

MAX RAINNEY OBE

MEMORIAL MEDAL

Francis Maxwell Rainey was born in Belfast in 1921 at a time when the city was one of the most important industrial centres in the world. Max saw his future in engineering and, following in his father's footsteps, joined James Mackie and Sons Ltd., the Belfast textile machinery manufacturers, as an apprentice toolmaker. He progressed through the drawing office and war work on munitions brought him into contact with plastics for the first time.

After the war, he became manager of the rapidly growing Mackie's Plastics Department. He lectured in the evenings on Industrial Administration at the Ashby Institute and cofounded the Plastics and Rubber Institute in Ireland, insisting from the outset that it would be an all island body.

In the late 1960s he started a new Plastics company with Billy Martin of Martin Plastics Ltd and in 1972 rescued Ulster Plastics Ltd from Receivership, along with son John and Billy Martin, forming Denroy Plastics Ltd. The Denroy Group Ltd now employs 250 people in Denroy Plastics Ltd, Denman International Ltd and Denman Inc in the USA and has offices in London, Boston, Amsterdam and Johannesburg.

Max Rainey was awarded an OBE in 1981 for his contributions to economic development in Northern Ireland. He sadly passed away in 2010.

His passion for plastics, best business practice and principles and commitment to education in industry live on in the Denroy Group.

The family wished to establish a fitting memorial and agreement was reached with the Queen's University of Belfast to award the Max Rainey Prize annually to the student who achieves the highest mark in their individual research project on a topic related to the design and manufacture of polymer products or the development of polymer materials.

The family also felt that there should be a more tangible and enduring legacy in the form of a memorial medal.

The company had gained valuable experience creating medals to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Denman patent and the 25th Anniversary of the opening of the office in the USA. Frances Simmons of Simmons Gallery had used her expertise to manage these projects and was again engaged for this commission.

For the hairdressing industry, the “Art Medal” was considered appropriate allowing greater freedom of expression without the constraints of a circular shape or other conventions.

With a view to help sponsor and encourage the arts it was decided to conduct a design competition and three international medallists were invited to submit their ideas. All produced work of a very high standard. The three Denman judges unanimously choose Natasha Ratcliffe who had previous experience on commemorative coinage design for the Royal Mint.

The following year Natasha was asked to adapt the design to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of Denman Inc.



Neither the concept of the Art Medal nor a competition was considered appropriate for the Max Rainey Memorial Medal. A more conventional treatment and life like representation would be required to reflect his personality. The medallist would have to be chosen on merit, reputation and past work.

The right image needed to be identified and some video footage traced to help the artist bring the character to life.

One photograph stood out as representing the man in his prime of life.



Choosing the right medallist to execute the likeness was to prove a long and difficult process.

Initially, Ian Rank-Broadley, was interested in the challenge but had to withdraw because of existing commitments.

The search began again for someone to entrust the task.

On the advice of Frances Simmons, Danuta Solowiej was approached.

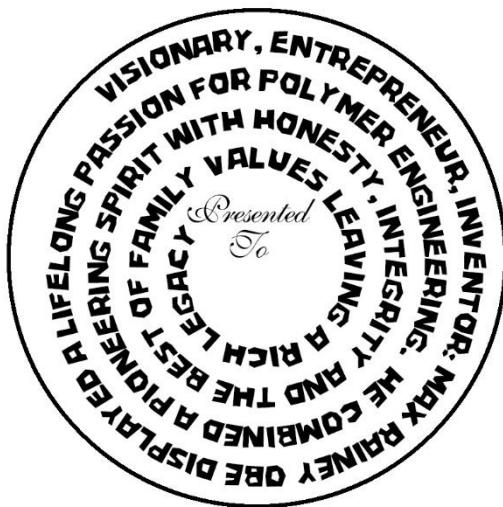
Much discussion and further research was required to establish the brief. It was clear from the outset that Danuta understood exactly what was required.

She was a pleasure to work with and several enjoyable meetings in London were scheduled around other Denman business to get to know each other better and progress the design.

The result was superb, capturing the likeness and the character and the plaster model was duly approved.

The choice of the medal maker to interpret and execute the design was also an easy one. Fattorini had impressed by coming to the rescue for the Numismatics Society of Ireland (Northern Branch) 50th Anniversary commemorative medal and were an obvious choice.

With portraiture and legend for the obverse design agreed thoughts then turned, belatedly, to the reverse. Various imagery was considered. In the end Jonathan King and Karen Batley from the Denman marketing department came up with a form of words, layout and typeface.



Advice from medallist, Danuta Solowiej, and Fattorini was to use a typeface more in keeping with that on the portrait side of the medal and the final design was approved. A fitting tribute to a man who had devoted his working life to the plastics industry in which he had been richly rewarded.



Ten silver and fifty bronze medals have been struck.

While we celebrated the successful completion, others were taking an interest in Danuta's work. We were delighted when she was honoured in the Goldsmiths' Craft & Design Council Awards 2017 with the Gold Award, and the overall Special Award in the Modellers' Section.



MODELLERS

Special Award sponsored by
Hearn Studio Ltd.

The aim of this award is to identify high quality modelling and artistic sculpturing skills. The winning entrant of this special award receives a cash prize. Any sculptur subject, including medals, can be submitted in the modelled condition (e.g. wax, wood, hand-worked plaster prepared for medallic work etc.) and can include finished pieces.

Gold Awards
Hearn Studio Ltd Award
Danuta Solowiej
Portrait of Max Rainey (Image 4)

Finally, this year, we were in a position to present the Silver Max Rainey OBE Memorial Medal together with the Cash Bursary to Ryan Hunter at the Ashby Building, Queens University Belfast on 4th July 2017.

Medals have now been presented retrospectively to

Mark Wright	2016
Christopher O'Hara	2015
Ambrose Lau Tiong Hong	2014

These medals will be treasured, no doubt, long after the money has been spent.