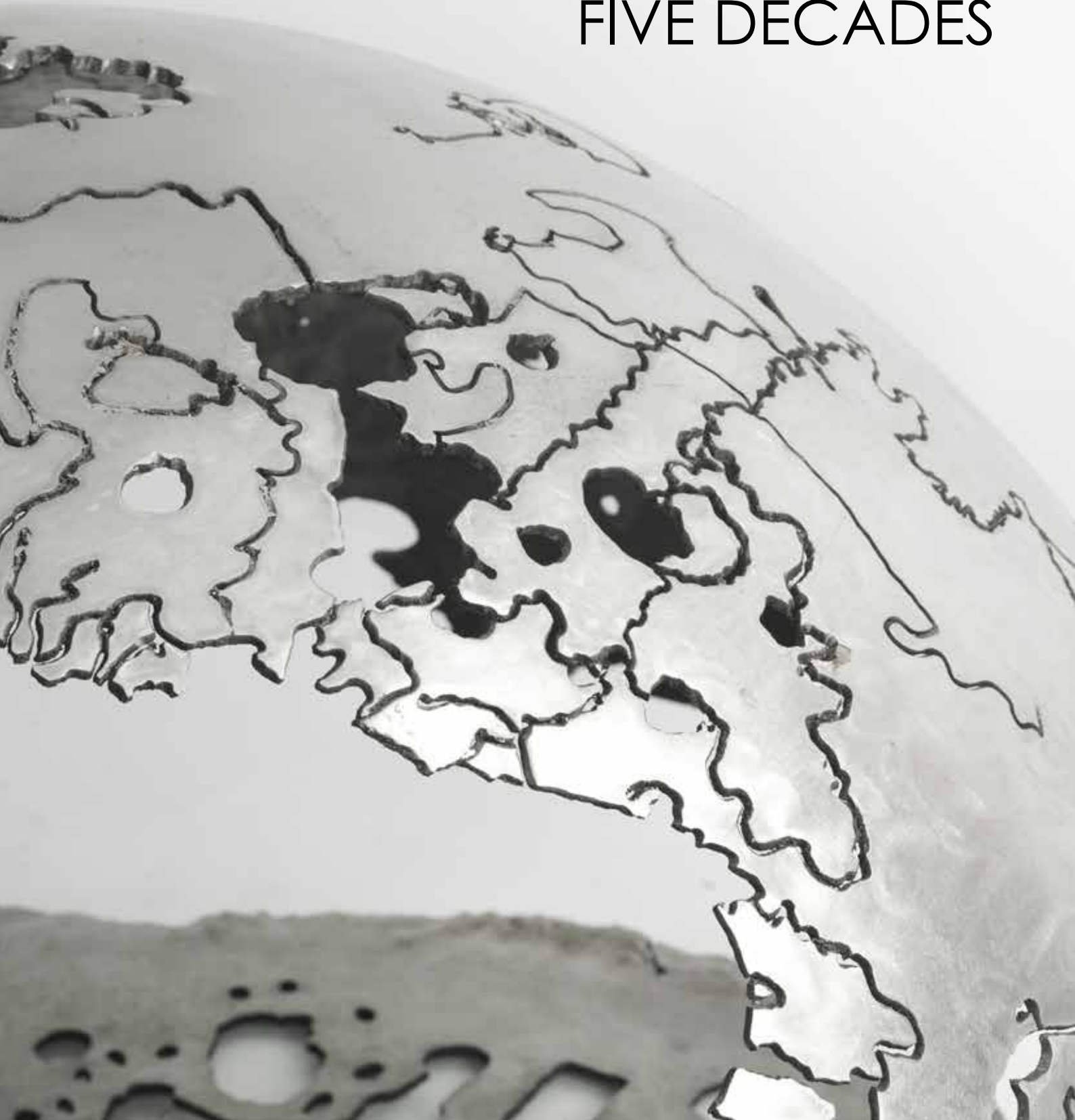


BRYAN KNEALE
FIVE DECADES



PANGOLIN
LONDON

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Astra
2011, Stainless Steel
Unique
68.6 x 254 cm

A BRIMFUL OF GRACE

*"Boayl nagh vel aggle cha vel grayse."*¹

This exhibition is not a retrospective of a life spent in the making of original and highly distinctive sculpture. It is a cherry-picked glimpse from Bryan Kneale's studios, his reserve collection. Works that were held back for his pleasure and reflection. Without the vast chronology of fifty years of achievement, we are given the intimate opportunity to see a chosen essence of his singular talent, which allows us a generous and unusual space to examine both his subjects and their intriguing physical language.

