RUSTICMANIA

Sculpture Care & Maintenance

Every Rusticmania sculpture is individually created and finished for its intended location. Wood is a natural material and will continue to respond to changes in temperature, humidity and weather long after it has been carved.

With appropriate care, an outdoor sculpture can be enjoyed for many years. The following guidance explains what to expect and how best to look after your piece.

Natural Movement & Cracking

Timber naturally expands and contracts as its moisture content changes. As a sculpture seasons, particularly during its first few years, cracks or “checks” may appear and change with the seasons.

This is a normal characteristic of solid timber and does not necessarily indicate a problem with the sculpture. In many cases these natural changes simply become part of the character of the piece.

If you are concerned about a significant crack, movement or deterioration, please contact me and send photographs before attempting a repair yourself.

Studio & Freestanding Sculptures

Freestanding sculptures created from timber supplied and selected by Rusticmania are covered by my 18-month initial aftercare period.

During this period I will, where appropriate, carry out a second protective oil treatment and repair significant drying cracks that I consider would benefit from attention. Minor natural checking and movement that do not affect the sculpture may simply be left as part of the character of the timber.

After this initial period, ongoing inspection and maintenance can be arranged as required.

Tree & Stump Carvings

A sculpture carved into an existing standing tree or stump is fundamentally different from a freestanding studio sculpture.

The original tree remains the client's timber and may already contain cracks, decay, fungal activity, old wounds, hidden metal or other defects. Further cracking and movement should be expected as the remaining timber continues to season.

For this reason, crack repair is not included as part of the aftercare of tree and stump carvings.

I will advise on appropriate protection and maintenance for the carving, but I cannot guarantee the future condition or structural integrity of the original tree or stump.

Protective Finishes

For many outdoor sculptures I use Osmo UV-Protection Oil Extra 420, which provides a clear satin finish while helping to protect the timber against moisture, weathering, UV exposure and biological growth.

The finish allows the natural colour and grain of the timber to remain visible rather than creating the appearance of a heavy varnished coating.

Outdoor sculptures should be inspected periodically and the protective finish renewed when required. The frequency will depend upon the species of timber, location, orientation and exposure to sun and weather.

Additional Timber Preservation

Some species and situations require additional protection, particularly where the timber is less naturally durable or where parts of the sculpture are particularly vulnerable to moisture.

In these circumstances I may use a suitable penetrating oil-based wood preservative before applying the final protective finish.

Faẽla the Wickham Dragon is a good example. Because the sculpture was created from an existing beech tree, additional preservative treatment was used extensively, including treatment of vulnerable areas around the base and root structure, before the sculpture received its finishing oil.

Where appropriate, I may recommend that the owner continues periodic preservative treatment as part of the sculpture's long-term care.

Looking After an Outdoor Sculpture

Try to keep vegetation, soil and accumulated leaves away from the base of a sculpture wherever possible. These can trap moisture against the timber and encourage decay.

Periodically check the sculpture for excessive moisture retention, deterioration of the finish, fungal growth, significant cracks or movement, and corrosion or movement around any steel components.

Avoid pressure washing, aggressive cleaning products or applying household paints, varnishes or oils without discussing them with me first.

For substantial outdoor commissions, I generally recommend a maintenance inspection approximately every 12–18 months, although the appropriate interval will depend upon the sculpture and its location.

Steel & Mixed-Media Elements

Some Rusticmania sculptures incorporate steel, resin, paint, pyrography, concrete or other materials.

These components may have their own maintenance requirements. Where a sculpture contains mixed materials, I will provide any additional care advice relevant to that particular piece.

Maintenance by Rusticmania

I am happy to provide ongoing maintenance for Rusticmania sculptures, including inspection, cleaning, protective treatments and appropriate repairs.

Maintenance outside the initial aftercare supplied with a studio sculpture is normally a chargeable service, with the cost depending upon the sculpture, its condition, location and the work required.

If you're ever unsure about the condition of a sculpture, please contact me and send a few photographs. In most cases I can quickly advise whether what you're seeing is normal timber movement or something that would benefit from attention.

Roger Coolbear

Rusticmania – Art, Nature & the Wild Life