metal sculptor Adrian Oakes was

commissioned by North west Leicestershire

District Council to create a piece of

public art for the cultural quarter of

Ashby De La Zouch his design concept was

to create a series of tall elegant

curved columns whose appearance changes

as you walk around the site from two

distinctive viewpoints the shapes will

magically form the image of a large

majestic tree reflecting Ashby’s

position in the heart of the National

Forest during the summer of 2018

Adrian hosted several meet the artist

sessions in the town so that local

people could see and understand his

plans he also ran workshops in local

primary and secondary schools where he

asked children to study the natural

forms of leaves and trees and create

their own artwork using metal wire their

ideas will be combined into a separate

artwork designed by Adrian which will be

installed in front of the hood park

gates later in 2019 from his studio in

Manchester Adrian takes us through the

various stages of fabrication and

special techniques he developed in order

to create the main sculpture the first

stage of the fabrication was to work

with a company in North Manchester who

specialized in bending gigantic pieces

of steel they've taken this structural

steel tubing and bent it to a very

specific technical design that are

produced for them and then from there it

was delivered to a blacksmith with

publication engineering Stockport lovely

lot of family affirmance I've worked with

for over 20 years

who then assembled all pieces together

very carefully they have an expert

welder who works for them from there

it was then carefully lifted onto a

lorry and sort of fading light one

afternoon and taken to the galvanized

another place but 25 miles away near

Rochdale where it basically they dip it

in acid first of all to clean it and

then they take it into a tank of molten

zinc

and they count the steel and it's by far

the best process for the longevity of

the surface it'll outlast us by about 90

years plus and then I collected it from

there using a whole the other two Voss

been using for donkey's years and then

we carefully craned it into the studio

from the road and here we are today ok

so here we are with the sculpture

it's actually taken me by surprise the

size of it from looking at the little

model in the schools to actually having

it here now it's enormous have to

build an extension on the back of the

studio and this is all set up now ready

for that link and it means up to be

preparing the galvanized surface for a

special treatment

ok so we've got the massive 8 columns

here and what I'm doing is I'm actually

settling them all ready to do a special

surface technique Buckland is a good old Yorkshire

word which means preparing to

do something else so these will all be

in fine fettle and are finished and it's

a massive sum in them getting rid of

rough bits and basically preparing them

with a special technique I've developed

when the big columns come back from the

galvanizes there's often lots of lines

of sharp zinc where it's pulled

underneath the tubing so I have to very

carefully go over it both with the Sun

dear and with a hand file as well so

that you make sure that there's no rough

areas or sharp areas so when I'll

actually have to sand lines into it

this is what gave me the idea to then

actually deliberately sand more lines

into it which after the effect of the

bark that I'm trying to create the

string on the large cone you are looking at

now

is actually part of the new technique

I've developed because I'm using it

about soak up the phosphoric acid to

make dart lines but also active as a

resist so that you see clear areas now

past the process that I'm doing with the

the fatling of the artwork is to prepare

them for this special technique which involves

actually applying very dilute phosphoric

acid to the zinc surface and it and it

basically gives it an instant aging

effect and I have these test tubes made

out the galvanizes so that I could

experiment with them before I actually

tackled the main large columns and

what I've done is with the sanded

lines you get effects of different sorts

of patterns and different reflections off

them and I've also thinking of the

children I work with in the schools last

year I've also cut out lots of little

stamps from sponge to actually put six

different leaves on each of the columns

so that the children especially will be

able to relate them to the work that we

did in the schools this is one of the

leaf stumps that I've made out of sponge

and it's actually soaking in the

phosphoric acid which is a very

dilute mix with water and it's quite

safe it doesn't burn or anything like

that and when it's on the zinc it's

quite benign it doesn't sort of float

off into the atmosphere like you might

do with old paint for instance which is

one of the reasons why I like it my I've

sort of developed this technique so what

I'm doing is I'm just making sure

there's some of the acid on

there. I’ve chosen a place where it's

actually quite a nice height for

children to see it I'm about three or

four feet up from the bottom and so

basically I'm just now one of the things

that the string does is it catches any

drips as well so that when the string

soaks up the phosphoric acid it form

starts forming the black lines that

you've seen now let's see how well

that's done

can you see that and then obviously

there's little drips there which I think

I will just let those do what they want

I'm also spraying a very mild tea wash

onto the surfaces very carefully making

sure that it

it was in between the string patterns

that are made giving it an overall sort of mist

looking at the polymers have already

patents you can see how the lines are

actually meant to signify or Akali different

types of bark particularly thinking of

something like a silver birds bark

which is very varied and interesting so

it's all sort of interlinking and

hopefully it'll create this extra layer

of interest which I like to build into

the sculptures where not only do you get

a gigantic sculpture that is quite an

impressive landmark from a distance but

I'm very interested in drawing people

closer so that they can expect the fine

detail of something and there's an extra

element to it to discover I love the

sort of systems and structures in nature

I find it very inspiring a lot of the

sculptures I've done in the past have

reflected this sort of interest and this

one's like the latest development so

this process I have developed is actually

unique something I started using about

eight years ago and sort of developed

this new technique particularly for the

sculpture in Ashby