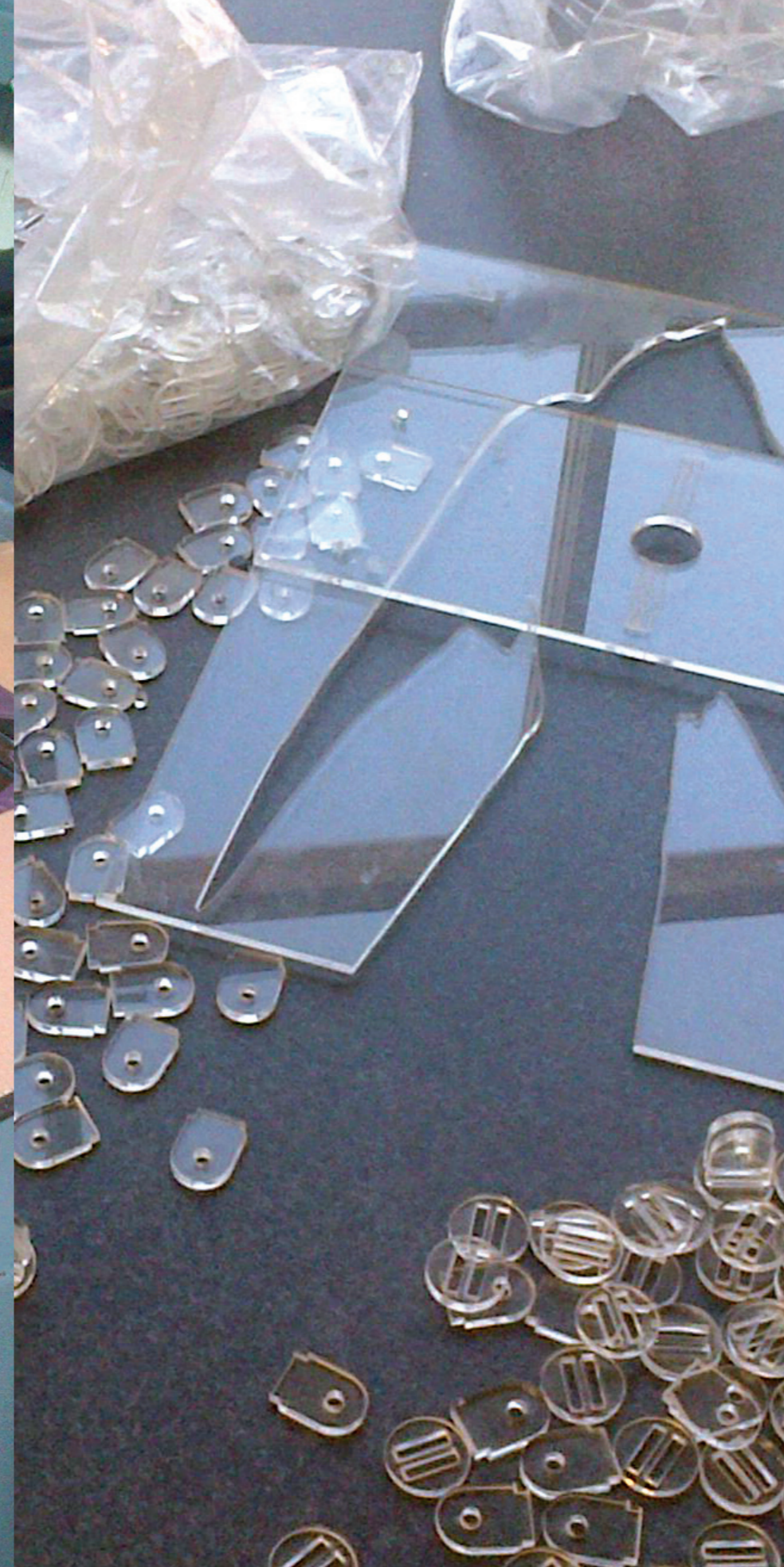
The circular movement of the flock of swallows was the inspiration for the design of the supporting structure. The main elements are the three circular hoops placed off-centre from one another, mimicking the layout of the birds. This minimizes the visibility of the supporting structure with optimal support for the swallows. The armature or framework is fabricated from rolled stainless steel bent to the design specifications. Each part was cut to size, welded and polished in order to complete the final layout of the design. The main structure has four parts which were finally bolted together on site at the end of March 2012.

The plexiglass swallows are attached to the supporting structure on modular branches that maintain the birds' orientation in the overall layout of the artwork. The swallows spiral downward and the light coloured birds seem to fly in underneath the dark birds creating a layered effect within the composition. The aim was to create as much depth as possible in the artwork using a limited amount of space. The modular branches that support the swallows also absorb impact from wind by being flexible and able to move independently. The movement is absorbed by the main structure and dispersed over the entire installation gently stirring each bird and creating a flutter of movement as light reflects on the birds. The installation now hangs suspended from the roof trusses of a 16th century Edwardian house in Oxford.