Notwithstanding it would be irreverent to discuss these works without acknowledging the enormous influence of his upbringing on the Isle of Man. Its dark and windswept isolation is still a subject he evokes and takes pleasure in, even once claiming that he was fundamentally a Manxman and that was the strength of his directness in making art. The five decades since have obviously proved that wrong. The level of elegant sophistication and the tenacity of brightness in his evolving sculptures have left the mud of that work ethic far behind. But there might be a primal key here to examine the core of Kneale's highly original metaphoric practice.

*"One of the things about the island is that whatever I saw seemed to assume a daguerreotype-like kind of reality owing to the extreme clarity of light and bareness of the landscape."*²

Single found objects in an environment of grass and rock create focus and mystery in a vivid imagination. Remnants of machine, fragments of sheep carcass, driven posts and fallen gates and all the other a man made contrivance punctuate the rural indifference and give a sign of closer systems of form and function, an otherness that demands a subconscious dialogue of explanation. This would explain the constant seeking to understand what the memory might be, of how the imagination invents another image to fill the hollow of unknowing. Sometimes the hand is the most direct way to expose this process and open a glimpse to meaning. Allowing and trusting in it to go beyond the matter of fact paths of conscious design. Kneale's drawing and sculpture are seething with this dissection of recollection. Remaking the echo of fragment inside his language of poetic cause and effect.

*"If I experiment it is only because this is a means of realising that I have at last understood something: it has become intelligible to me."*³

This is one of the constant signatures in his work that separates him from so many other contemporary and near contemporary British abstract sculptors. His striving is not seated like so many other cutters and welders in the academic and does not rely on training or a reaction with the life room and the objective external contours of the human body.

*"The more I examined the exterior quality of a head the less real it seemed...in a life-class, I suddenly realized that when the model opened her mouth I became aware of an internal world which whilst invisible was more real than the outer one".*⁴

Kneale's early paintings do not show the worthy study of dull pigment and blunt observation, but a fierce and uncompromising expressionistic portraiture of people, haunted by the emptiness of numb peace in bleak post war isolation. Hollow eyed and big handed they stare out of the canvases, angry and melancholic.



They demand emotional contact with the viewer and purposely ignore the rising fashionable tides of Colour Field painting that were demanding the Stalinisation of all figurative personality.

Kneale's move into the third dimension had little or nothing to do with external pressures, but rather a need to find a greater fluency to summon the growing surrealistic shadow in the work. Picturing the protagonist or the victim was now no longer enough. It was necessary for the actual essence of the mystery and the conflict to become manifest. Early experiments with wood and plaster did not give him the resistance he desired. The stern, flexibility of steel became that, the primal processes of heat and force appealing to his sensual delight in struggle and concussion, and also resonating with the sound of explosion. The only German bomb dropped on the Isle of Man, tried to nail the rock even deeper into the Irish Sea. Bryan's father hastily cycling over to the crater and returning with a fragment of warm buckled steel. A prized possession, that was miserably stolen from the boy at school and doubtless is still hidden there.

More manipulation was required to match such an incident; the knowledge of forging and machine lathing giving agile stealth to the composed object; increasing the logic of their machined anatomy. The pitted steel rectangle of *Bible Box*, being made concave by controlled military explosion. Opposite skills chilled to perfection; brass, aluminium and perspex engineered to contrast; the language expanding.

In *Pendulum*, *Drift* and *Witness* the forms are open, linear and converse in a distance of balance and suspension and demonstrate one of the artist's keenest preoccupations; poise. In these works it is actual and set in a rigid Beckettian framework of tension. In later works it becomes absorbed, sheathed and internalised, so that poise becomes

(LEFT)
Theme of Heads
1960, Oil on canvas
Unique
101 x 76.4 cm

(RIGHT)
Pendulum
1963, Steel
Unique
152 x 251 cm





the subtle motivation that drives the work. There is an inspired restlessness in Kneale's sculptures. The hand won't settle, but drives into new configurations of form and material, through different understandings of process interrogating images with their opposites.

These were also the features that made him such an important educationalist and curator of contemporary sculpture before his retirement. The energetic encouragement of difference and diversity, with significant shows at the Royal Academy and Battersea Park. He also strengthened and guided the RCA sculpture department in direct opposition to the St. Martin's School of Sculpture, (where attitudes towards innovations in abstract sculpture were often less than flexible), Kneale was never part of that clan or any other conglomerate of thinking. He demands his own separate oxygen for private experimentation.

