

A large, dark, abstract sculpture made of metal, featuring a series of sharp, pointed, tooth-like elements that resemble a comb or a set of fangs. The sculpture is set against a white background.

EXORCISING THE FEAR

BRITISH SCULPTURE FROM
THE '50S AND '60S



LYNN CHADWICK
Bullfrog
1951, Bronze
Edition of 9
66cm high

EXORCISING THE FEAR

When Herbert Read wrote the introductory essay to the *New Aspects of British Sculpture* exhibition at the Venice Biennale sixty years ago, his phrase 'the geometry of fear' left an indelible mark on the history of British Sculpture. The term has since become synonymous with the eight sculptors that exhibited, yet whilst we can recall the artists that took part and Read's indication that the works shown were spiky, aggressive and imbued with a collective guilt, many of us would struggle to envisage the exact works he was referring to.

An exhibition that could recreate this renowned Biennale would present the perfect opportunity to reassess the validity of Read's remarks. However with the works now scattered across the globe and some untraced, this may have to be a future project and for the meantime we must rely on the few archive images that remain and the brief catalogue. It is exciting to be able to include in this exhibition three rare works that are particularly closely related to those exhibited at the biennale (Lynn Chadwick's *Bull Frog*, Reg Butler's *Young Girl* and Geoffrey Clarke's *Man*) along with a superb collection of further works chosen for their direct relationship with those on display in Venice. A number of works from the subsequent generation of sculptors have also been included to highlight the immediate impact of the exhibition in the decade or so after this legendary biennale.

Whilst *Exorcising the Fear* poses a number of broader questions such as whether the term the 'geometry of fear' can still be considered an appropriate description, the exhibition is primarily intended as a celebration - an opportunity to recapture the excitement and vitality of a moment when eight young British sculptors burst on to an international stage and jump-started a chain reaction that brought about a crucial sculptural renaissance in the history of British sculpture.

THE XXVI BIENNALE – VENICE, 1952

The British Pavilion exhibition of 1952 was selected by Sir Philip Hendy, Director of the National Gallery; Sir John Rothenstein, Director of the Tate; Lilian Sommerville, Director of Fine Arts at The British Council and Herbert Read, one of the most prolific writers and widely recognised supporters of 'modern art' in Britain at the time. In the two exhibitions to follow the Second World War, sculpture had been given a prominent showcase and had been well received with Henry Moore winning the International Sculpture Prize in 1948 and exhibitions of work by Barbara Hepworth and Matthew Smith in 1950. Well aware of the political opportunities the biennale offered in terms of Britain's image and post-war rebranding, the British Council were happy to fund these expensive international projects and to encourage what seemed to be a healthily developing avant-garde movement.



On this occasion however sculpture was not given the main spotlight, rather sixty-seven paintings by Graham Sutherland and a smaller tribute show to Edward Wadsworth took up the first few rooms and the predominant position on the front of the catalogue.

Where Hendy and Rothenstein concentrated on the painting shows, Herbert Read meanwhile selected eight sculptors: Robert Adams, Kenneth Armitage, Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, Geoffrey Clarke, Bernard Meadows, Eduardo Paolozzi and William Turnbull who, all under the age of forty, would make up the *New Aspects of British Sculpture* exhibition. In an astute move to illustrate continuity since 1948 whilst also emphasising rapid progression in Britain, Read placed a work by Henry Moore at the entrance to the Pavilion and nominated him as 'parent' and mentor of the group he had selected. Whilst the fame and influence of Moore was undeniable, the works on display inside the pavilion showed a distinct and marked reaction against Moore and his belief in 'truth to materials', organic form and monumentality. The other outdoor sculpture, Reg Butler's *Woman*, 1949 was a tantalising indicator of this shift but was largely overlooked by the press.

PRESS REACTION

As a prelude to the actual exhibition in Venice in June, the press were invited to a preliminary viewing of the exhibition at the offices of the British Council. The response was less than luke warm with most papers choosing to illustrate the most traditional portrait of Lord Beaverbrook by Graham Sutherland rather than any of the other more 'avant-garde' works.

