

PHANTOM SCULPTURE



Mead Gallery

6 October 2023 - 10 March 2024

Exhibition Guide

Introduction

Britain has been home to some of the world's most renowned sculptors – from Barbara Hepworth to Anthony Caro and Mona Hatoum. Our understanding of modern and contemporary sculpture has largely been asserted through successive generations—each add to and develop our knowledge and appreciation of what sculpture is and can be.

For our autumn and winter exhibition, the Mead Gallery showcases the work of 23 artists who have contributed to and shaped the development of British sculpture over the last century. Titled *Phantom Sculpture*, the exhibition takes as its starting point the writing of former University of Warwick student and world-renowned cultural theorist, philosopher, and academic Mark Fisher (1968 – 2017). Fisher proposed:

“... the 21st century is oppressed by a crushing sense of finitude and exhaustion. It doesn't feel like the future. Or, alternatively, it doesn't feel as if the 21st century has started yet. We remain trapped in the 20th century.”

- Mark Fisher: *Ghosts Of My Life - Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Zero Books (2013)

With this quote in mind, *Phantom Sculpture* proposes that history is under constant reappraisal, none more so than by artists working today. The artists included in the exhibition mine their own histories as well as interrogating those that have been widely accepted. They create space where it was previously lacking to allow for new and emerging ideas to generate ghosts, traces and phantoms of one artist's practice in another.

In January, the work of some artists present at the start was replaced by different artists and new sculptures, creating a kaleidoscope of further synergies connecting artists and their work across boundaries and generations.

Artworks that have left the exhibition = (-)

Artworks that have joined the exhibition = (+)

Please note: All works displayed in *Phantom Sculpture* are listed in this guide.

Olivia Bax

Born 1988, Singapore

Lives and works in London, UK

Off White

(2020) steel, plastic funnel, chicken wire, paper, UV resistant PVA, plaster, paint, wheels

Olivia Bax's playful sculptures appear to reinvent discarded household objects. Metal armatures and hand-generated paper pulp are turned into unusual looking objects held together by chicken wire. The texture is created by mixing paint and pulp together. Bax often uses water pipes and tubes in her work to signify movement and transferal—this can be seen in *Off White*. The use of 'pockets' and containers suggests the enclosure of an object, whilst the hooks and handles create connections.



Courtesy the artist

Nicole Wermers

Born 1971, Emsdetten, Germany

Lives and works in London, UK

Wasserregal (+)

(2011) powder coated steel, fixings, water

Wasserregal, German for water shelf, is a free-standing sculpture resembling a shelving unit supported by an assortment of U-shaped steel pacers with water contained within the individual shelves. Nominated for the 2015 Turner Prize, artist Nicole Wermers specialises in creating sculptures, collages and installations that connect urban space and surfaces to explore ideas of modernity and consumption. *Wasserregal* has references to the low-cost minimalist interiors of the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than hold objects or books as an ordinary shelving unit would, Wermers' shelves hold pools of water. Fluid but static, the water is contained within thin panels. It is reminiscent of the British modernist sculptor Barbara Hepworth's outdoor works, which collect pools of water in their concave spaces .



Courtesy the artist and Herald Street, London

Phoebe Collings-James

Born 1987, London, UK

Lives and works in London, UK

The Infidel

The Infidel

(both 2023) ceramic



Phoebe Collings-James' wide-ranging practice encompasses sculpture, video, sound and performance.

For Phantom Sculpture, Collings-James has produced two new works that are part of the ongoing series of forms titled *Infidel*. These objects explore the position of an infidel in society—questioning both church and state, while still holding deep spiritual faith and belief in collective society.

Various ceramic techniques including sgraffito, rouletting and hand carving (referencing various African pottery traditions) are used across the clay's surface, creating repeat patterns and words.

Through the material itself, along with the processes and modifications made by Collings-James, these works call into question euro centric modes of knowledge building.