William Tucker once complained to Bryan that there was "too much of the Quatermass" about his work. This comment was obviously limp but might just have had an accidental kernel of profundity in it. Bryan's brother Nigel made film and TV stories that were hugely successful and are still gaining critical praise. A dark menace was at the heart of each, a Manxian shadow escaping into overlit modern setting, wickedly tinged with humour and understatement.⁵ There is nothing literal in the younger brother's sculptures, no story telling with a beginning, a middle and an end. But there might just be a tincture, a quintessence of a brooding memory of chill and otherness in the way its layered parts fold or an uncertain circumference, shuttered like a giant lens, hung vertically and given the name *Polyphemus*. The eye of a monster trapped on an island.

Polyphemus
2000, Bronze
Coated Steel
Unique
140 x 170 cm



Kneale always matches poise with ingenuity in his finely crafted works. It is one of the haptic read-outs of the joy of making and also offers a scent to the viewer in their need to track the identity and meaning of an abstract work. This is true in his gliding forms that have immaculately exchanged the mechanical fingerprints of their invention for polished reflection as it is of *Crocus* and the smaller Haiku table pieces that look like they may have been modelled in clay instead of delicately hammered out of steel.

In the circular and domed works *Shrine of Daedalus*, *Oracle*, *Mars* and *Crucible* a planetary image is exploited. They are not gesturing to us in the same way as the other work, but turn inwards while glaring outward. There is a summoning of unstable momentum here. Some brim with night and ripeness while others have given up the perfection of their meniscus in a spilling that bends and fragments them towards inversion. It is difficult not to read murmurs of fear, decay or environmental collapse in these cauldrons of future.

Kneale's relationship to drawing is complex and to some extent contradictory. The power and impact of the works on paper is conspicuous. The skeletal bestiaries are the only works where he shares his subjective potency with objective study, allowing one view to pass through the other with tangible relish and wit. But they have often come into being as a displacement to the act of three-dimensional construction; (when ill health prevents) the drawing being an integral part of the structure and again entirely subjective. The distribution of weight and contrasts of proportion creating line and volume inside the metal as in *Astra*. The surface detail alive with touch as in *Odyssey* or written into the carapace of *Shrine of Daedalus*.

Parrot Fish
1987, Pencil
on Paper
Unique
89.5 x 82 cm

The most recent drawing gives another insight into the artist's visual intelligence. These pale trceries are gleaned from both the sculptures and the anatomical studies. The sturdy bones of which have been whittled down, the mass removed. These studies are not gathering of past configurations of solid bodies but the interior of the interior in the act of separation; delicate, translucent and fluctuating. They may have started as longings to the need to make strong physical work again, to contact the grace of steel. But they too are evolving in Kneale's imagination. Not coming to terms with the disappearance of weight, but finding another existence that is separate to gravity. More of mist than earth, closer to music than stone.

BRIAN CATLING
Oxford, 2015

NOTES

¹ Translation; *Where there is no fear there is no grace*, Manx Proverb.

^{2, 3 & 4} Dialogue with the artist by Bryan Robertson, *Sculpture: 1959 – 1966*, Whitechapel Gallery, February - March 1966 Fosh & Cross Ltd

⁵ Thomas Nigel Kneale (1922 – 2006) was a British screenwriter best known for the creation of the character Professor Bernard Quatermass, a heroic scientist who appeared in various television, film and radio productions written by Kneale for the BBC, Hammer Film Productions and Thames Television between 1953 and 1996.



Shrine of Daedalus
2006, Stainless Steel
Unique
110 x 70 cm

CATALOGUE



..the centre of the earth is a huge ball of iron.... steel is iron with carbon... it is an old material and we have been using it for a long time. Bronze is not the only atavistic substance. People think of nature as rocks and trees and streams and living things, but the earth itself is also nature: there is this inner core and the rest is merely surface skin.

BRYAN KNEALE

Crucible
2005, Copper
Unique
60 x 79 cm





Pendulum
1963, Steel
Unique
251 x 152 cm





Island
1970, Marine Plywood
Unique
120 x 45 cm



Falcone
1968 / 2015, Brass
Unique
95 x 36 cm



If I make a sculpture with a particular form or idea in it, I learn something which will probably change the subsequent development of my work but I do not see sculpture, for myself, as endless variations on one experience.