In contrast, when the exhibition opened in June the international press were far more complimentary with many key critics and art world luminaries enthusiastically describing it as the most exciting exhibition of the Biennale. In Britain, the coverage sparked a debate about 'modern art' that was to continue for the rest of the year with a fervour that hadn't been seen since

(ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT)
Installation shots of
works by Bernard
Meadows and Reg
Butler at the Venice
Biennale, 1952

(OPPOSITE FROM TOP)
Installation shots
of works by
Robert Adams,
William Turnbull,
Eduardo Paolozzi,
Lynn Chadwick
and Reg Butler
at the Venice
Biennale, 1952

THE GUARDIAN, 4th April, 1952

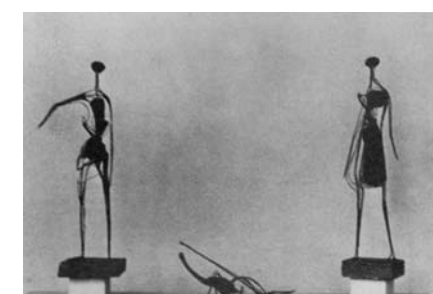
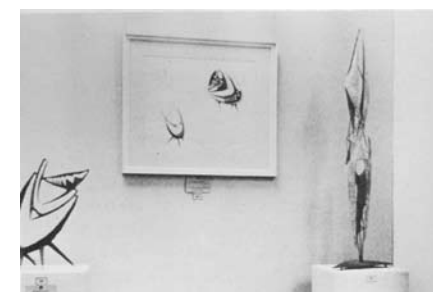
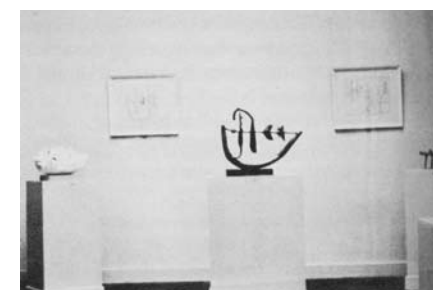
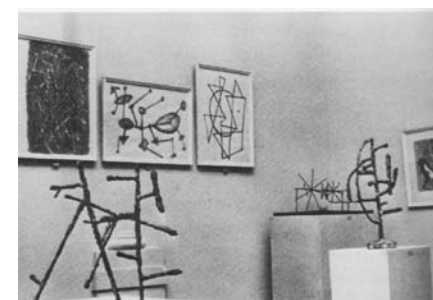
The British contribution to this year's Biennale Art Exhibition at Venice was shown to the press today at the offices of the British Council. It consists of a large collection of paintings by Graham Sutherland, a smaller collection of paintings and wood cuts by the late Edward Wadsworth, and some works by eight young sculptors – the oldest not yet 38. The selection was made by Mr Herbert Read and the directors of the National Gallery and the Tate.

The general effect is thin, restless and spiky; the flat papery surfaces of Wadsworth's pictures resemble the flat bronze planes of the sculpture by Kenneth Armitage; the wrought iron spikes by Reg Butler are like the painted spikes in Sutherland's pictures. The work of Sutherland is familiar and rightly esteemed, but was it wise of the selectors to put an artist like Edward Wadsworth so prominently in the shop window? Probably the selectors were determined to show the world that Britain also had its cubists even in far away 1914. If so Wyndham Lewis would surely have been a better choice.

The reasons for the inclusion of some of the sculptors are not entirely clear either. Lynn Chadwick's mobiles, Reg Butler's attenuated figures in wrought iron, and Kenneth Armitage's flat silhouettes are all lively and curious; but it hardly seems a matter of urgent necessity to send to Italy the rather uninteresting cubes and cones by Robert Adams or the Bronze biscuits and plaster pies by William Turnbull and Eduardo Paolozzi.

THE OBSERVER, 13th April, 1952

So much for imports. Last week I looked at the British Council's cargo of Wadsworth and Graham Sutherland pictures consigned, with the recent work of eight young sculptors, to Venice for the Biennale. Will our foreign critics discover in these bronze and iron abstractions any real contribution to sculpture? Reg Butler, pursuing with almost Leonardesque absorption his anatomical studies which provide the basis for his constructions, may excite attention, though his figures are less persuasive to my mind than the sharp-clawed brittleness of his insectile creatures. Kenneth Armitage's impressionist groups of cloaked figures, breasting the gale like littermice, are also products of a consistent imagination rather than ingenuity; but it is unlikely that the other sculptors will cause much stir in the British Pavilion.