Swallows production

The production of the swallows involved the laser cutting of swallow profiles and fittings designed to attach the birds to the supporting structure. The plexiglass fittings are attached to the swallows with a special bonding agent that glues the two parts together permanently. The fittings are positioned using a template to get the correct alignment and then bonded to the swallow profile. Each swallow is individually wrapped in tissue paper and bubble-wrap, in preparation for transport to the installation site.





Swallows in rows

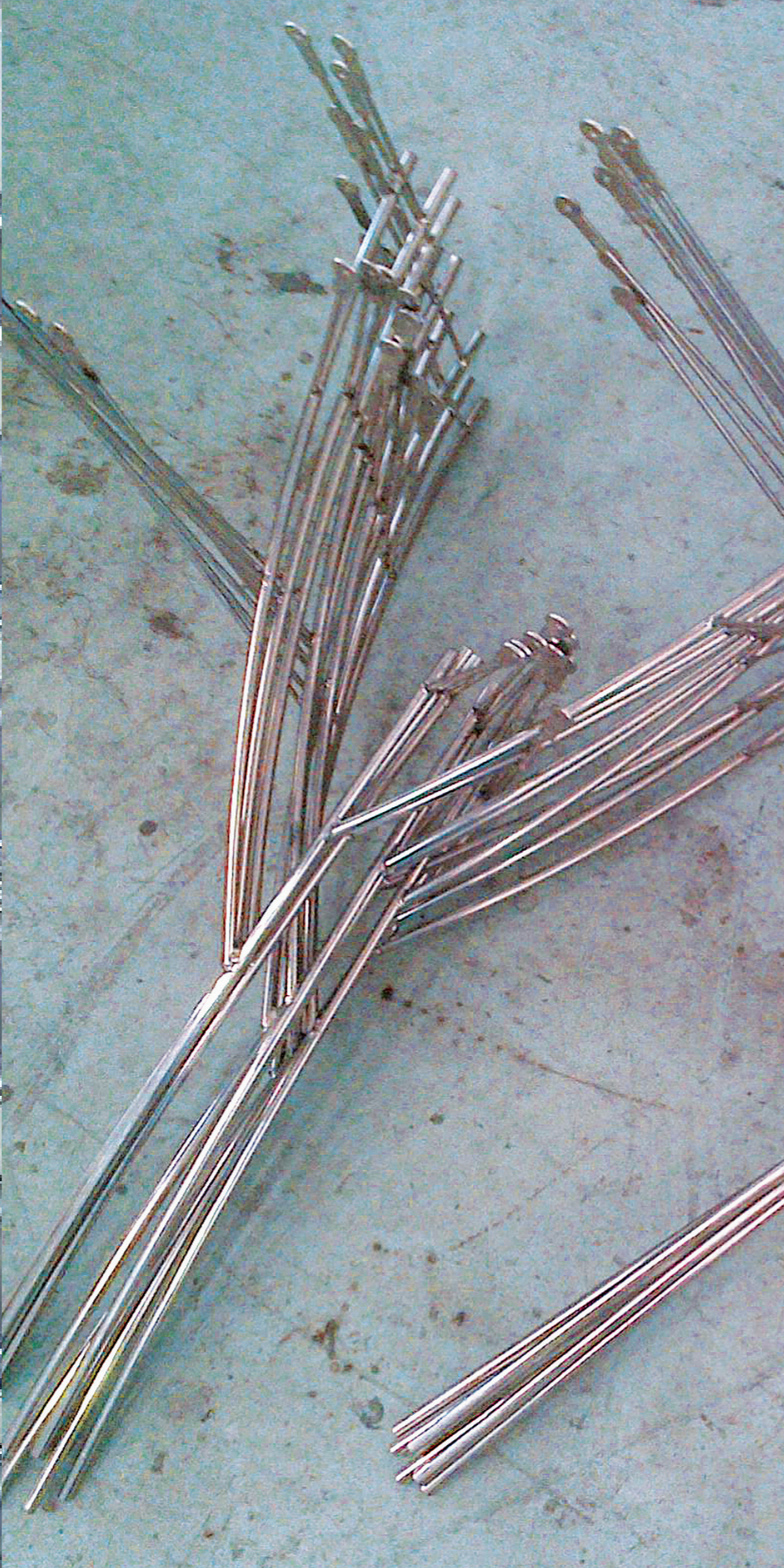
Swallows, waiting to be packaged before they fly north for the winter

Ring Structure

The ring structure is made up of stainless steel pipes that have been rolled to a particular diameter and cut to size. Each part is shaped to fit the curvature of the adjoining part, then welded into position, finished off and polished to a mirror finish.