BRYAN KNEALE

Trapdown
1965, Steel
Unique
81.3 x 45.7 cm



Witness
1963-4, Brass
Unique
45 x 40 cm



Shrine of Daedalus
2006, Stainless Steel
Unique
110 x 70 cm

Mars
2005, Copper
Unique
90 x 40 cm





Crocus
1975, Copper, Brass
and Stainless Steel
Unique
33 x 190.5 cm





These drawings are, of course, a paradox. The truth is that skeletons, when delineated by Bryan Kneale, do not symbolise death. They proclaim life.

DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

Walrus
1987, Ink on Paper
Unique
75 x 101.4 cm



(ABOVE)
Boar Pig Skeleton
1995, Conte Crayon
Unique
113 x 82.5 cm

(BELOW)
Boar Pig Skeleton
1995, Conte Crayon
Unique
113 x 82.5 cm

(RIGHT)
Baboon
1987, Ink on Paper
Unique
64.5 x 85 cm





...the most fascinating thing to try to do is to discover whether one has within oneself, the ability to realise a form that one has never seen and hence not known about: to try to realise the non-existent.

BRYAN KNEALE

Cornaa
2012 / 2015, Brass
and Nylon
Unique
15 x 14 cm





Oracle
2006, Brass
and Copper
Unique
90 x 50 cm





Thetus
2009/2015, Brass
and Copper
Unique
47 x 31 cm

Sky
2010, Stainless Steel
Unique
81 x 282 cm





I often get the same feeling looking at his work as in looking at a beautifully crafted piece of armour or some lethal but beautiful weapon; menacing and dangerous, but ultimately ours. With our eyes we can feel the weight of things, with our body the balance of each part to the other. Echoes of a world we know even without thinking about it, an accessible container for our projected wonders and dreams. Not fantasy, but something real, manmade. This is sculpture.

PHILLIP KING

Odyssey
2008, Powder
Coated Aluminium
Unique
68.6 x 216 cm



Trapeze
1971-2, Stove Enamelled
Steel and Brass
on Wooden Plinths
Unique
244 x 170 cm



Arethusa
2005, Steel, Brass
and Copper
Unique
48 x 50 cm





Curlew
2012, Stainless Steel
Unique
98 x 80 cm



Plover
2012, Powder Coated
Stainless Steel
Unique
65 x 70 cm





In his eighties (Bryan Kneale) remains an agent of disruption, an anarchist in Academician's guise, the wayward experimenter who continues to question assumptions. He still aims to surprise himself: to discover hidden and unexpected connections, and to subvert his existing knowledge by new visual perceptions.

ANDREW LAMBIRTH

Nikessen
2014, Stainless Steel
Unique
135 x 45 cm



Polyphemus
2000, Bronze
Coated Steel
Unique
140 x 170 cm



To this artist drawing is not an action but rather a method of investigation that enables him to observe shapes and volumes to understand their structure as a whole.

PATRIZIA BOTTALLO

Untitled
2015, Ink and
Watercolour on Canvas
Unique
40 x 40 cm



Zeus
2003, Aluminium
on Wood
Unique
86.4 x 142.2 cm



(LEFT)
Untitled
 2015, Ink on Paper
 Unique
 30 x 41.5 cm



(ABOVE LEFT)
Untitled
 2014, Ink on Paper
 Unique
 30 x 41.5 cm



(ABOVE RIGHT)
Untitled
 2014, Ink on Paper
 Unique
 30 x 41.5 cm



(ABOVE)
Diablo
 2012, Brass
 Unique
 32 x 22 cm



(BELOW)
Maquette for Falcone
 2012, Brass
 Unique
 39 x 22 cm



(LEFT)
Maquette for Clove
 2012, Brass
 Unique
 6.6 x 14.5 cm



*I'm trying to make sculpture in which my life and my sculptures are indivisible
- as indeed they are: I spend my life making sculptures after all. So there it is
in the sculpture, I hope - my life.*

BRYAN KNEALE

Sloc
1965, Brass
Unique
30.2 x 24 cm

BRYAN KNEALE

BIOGRAPHY

1930	Born in Douglas, Isle of Man
1947	Attends Douglas School of Art
1948	Attends Royal Academy Schools
	Awarded Rome Prize
1949 - 51	Rome Scholarship
1952	Leverhulme Prize
	Tutor, Royal College of Art
1968	Head of Sculpture, Hornsey College of Art and Design
1969	Arts Council Purchase Award
1970	Elected A.R.A
1972	Curated 'British Sculptors' Exhibition, Royal Academy
1974	Elected Royal Academician
1977	Curated Jubilee Exhibition of British Sculpture, Battersea Park
1980-85	Senior Tutor, Royal College of Art
1980-86	Professor of Sculpture, Royal Academy Schools
1985-90	Head of Sculpture, Royal College of Art
	Senior Fellow, Royal College of Art
1990-95	Professor of Drawing, Royal College of Art