the International Surrealist Exhibition organised by Roland Penrose in 1936. A particularly heated exchange between Alfred Barr, Director of MOMA and buyer of several works from the British Pavilion and Sylvia Sprigge writing for The Manchester Guardian makes for interesting reading. Where Sprigge yearned for representational art rather than 'iron waifs' Barr responded 'I can scarcely express my astonishment at her (Sprigge's) half querulous, half contemptuous, critique of what seemed to many foreigners the most distinguished national showing of the whole exhibition'.¹

HERBERT READ – THE POETIC COMMISSARIO

Despite the initial press reaction to the preview, Herbert Read took a bold academic approach to the introduction. He carefully justified his selection of artists whom he said were not an 'organised group' but at the same time enforced his belief that they all shared a 'collective guilt' borne from their unconsciousness (see Appendix). Well argued and convincing, the essay included many references to art history, literature, philosophy and psychology, as well as a good dose of the poetic licence and spirit he had become known for.

Born in 1893, Read studied History and Law at Leeds University and from an early age established a passion for literature and poetry.² During the First World War he fought with the Yorkshire Regiments, was wounded and awarded the Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order. Learning of the loss of his brother whilst in the trenches, the terror and the filth of war must have deeply affected Read as it did many thousands of others. On his return to London, he continued his work as an indefatigable writer and became a voracious art world networker establishing strong relationships with many artists and poets of the time including Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Charles Ginner, Richard Adlington and T. S Eliot.

Read's first hands-on experience of the art world came in 1919 when he assisted the two brothers Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell in their exhibition of work by Archipenko, Derain, Dufy, Matisse, Vlaminck, Zadkine and others.³ Considered a highly controversial exhibition at the time, Read gave out catalogues and defended the show to the many shocked and traditionalist visitors. Inspired by the experience, he went on to curate a number of exhibitions and soon became a prominent voice on modern art, no doubt realising that his passion for the subject and his fearlessness in defending it was helping him carve his career. By 1933 he had published his well known book 'Art Now' and become editor of the prestigious Burlington Magazine. A few years later, he publicly attacked Kenneth Clark, then the director of The National Gallery, in *The Listener* for his views that 'advanced' or 'modern' art was out of touch with reality and could only lead to a dead end. At a time when the Nazis were systematically expunging modern art as 'degenerate' it is easy to see how Read's vehement views drew much attention and support.

Read's literary and poetic background as well as his talent as a wordsmith also led to his success. Following from his introductory essay to Roland Penrose's International Surrealist exhibition Read's 'Surrealist Objects and Poems' included another phrase that has since become widely recognised

REG BUTLER
Young Girl
1951
Welded copper
sheet & wire
48.3 cm high



and often repeated which describes the Surrealist object as ‘the chance meeting of the umbrella and the sewing machine on the dissecting table’.

By 1952, Read was widely considered one of the most pre-eminent art writers and curators of his time. He was an esteemed member of countless committees and Chair of the Institute of Contemporary Art which he co-founded with Roland Penrose in 1946. Whilst a number of the sculptors exhibiting at the 1952 biennale had already begun to make waves in the UK with their first solo shows, works commissioned for the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the Open Air exhibitions in Battersea Park, this was the first time many of the artists had exhibited internationally. An additional endorsement from Read would have been considered a precious accolade at the time regardless of whether they agreed with the accuracy of his descriptions of their work.

PHILOSOPHY, FEAR AND THE CONCEPT OF COLLECTIVE GUILT.

These new images belong to the iconography of despair, or of defiance; and the more innocent the artist, the more effectively he transmits the collective guilt. Here are images of flight, of ragged claws 'scuttling across silent seas', of excoriated flesh, frustrated sex, the geometry of fear.

As well as a passion for poetry Read had a strong interest in philosophy and in particular those writers connected with existentialism such as Sartre, Heidegger, Camus and Thoreau who became popular in the post-war years by re-asserting the importance of human individuality and freedom.