Courtesy the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

Anthony Caro

Born 1924, London, UK. Died 2013, London, UK

After Emma

(1977-82) steel rusted, blackened and painted red

Anthony Caro's career spanned more than six decades and has been described as sensational and ground-breaking. Since his first solo exhibition in 1963, Caro experimented with sculpture and dismantled tradition by abandoning figurative forms of sculpture to focus on the idea of "drawing in space" and through abstract forms. Caro was frequently inspired by nature, preferring to work outdoors. Instead of placing sculptures on a plinth, he placed them firmly on the ground allowing them to directly confront the viewer. In *After Emma*, Caro welded steel into abstract shapes before embellishing them with paint. Caro's interest in nature is explored in this work with *After Emma* having its name derived from Emma Lake in Saskatoon, Canada, the location of the workshop where the sculpture was created.



Courtesy the Anthony Caro Centre, London

Phyllida Barlow

Born 1944, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Died 2023, London, UK

Rockpompom 7, 8, 9, 10 (+)

(all 2015) polyurethane foam, plaster, paint, wool, steel, tape, fabric

Phyllida Barlow's *Rockpompoms* are inspired by the artist's childhood in post-war Britain where the effects of austerity were strongly felt and a make and mend mentality was extensively promoted. Improvising children's toys with recycled materials and scraps formed a core memory for Barlow and she would later refer to this in her art. In *Rockpompom*, vibrant and colourful fabric scraps echo this experience. As a mother with five children to raise and little free time, *Rockpompom* shows a deliberate sense of urgency, combined with a lively and intense mixture of colours, strewn in a theatrical manner, showing how Barlow was inspired by her personal experiences in the creation of her artwork.



Courtesy Hauser and Wirth

Rebecca Ackroyd

Born 1987, Cheltenham, UK

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Carcass, Float and Residual Glare I from the series *Singed Lids*

(all 2019) steel, epoxy resin, plaster, paraffin wax

Rebecca Ackroyd is an artist who incorporates the body and the abstraction of objects into her work. She focuses on bridging the gap between the past and present with the ordinary and the uncanny. *Carcass, Float and Residual Glare* form part of the series *Singed Lids* which evokes the scene of an aeroplane crash, with debris and body parts scattered, as a dystopia frozen in time. The use of orange resin reflects the inferno setting the aeroplane ablaze. The crash is materialised in both a literal form in the physicality of the piece and in a metaphorical form, as an interruption in our lives.



Courtesy of the artist and Peres Projects

Richard Deacon

Born 1949, Bangor, UK

Lives and works in London

On the Back

(2011) aluminium and stainless steel

Richard Deacon's abstract forms have placed him at the forefront of British sculpture since the 1980s. A hugely influential teacher and artist, his work has been commissioned internationally, including by the University of Warwick. *Let's Not Be Stupid* sits opposite Warwick Arts Centre.

A self-described 'fabricator' concerned with the construction behind the finished work, Deacon's practice has involved working with a range of materials from laminated wood to corrugated iron. *On the Back* experiments with the idea of drawing in space and placement. Aluminium and stainless steel are combined into a trapezoidal and triangular frame to reflect light and create shadows across the gallery floor.



Courtesy the artist

Barbara Hepworth

Born 1903, Wakefield, UK. Died 1973, St. Ives, UK

Figure (Walnut) (1964) bronze

Discs in Echelon (-) (1964) bronze

One of the most influential artists of the 20th century, Barbara Hepworth remains a key figure in modern art. Over the course of her career, her work developed from figurative works to more abstract forms. She was a proponent of 'direct carving', a technique involving working directly with the final material rather than on an initial model. The shapes in *Figure (Walnut)* are inspired by Hepworth's childhood travels across the English countryside and connects the ancient landscape with the modern world. The surface and holes in the works warp the viewer's perception, creating contrast between colours, light and emptiness.



Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry

The Hepworth Wakefield (on long loan from the Hepworth Estate)

Jonathan Baldock

Born 1980, Kent, UK

Lives and works in London, UK

Warm Inside (i), (viii), (xi)

(2021) willow, steel, cotton, wool, ceramic, raffia, latex

Jonathan Baldock is a multidisciplinary artist who works with sculpture, installation, and performance. He takes inspiration from the seasons, paganism, myth, folklore, and our deep connection to nature. *Warm Inside* was created during the pandemic and harks back to a time of uncertainty, change, and survival. This is echoed in the textile cocoon's form as a container when woven baskets played an important role for transporting and carrying goods. The cocoon shape relays the lifetime journey between womb and tomb, and is another reference to time and endurance.



Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

Jesse Darling

Born 1981, Oxford, UK

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Virgin Variations

(2019) mixed media

Virgin Variations explores ideas of sexuality, religion, gender and disability and their impact on individuals and society. Built to resemble school lockers, each wooden cabinet is arranged in an orderly format decorated with everyday objects, from paper and plastics, to trinkets and clothing to reflect the artificiality of the feminine in society. There is a level of voyeurism present. Whilst the cabinets enclose these seemingly personal objects, it is not completely closed, allowing the viewer to peer inside. *Virgin Variations* also pays homage and acts as a shrine to Saint Ursula who was martyred alongside 11,000 other virgins in Cologne, Germany. The piece marks a metaphorical site of absence, an empty tomb paying testament to those lost with Saint Ursula and a graveyard for futile objects. Although personal objects are presented, there remains a veil of anonymity, there are no names of the items' owners, reflecting the anonymity of the martyred virgins.



Courtesy the artists, Arcadia Missa, London and Galerie Sultana, Paris

Kira Freije

Born 1985, London, UK

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

The Weeping Arc

(2023) stainless steel, cast aluminium, silk, grass

Temperant Observer (+)

(2023) stainless steel, cast aluminium, felt

The figures in Kira Freije's sculptures create a sense of unease. They are trapped in time and reflect an era belonging to the past. The sculptures resemble ghost-like figures with expressions similar to that of a death mask. The face moulds have been cast from real people whose own faces will age and change over time, while those on the sculptures stand still in time. Although the figures appear lifelike and are almost brought to life by costumes and props, the thin wiry frame reminds the viewer of absence and the reality of their simple metallic armatures and hollowed bodies.



Courtesy the artist and The Approach, London

Joseph Buckley

Born 1990, Leeds, UK

Lives and works in New York, USA

Crystal Landlord

(2023) plastic, formica, MDF

Crystal Landlord is a scrutiny of dehumanisation, class struggle and race politics. The artist, Joseph Buckley uses science fiction and fantasy to voice the inequalities in society. Through mould-making and plastic casting, Buckley echoes the processes of industrial production whilst also depicting the fragility of authority. Rather than invite the viewer to contemplate the victims of oppression and society, Buckley suggests the reverse and invites the viewer to identify the perpetrators of such dehumanisation.



Courtesy the artist

Redd Ekks

Born 1937, Oslo, Norway

Lives and works in County Cork, Ireland

Mr Salmon

(2005) ceramic, wire, salmon skin

Molen II (-)

(1989) ceramic

Influenced by the 1960s psychedelic era and counterculture movement, Redd Ekk's work is both experimental and secretive. His sculptures have contributed greatly to the Californian ceramic arts revolution. Whilst his contemporaries were focused on exploring the comical and bizarre in the creation of Funk Art, Ekks embraced the ceramic art form that was previously perceived as feminine and domestic and developed it into a sculptural art form. The artist also shines light on his Norwegian roots and fascination with spirituality by including references to Nordic runes.



Courtesy the artist, Tim Horrox and Arcadia Missa, London

Courtesy the artist, Zully Adler and Arcadia Missa, London

Phillip Lai

Born 1969, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Lives and works in London, UK

Drunken Sailor

(2021) cast polyurethane resin and epoxy fibreglass

Floating above the boundless waves of the ocean, the empty barrels in Phillip Lai's *Drunken Sailor* illustrate physical immersion and disorientation whilst highlighting the economies at play in the material world. Lai frequently employs everyday objects such as containers in his work. He explores their relationship to humans' dependence on them for sustenance and survival. By placing objects in plain sight, Lai invites the viewer to remark upon the crux of the object – its purpose, its creation, its value.