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2011	Beaux Arts, London
2009	Royal British Society of Sculpture
	Hart Gallery, London
2007	Hart Gallery, London
2005	Cass Sculpture Foundation, London
2004	Hart Gallery, London
2002	Hart Gallery, London
2000	70th Birthday Exhibition, Roche Court
1995	Retrospective, Royal West of England Academy
1991	Drawing Retrospective, Natural History Museum
1990	New Art Centre, Salisbury
1987	Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
1986	Retrospective, Henry Moore Gallery, Royal College of Art
1981	Taranman Gallery, London
	Compass Gallery, Glasgow
	51 Gallery, Edinburgh
1978	Serpentine Gallery, London
1977	Taranman Gallery, London
1972	Dartington Hall, Devon
1966	Whitechapel Gallery, London
1954 - 86	One man shows, Redfern Gallery

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2009	Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy Courtyard
2007	Summer Exhibition, Hart Gallery, Nottingham
2000	Bronze, British Contemporary Sculpture, Holland Park
	The Eye of the Storm, Mandria Park, Turin
1999	Bryan Robertson Exhibtion, Kettles Yard, Oxford
	Exhibition Animaux, Paris
1998	Pallant House, Chichester, Drawings for Goodwood
	Figurative Art, Flowers East
1997	Lewes Festival
1996	Goodwood Sculpture Park
1993	Chealsea Harbour Sculpture Show
1988	Sala Uno, Rome
	Chichester Festival
1981	Whitechapel Gallery, London
	Bath Art Fair
1977	Jubilee Exhibition of British Sculpture, Battersea Park
1975	New Art, Hayward Gallery, London
1974	Royal Exchange Sculpture Exhibition
1973	Holland Park
1972	Sculpture in the Cities, Southampton
	British Sculptors, Winter Exhibition
1968	Open Air Sculpture, City of London
1967 - 68	New British Painting and Sculpture
1966 - 71	Arts Council Tours
1966	Battersea Park Sculpture
	British Sculpture in the 60s, Tate Gallery
1965	English Eye
1964	Profile III, Bochum, Germany
1963	Battersea Park, Sculpture International
	Art d'Aujourdhui, Paris

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Arts Council of Great Britain
Bahia Museum, Brazil
Beaverbrook Foundation, Frederickton
Birmingham City Gallery
Bradford City Gallery
British Museum
Contemporary Arts Society
Fitzwilliam Museum
Glasgow City Gallery
Leicester City Art Gallery
Leicester Education Authority
Manchester City of Art Gallery
Manx Museum, Isle of Man

Middlesborough City Gallery
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Museum of Modern Art, Sao Paolo, Brazil
National Gallery of New Zealand
National Gallery of Victoria, S. Australia
Natural History Museum
Nottingham City Art Gallery
Oriel College, Oxford
Sheffield City Art Gallery
Tate Britain
Unilever House Collection
Wakefield City Gallery
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
West Riding Education Authority
Yale Museum
York City Art Gallery

SELECTED PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

2008	Rio Tinto Building
2005	<i>Captain John Quilliam</i> Sculpture, Isle of Man
2004	<i>Three Legs</i> , Noble Hospital, Isle of Man
2000	<i>Three Legs of Man</i> , Airport, Isle of Man
1999	Sculpture for Westminster Cathedral
1998	Sculpture for Westminster Cathedral
1997	Bronze Doors for Portsmouth Cathedral
1996	Sculpture for Manx Government Building
1994	Sculpture for Perse School, Cambridge
1979	Monumental Sculpture, Manx Millenium
1977	<i>The Watcher</i> , Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man
1972	Sculpture for King Edwards School, Totnes
1965	Sculpture for Camberwell Library
1962	Sculpture for L.C.C., Fenwick Place, Lambeth



(RIGHT)
Bryan Kneale
with *Polyphemus*
2000, Bronze
Coated Steel
Unique
140 x 170 cm

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibition would not have been possible were it not for Bryan Kneale's lifelong dedication to creating sculpture. For their assistance in bringing this exhibition together Pangolin London would like to thank Sam Neal for his advice and assistance, Brian Catling for his perspicacious essay and Steve Russell for his expert photography. Finally we must thank Pangolin Editions for their support and expertise.

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