The above two sentences which have been so often quoted, are a veritable smorgasbord of philosophical and psychological references. Not only does Read mention existential angst and despair but also nods to Freud's theories of sex and the concept of collective guilt. Existential angst and despair are two central themes of existentialism, however, they are set apart from fear in that fear requires an object which through definitive measures can be removed. In his essay Read references both anxiety and despair but noticeably does not define the exact object of the fear. In addition, for there to be a manifestation of collective guilt, there must be a conscious individual admission of responsibility for a group action. If these eight sculptors are not a group as Read states then his implication must be that the ‘collective’ is everyone in general and that the guilt is admitted by everybody. If we assume that Read implies the guilt is caused by the horrific acts of the World Wars then this is understandable to an extent however it ignores the fact that both Adams and Butler were Conscientious Objectors and makes a very generalised assumption that all eight sculptors would readily admit responsibility.

The titles of the works selected for the biennale exhibition also seem to challenge Read's notion of fear and despair for there are none that indicate a direct relationship to the atrocities of war or an awareness of conscious or subconscious fear - no ‘tragic groups’ or Giacometti inspired ‘Women with their Throat Cut’ titles. Nor are there pastoral idylls but succinct, innocuous titles that reference figures resting, family groups, insects, machinery, tools and abstract forms. One example of an artist's work that seems to have been misconstrued to

fit the ‘geometry of fear’ are the delicately welded figures by Butler which Read referred to as ‘entomological’. Not only had these works progressed from a figure titled *Girl with a Surfboard*, 1948 but they were as Butler said himself experiments in ‘knitting in steel’ as opposed to being works that provoked fearful memories.

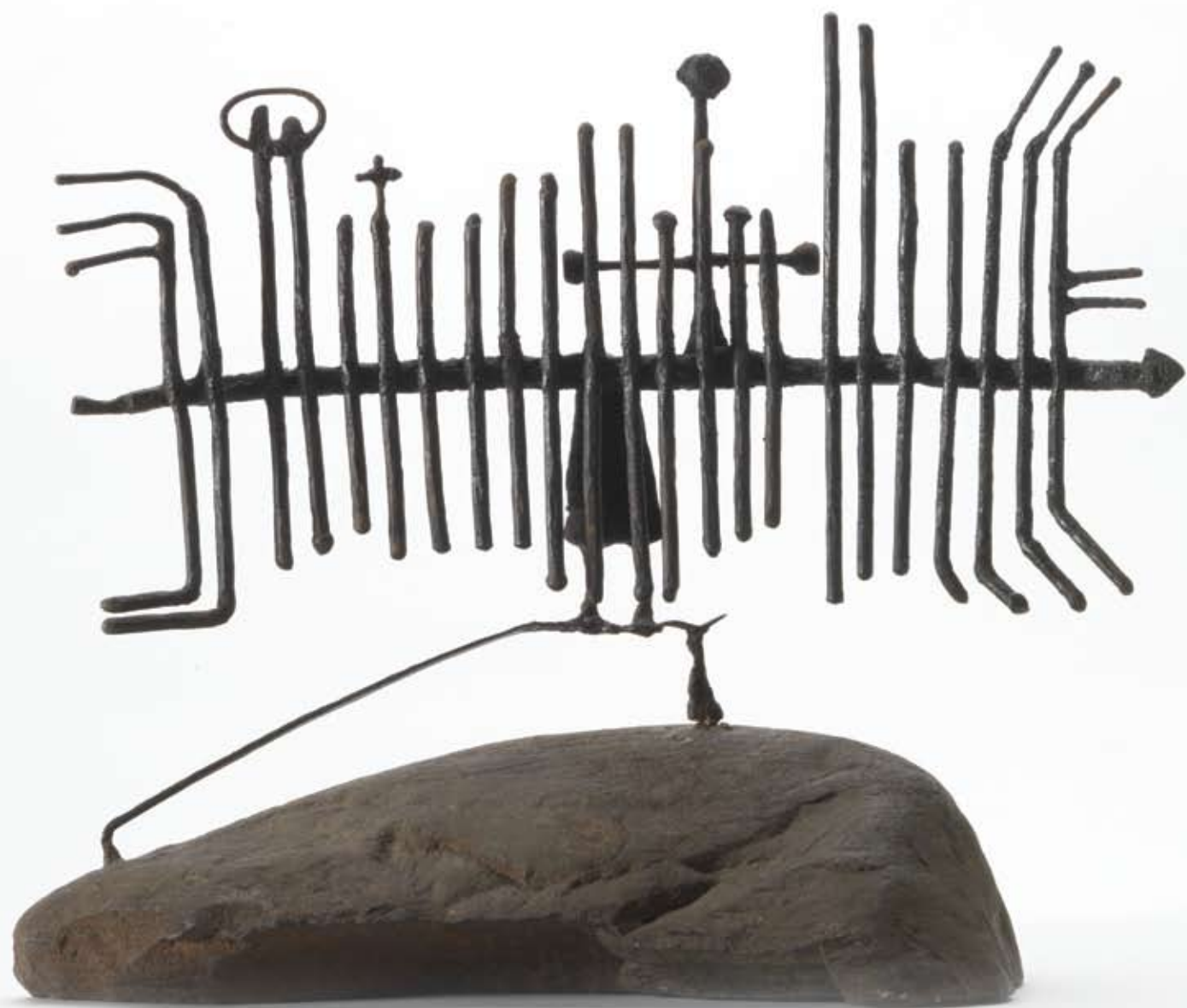
Another questionable description is that of Armitage whom Read notes is ‘an expressionist, a degothicised Barlach, moving, in his latest work, towards a sardonic commentary on the stretched agony of human relationships’. Talking of the inspiration for *People in a Wind*, 1950 which was included in the biennale exhibition, Armitage refers to his fascination with a tall slender stemmed plant suspended in balance outside his studio in Corsham and an impressive firework display he saw in London.⁴ Indeed in 1955 he noted that he was most satisfied with work that ‘derived from careful study and preparation but which is fashioned in an attitude of pleasure and playfulness’.⁵