Courtesy the Artist and Modern Art, London

Sarah Lucas

Born 1962, London, UK

Lives and works in London

GOOD THOUGHTS - BAD THOUGHTS

(2023) tights, wire, wool, boots, boxing gloves, acrylic paint, chair, bin

Audacious and daring, *GOOD THOUGHTS - BAD THOUGHTS* is a playful provocation of gender, class, and sexuality. Challenging the traditional plinths of grandeur and elevating statues on a moral high ground, the artist challenges this sentiment in *GOOD THOUGHTS - BAD THOUGHTS*. Lucas selects a bright red industrial waste bin as the base for her deconstructed female figure with splayed limbs suffocating the bulging breasts of the figure. An uncomfortable confrontation with the body, Lucas questions what it means to be human and stretches the sculptural possibility of the female body to its limits. A member of the Young British Artists emerging in 1988 who were known for their boldness and radical art forms, Lucas is known for her engagement of visual puns, eroticism, and humour in her work.



Courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London

Mona Hatoum

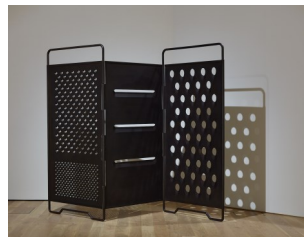
Born 1952, Beirut, Lebanon

Lives and works in London, UK

Paravent

(2008) black finished steel

Mona Hatoum explores the conflicts and contradictions of our world. Born in Beirut to a Palestinian family, Hatoum's work deals with issues of displacement, marginalisation and exclusion. Often using grids or geometric forms to refer to systems of state control. Since the 1990s, she has focused on installation and sculptural work and often uses household objects as a starting point. Whilst the objects maintain their familiarity, they are altered in a way that turns them into uncanny and unsettling objects. At first glance, *Paravent* resembles a room divider commonly seen in changing rooms or hospitals, but a more detailed look reveals that it is a foldout grater that has been scaled-up to larger-than-life dimensions. Comical yet sinister, what may once be perceived as a harmless grater has now been enlarged to project danger and potential harm.



Courtesy of Mona Hatoum Foundation

Jala Wahid

Born 1988, London, UK

Lives and works in London

Carved My Sole In Two, Soul Halved In Bloom (+)

(2021) resin, fibreglass

Kurdish-British artist Jala Wahid frequently explores the way the human form is presented in her work. *Carved My Sole In Two, Soul Halved in Bloom* depicts a figure lying on their side with their identity shrouded in mystery due to the abstract form of the body and lack of facial features. Wahid's practice is primarily concerned with the intertwining of Kurdish politics and nationalism with artistic expression as she explores the presentation of marginalised bodies. Although her early works were rooted in feminist discourse, her more recent work has extended to explore issues from a Kurdish diasporic perspective. She commonly touches on the theme of urgency, migration, and Kurdish culture to question fixed definitions of identity.



Courtesy of the artist and Niru Ratnam Gallery, London

Rachel Whiteread

Born 1963, London, UK

Lives and works in London, UK

Untitled (Silver Pallet)

(2021) lacquered silver

In 1993, Whiteread became the first woman to win the prestigious Turner Prize and has become famed for reinventing ordinary objects through casting. Whilst her objects retain a ghostly familiarity of their original form, they bear a new identity upon being cast. *Untitled (Silver Pallet)* demonstrates Whiteread's expertise in casting by transforming a cardboard drinks box into a lacquered silver cast. Whilst time continues to progress and objects decay, the remnants of the box are frozen in time with the still visible impressions marking where the drinks cans once stood.



Courtesy the artist and Gagosian

Dominique White

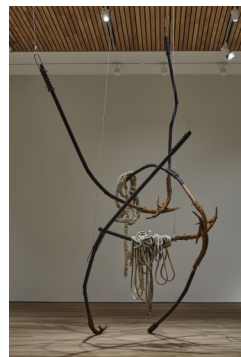
Born 1993, Essex, UK

Lives and works in Marseille, France

Redemption

(2022) burnt mahogany, cast iron, forged iron, damaged rope

Winner of the 2023 Max Mara Art Prize for Women, Dominique White weaves together ideas related to the ocean, slavery, movement and blackness to create *Redemption*, a sculpture inspired by the artist's family history of migration from the Caribbean to the UK. The work is made from objects associated with the sea and found materials. Mirroring a ghostly figure in mid-dance, *Redemption* is informed by the ongoing effects of slavery and Hydrarchy, a term coined by the 17th century poet Richard Braithwaite referring to the ability of individuals to gain power over land by ruling through the instruments of water. Nautical myths are an important part of White's work with materials such as worn ropes and weathered iron, capturing ideas of preservation and decay.



