

Owen Croft *(United Kingdom)*

At WEC Group Training Academy, immense pride is taken in nurturing the next generation of metalwork professionals. One approach is to involve apprentices in metal artwork projects.

The projects are part of an evolving series of metal artwork initiatives at the Academy, which includes renowned creations such as the Lowry Sculpture and Dog, Darwen Spitfire, and many more. Each project not only contributes to the artistic legacy of the WEC Group but also plays a vital role in apprentice development.

Throughout the projects, apprentices such as Owen Croft, hone techniques such as TIG welding, as well as traditional metalworking methods like dishing, raising, and the safe and correct use of hand tools—skills that are fundamental to becoming a highly skilled fabricator and welder.

Projects are conducted under the expert guidance of Kris Mercer AWeldI and Master Welding Instructor. The sculptures are more than just a piece of art—they are a celebration of craftsmanship, teamwork, and hands-on learning. They demonstrate how innovation and education can come together to produce something truly exceptional.

The next major project which a team of apprentices has just started work on is a Commission to create a large sculpture in Corten steel of the Curlew, a unique moorland bird-species. It is due to be installed at a gateway entrance to Darwen Moor. This 4 m high sculpture celebrates and draws attention to the fragile status of this bird and the moorland ecology it depends on.

This project has come about through WEC's collaboration with artist and sculptor Marjan Wouda and Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council with further support from Arts Council England.

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Exhibit “The Doberman Dog”

One of WEC's standout training projects, The Doberman Dog Sculpture, is a testament to the creativity, technical skill, and dedication of WEC's apprentices.

Crafted entirely from 316 stainless steel washers, the large-scale sculpture was designed and fabricated by one of WEC's rising star apprentices, Owen Croft.

This visually striking artwork features washers of various sizes, with the majority being 35mm outside diameter, showcasing meticulous attention to detail and precision craftsmanship.

The stainless-steel Doberman sculpture was purposefully integrated into WEC's Apprentice Curriculum to help trainees meet and exceed industry standards while learning valuable skills.

Dimensions of Exhibit

83 cm high x 75 cm long x 25 cm wide



The Doberman Dog
Owen Croft