A few years after the biennale Read wrote a ‘Letter to a Young Artist’ where in a chapter on Lynn Chadwick he attempted to justify ‘the geometry of fear’ which implies that he himself had his own misgivings about the term:

*On a former occasion I used a phrase to describe the symbolic significance of Chadwick's work which has been frequently quoted: the geometry of fear. I do not wish to withdraw this phrase, but it should be realized that the fear, or rather anxiety, which these works of art represent is not the fear we experience when confronted with physical peril (in a battle or an air-raid, for example). It is not the conscious fear of the dark, or even, in the animal figures, animal fear. (One must not forget that it is not the animals that express their fear but the artist who uses their forms to give significance to his own feelings). I have called it metaphysical fear; it would be still more exact to call it unconscious fear, but then 'fear' is no longer an appropriate word.*⁶

Whilst the dreadful experiences of war for those both at home and on the battlefields combined with the apprehension of the ongoing Cold War and development of the Atom Bomb are undoubtedly important factors that must have had an impact on all eight sculptors it seems to me that Read's broad philosophical justification for the term ‘geometry of fear’ is not quite coherent. Rather it misses what I would consider the most crucial shared element: the exploration of a new identity through the figurative and the freedom the artists relished in the post-war period. Read's phrase also denies the artists any scope for the introduction of humour or light-heartedness.

Many journalists at the time and art historians have since latched on to the term and referred to the sculpture's noticeable ‘spikyness’ an adjective that seemed to correspond with the concept of the ‘geometry of fear’. However, these ‘spiky’ attributes were by no means a new development when one considers the trends in architecture and design. Take for example the asymmetric forms and thin supporting structures in designs by Ray Eames and Robin Day or the buildings of Le Corbusier. These designs were not seen to be responding to an inherent fear but were celebrated as a new visual vernacular language of modernism and the future.



GEOFFREY
CLARKE
Man
1951, Forged iron
and stone
Unique
18.5 cm high

NEW MATERIALS FOR A NEW LINEARITY

Whilst the philosophical and psychoanalytic references of Read's essay seem to me less than compelling, his notion of a new 'linear, cursive quality' is appropriate and highlights the exciting shift away from the solid organic forms of Moore and Hepworth. Rather than fear and guilt this new linearity was due to two important factors: the euphoria and courage to experiment that came with post-war freedom and the opportunity to explore new materials.

The economic depression following the Second World War hit artists as hard as anyone. Bread and domestic electricity rationing were fresh memories and with many of the country's sculpture foundries closing before the war or being commandeered for the war effort, sculptors in particular were forced to look for alternative materials and cheaper methods of working.