Strand, South Africa
stainless steel structure
38 x 3000 x 3000 mm





Stainless steel production
fittings, branches and structure



Vision of the Artist

The main structure has a diameter of 3 metres and the whole installation is about 3.8metres at the widest part. The complete installation weighs 220Kg and contains 600 swallows. The final design has 5442 individual parts that were manufactured and assembled in Cape Town, South Africa. The final artwork was constructed according to the original design of the artist however, the design was intuitively interpreted, and adjusted according to the artist's vision.

There will always be differences between the original design and the final artwork. This is part of the process of creating something spectacular. The final artwork was produced by a team of 12 people including engineers, fabricators, co-ordinators and the artist. The installation took approximately four months to complete and was flown from Cape Town and installed in Oxford on the 27th of March 2012.

by André Stead
Commissioned by Bernard Fontannaz

Workshop

fabrication
2012
stainless steel



On-site installation

The on-site assembly and installation of the artwork took four days to complete. The four parts of the stainless steel structure were bolted together on stands before the birds were bolted on individually. Once the piece was completed it was hoisted to its final positioning and suspended on stainless steel cables.

Oxford, England
26 - 30 March 2012



Installation
on site
27 March 2012

Oxford Swallows
31 03 2012
plexiglass and stainless steel
600 x 3800 x 3000 mm





Swallows home in Oxford

England
2012

Oxford Swallows

31 03 2012

plexiglass and stainless steel
600 x 3800 x 3000 mm



Word of thanks

Thanks to Ian Jacobs from TFD manufacturing for his design and engineering contribution on the project, as well as the stainless steel fabrication team at Lizzies Marine Stainless. Many thanks also to Gareth McArthur and his team from Hot Wired for their laser-cutting and fabrication expertise. I would like to thank Pam Morgan and Caroline Quinn from Virgin Atlantic for collecting the cargo in South Africa and ensuring its safe arrival in England.

I would also like to thank Pierre Verwoerd for helping with transport and arranging all the on-site tools and equipment needed for the installation. Lastly I would like to thank Bernard Fontannaz for the opportunity to do a wonderful project like this, and his wife Sue for her hospitality and patience during the installation.



André Stead

Born in Evander, 1975. Lives and works in Cape Town.

Qualifications and awards

2007 Eight years bronze casting experience, and instituted Foundry Course at Bronze Age Art Foundry, Simon's Town
1997 Metal forging tuition, John Allesandri, Cape Town
1995 Graphic design course, Gunther Komnick, Cape Town
1994 Goldsmith apprenticeship, Pretoria
1993 Pro Arte School of Arts, Distinction with colours for Art, Pretoria
1991 Merit award, Iscor Art Competition, Iscor Permanent Art Collection, Pretoria

Selected Exhibitions and Commissions

2012

Illumination, Solo exhibition, Christopher Møller Art, Cape Town
Oxford Swallows, Private commission, Oxford, England

2011

Flight of the Swallows, Corporate commission, Delaire Graff Wine Estate, Stellenbosch
Evolution, Solo exhibition, Is Art Gallery, Franschoek
Group exhibition, Christopher Møller Art, Cape Town
Group exhibition, Dawid's Choice Gallery, Johannesburg
Roodt Inc, group exhibition, Dawid's Choice Gallery, Johannesburg

2010

Group exhibition, Dimitrov Art Gallery, Dullstroom
Rooftop exhibition, group show, St. Lorient, Pretoria
Group exhibition, The Upper Deck Gallery, Plettenberg Bay
Group exhibition, Christopher Møller Art Gallery, Cape Town

2009

Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg
Identity, group exhibition, Platform on 18th Gallery, Pretoria
Figures, solo exhibition, Northcliff, Johannesburg
Female series launch, Grande Provence Heritage Wine Estate, CTICC

2008

Angels, group exhibition, Grande Provence Gallery, Franschoek
Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town
Medallions, Corporate Commission, Burj Dubai Development, Dubai

2006

Corporate commission, Graham Beck Wine Estate, Franschoek
Group exhibition, Bronze Age Sculpture House, Cape Town

2000 – 2005

Group exhibition, Seidelberg Wine Estate, Paarl
Miniatures, group exhibition, Bronze Age Sculpture House, Cape Town
Board of Executors, Corporate commission, Cape Town
Group exhibition, Vineyard Gallery, Cape Town

1999

Group exhibition, The Christie Gallery, Cape Town
Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town

1998

Wooden figures, Solo exhibition, Novalis Institute, Cape Town
Sanlam Restoration - Award, Corporate commission, Sanlam, Cape Town
Group exhibition, Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town

1997

Sanlam Literary Award, Corporate commission, Sanlam, Grahamstown
Group exhibition, Primart Gallery, Cape Town

Collections

Bernard Fontannaz
Laurence Graff
Willy Woestyn
Johnny Walker Stride Awards
Graham Beck Estates
Board of Executives
Hal Shaper
Sanlam
Iscor



Photo: Wiehahn Diederichs



www.andresteadsculpture.com