Courtesy the Artist and Veda, Florence

Kim Lim

Born 1936, Singapore. Died 1997, London, UK

Lives and works in London, UK

River Run II (+)

(1996-97) marble and wood

A key figure in the British post-war art scene and a former student of Anthony Caro, Kim Lim was a British-Singaporean sculptor known for her minimalist work. Lim embraced her cultural heritage, becoming the first non-white female artist to be included in the 1978 Hayward Annual. Lim and her artist husband William Turnbull whose work featured in the first phase of *Phantom Sculpture*, travelled the world and met with artists across different cultures. Her travels became a source of inspiration as she soaked up the influences of Indian and Southeast Asian art. She is most well known for her wooden and stone-carved sculptures of which *River Run II* is an example. The marble block is skilfully balanced on the wooden piece, creating a dialogue between the two materials creating both harmony and contrast.



Estate of Kim Lim, London

Veronica Ryan

Born 1956, Plymouth, Montserrat

Lives and works in London

Breadfruit (Moraceae) (+)

(2021) bronze

Known for its soft and sweet bread-like taste, breadfruit is an important fruit in the Caribbean. Born in Montserrat, Veronica Ryan has selected the breadfruit as the focus of her sculpture. It honours the Windrush generation, Caribbean immigrants who came to the UK to fill post-war labour shortages, but faced discrimination and racism despite having the legal right to live and work here.

Breadfruit was one of the main foodstuffs for enslaved people in the West Indies. The sculpture is designed to increase cultural visibility and representation in public spaces. Drawing upon environmental concerns, personal narratives, trauma and recovery, *Breadfruit* discusses a range of themes and ideas.



*This sculpture is located in our Sculpture Park

University of Warwick Art Collection

William Turnbull

Born 1922, Dundee, UK. Died London, 2012

Angle (-)

(1971-1972) stainless steel/6 elements

William Turnbull's work discusses geographical and historical boundaries and he became well-known for his minimalist sculptures. He was fascinated by the way sculptures occupy space and time. This is shown in *Angle* where the sharp angular shapes are repeatedly duplicated. Turnbull has frequently been linked with Geometry of Fear, a term coined by the critic Herbert Read to describe a group of young British sculptors whose work featured twisted and battered looking human and animal figures welded from metals to explore anxieties and feelings experienced during World War II. Balance, equilibrium, and gravity became key themes in Turnbull's work following his experience as an RAF pilot. Viewing the ground from a bird's eye view offered new perspectives into his understanding of space which he would later demonstrate in *Angle* and other works.



Turnbull Studio, London

Making Space

Make use of our Making Space to creatively explore themes in *Phantom Sculpture*. With resources and prompts designed by our Family Artists-in-Residence, Natalie Zervou-Kerruish and Ascension Dance, this space invites play, conversation, movement and an opportunity to respond to the works on display.

You can leave your artworks here or take them with you.



Phantom Sculpture

6 October 2023 - 10 March 2024

Curated by Thomas Ellmer,
Exhibitions Curator

Installation by Luke Pickering, Visual
Art Technician and our team of
freelance art handlers: Tom Bloor,
Halina Dominska, Beth Emsden and
Steve Rubacki

With additional support from
Michelle Tsang, Exhibition Assistant;
Tara Johnstone-Comerford,
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Dooley, Art Collection Curator,
Sarah Shalgosky, Principal Curator
and Sophia Welby, Exhibition
Assistant

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Residual Glare I, from the series
Singed Lids (2019). Courtesy the
artist and Peres Projects, Berlin.
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