With the boundaries of making entirely readjusted thanks to Surrealism, the opportunity to explore beyond traditional sculpture materials became an exciting reality. The interruption of war followed by the establishment of a new Welfare State and the Arts Council as well as a unique opportunity for British artists to leapfrog the more popular European artists of the time, thanks to expensive import restrictions for commercial galleries, meant that artists from a wide spectrum of backgrounds could pursue a professional career without necessarily having an academic training. Indeed the wealth of different experiences from pre-war careers such as architecture in the cases of Lynn Chadwick and Reg Butler, or those gained during the war such as flying, operating machinery, blacksmithing or even aircraft spotting by silhouette in the case of Armitage added a new diversity of skills and vision. In addition, the open access to influential sculptors afforded to those that travelled to Paris, such as Turnbull and Paolozzi who met Giacometti and Brancusi and a whole host of other luminaries, must all have added to the melting pot of new ideas.

Whilst welding had been used extensively in industry since the 1800s it was only the advances in technique and equipment made in the 40's and 50's that made it a viable and economical option for sculptors. For those artists who had not learnt the techniques during an academic training, outside courses were a necessity and Lynn Chadwick, Reg Butler and Geoffrey Clarke all met in the summer of 1950 to learn to weld with the British Oxygen Company in Cricklewood.

The very method of welding was so different to carving or modelling that it could only have had a dramatic effect on the course of sculpture. Artists were suddenly able to sketch an outline in space and rapidly build up a three-dimensional form of substantial scale from scrap or cheaper materials without the labour-intensive and time-consuming process of carving or casting whilst also maintaining sole control.

Kenneth Armitage was the exception to the rule that all the biennale sculptors experimented with new materials and maintained his passion for modelling and casting throughout his career. Bronze still continued to be a popular if more expensive medium especially when artists realised that, as in the case of Lynn Chadwick, outdoor works would eventually deteriorate in iron. Revisiting the longevity offered by bronze therefore became a necessity and the plethora of competitions for war memorials also meant that bronze maintained

its appeal. However as much of the best bronze casting still had to be carried out abroad at Noack in Berlin, Susse Frères in Paris or the Swiss foundry Brotal, Paolozzi, Butler, Armitage and Chadwick all experimented with their own small scale foundries for bronze casting and Geoffrey Clarke with aluminium.⁷

As casting bronze returned to being more accessible in the late 50’s the next generation of sculptors were able without hesitation to pick and choose from a wider range of sculptural media. Where John Hoskin continued to push the boundaries of welding abstract forms, Ralph Brown, George Fullard and Elisabeth Frink concentrated on exploring the figure in bronze. However it is clear that they all benefited from the advances made by the ’52 biennale artists who took such a bold step beyond Moore, Hepworth and Epstein in the representation of figurative and abstract form and brought a new age of sculpture well and truly into the spotlight. Linearity and new methods of making became widely accepted and lit the way for the minimalists of the ’60s such as William Tucker, Phillip King and Anthony Caro.

There is no denying Herbert Read’s enormous contribution to the progress of modern art, the fruits of which we all continue to enjoy as a result. Nor could Read have imagined that his essay would have such longevity or his phrase ‘the geometry of fear’ such a lasting impact. As a child of the ’80s it would be valid to argue that I have little concept of life after a World War or its associated fears and concerns, bar perhaps, a secondary family insight into the monumental upheaval suffered by so many Eastern Europeans. However, I would maintain that whilst Read’s essay captured the *zeitgeist*, what it is remembered for somewhat dampens the euphoria and excitement of the work that was actually exhibited at the 1952 Venice Biennale. Indeed the essay rather than the exhibition seems to have taken precedence over an exceptional moment, which in relation to more recent history, can be compared in importance to the impact of British minimalist sculptors in the ’60s or indeed the explosive entry of the Young British Artists at the *Sensation* exhibition in the ’90s.

As with any major artistic movement there are those that relished the opportunity the attention the ‘geometry of fear’ brought them and used it to their advantage. However as Lynn Chadwick pointed out, the term ‘the geometry of fear’ has been used again and again by us all like parrots who have forgotten to look at the work itself.⁸ Perhaps sixty years on it is time to look afresh at the work of that era - to consider the concerns the artists had for the future but more importantly to take note of the optimism, humour, vibrancy and vitalism that came with peace and liberation and finally exorcise the fear.

POLLY BIELECKA
Pangolin London

NOTES

¹ Letter to the Editor of *The Manchester Guardian* written by Alfred Barr Jnr, 3rd September, 1952
² Having been wounded in 1916 Read spent much of his convalescence reading. Returning to the battlefield he is said to have narrowly escaped the retreat of St Quentin at the Second Battle of the Somme with nothing less than a copy of Thoreau’s *Walden* in his breast pocket.
Herbert Read: A British Vision, Leeds City Art Galleries, 1993, p.149
³ The Sitwell exhibition took place at Heal’s Mansart Gallery, Tottenham Court Road, London.
⁴ Introductory essay by John McEwen for *Kenneth Armitage: 80th Birthday Survey*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, June – September 1996, p.2
⁵ *Ibid*, p.6
⁶ *A Letter To A Young Painter* by Herbert Read, Thames and Hudson, 1962.p.99
⁷ Armitage, encouraged by Harry Fisher from the Malborough Gallery, used Noack, Chadwick used Brotal and Reg Butler used Susse Frères.
⁸ Interview with Lynn Chadwick for the National Life Stories Collection, 1995, The British Library

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KENNETH ARMITAGE
Triarchy
1957, Bronze
Edition of 6
25.5 cm high

ROBERT ADAMS
1917-1984

Movement plays a great part in my sculpture, not actual, but imagined. The same twisting movement that a spiral has. Many of the carvings are in fact, short sections of a horizontal spiral, but chopped, twisted, and cut to suit my own design. All are made more dynamic by a contrast of thickness and thinness of parts, and the finely balanced masses, poised delicately on a tiny base. The carvings that have this balance are not fixed to the base on which they stand, but turn upon a small pin.

Divided Pillar
1952, Birch
Unique
57.1 cm high





ROBERT ADAMS
Round Stone Form
1953, Stone
Unique
10 cm high

KENNETH ARMITAGE
1916 - 2002



In 1956 I had been approached by the director of the Kaiser-Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld, Germany, who had the idea that they should have a war memorial there. He invited sculptors with international names: Marino Marini submitted a model, but I won first prize. I was delighted but nothing came of it. There was an outcry in the Krefeld press that an English sculptor, a former enemy, should win the prize and understandably the scheme fell through.

*Model for the Krefeld
Monument, No. 2
1956, Bronze
Edition of 9
35.6 cm high*

KENNETH ARMITAGE
Man With Raised Arms
1951, Sterling silver
Edition of 6
29 cm high





You cannot imagine the exhilaration of seeing Egyptian and Cycladic work! (at the British Museum). After all the classical decadence of 19th century sculpture, the drapery and fiddling with form, it came like a great gust of fresh air – pure, direct and simple. The difficult thing about figurative art is to make it simple.

KENNETH ARMITAGE
(ABOVE)
Study for Seated Figures
1958, Charcoal and wash
on paper
Unique

(RIGHT)
Triarchy
1957, Bronze
Edition of 6
25.5 cm high



MICHAEL AYRTON
1921-1975

Slender Sentinel
1963, Bronze
Edition of 6
59 cm high



RALPH BROWN
b. 1928

Tragic Group
1953, Bronze
Edition of 8
51 cm wide





RALPH BROWN
(LEFT & ABOVE RIGHT)
Woman Bathing
1960, Bronze
Edition of 9
36 cm high

(ABOVE LEFT)
Woman Bathing
1960
Pencil on Paper
Unique

REG BUTLER
1913 - 1981

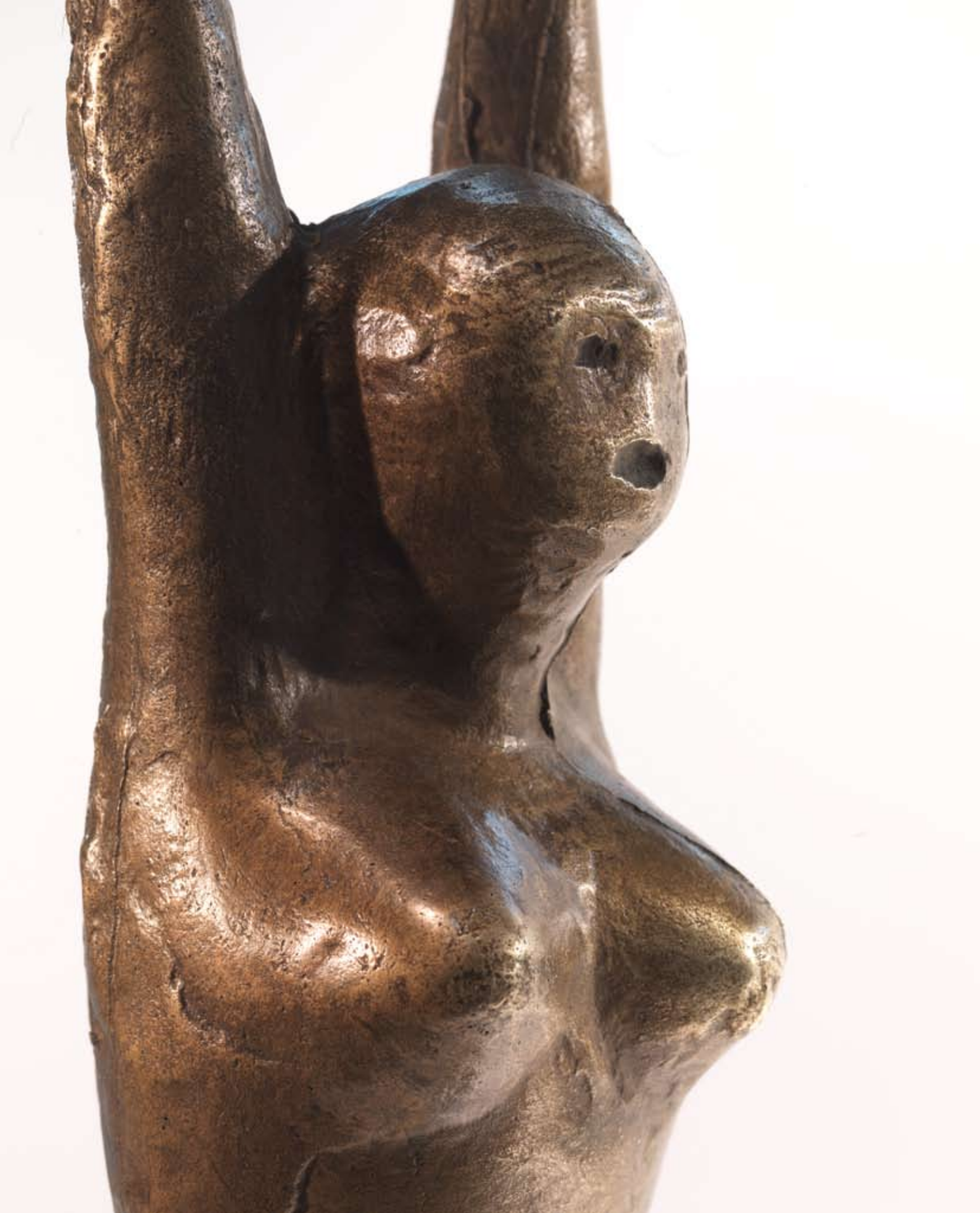
The earlier iron women were forged; that is to say hot-shaped on the anvil, shaped not so differently from the way I had formerly worked wood. This gave me images, if not an actual literal nakedness, at least a bareness and austerity: more so than in the case of the later ones which, although partly forged, were extensively welded, made up of minute particles of metal deposited electrically or by oxyacetylene. Somehow vestiges of clothes seemed to occur; I remember referring to the process rather facetiously as 'knitting with steel'.

Young Girl (detail)
1951
Welded copper
sheet & wire
48.3 cm high





REG BUTLER
Machine
 1953, Shell bronze
 Edition of 4
 77 cm long



REG BUTLER
Doll
1955, Bronze
Edition of 8
54.5 cm high





REG BUTLER
(ABOVE)
Seated Nude
1957, Pencil on Paper
Unique

(RIGHT)
Study for Fetish
1959, Bronze
Edition of 8
36 cm high



LYNN CHADWICK
1914 - 2003

Bullfrog (in motion)
1951, Bronze
Edition of 9
66cm high





LYNN CHADWICK
*Maquette for Unknown
 Political Prisoner*
 1953, Welded iron
 Unique
 43 cm high





LYNN CHADWICK
Beast
 1953, Welded iron,
 copper sheet & glass
 Unique
 214 cm high

(ABOVE)
 Photograph of Lynn Chadwick
 with *Beast* taken by Ida Kar, 1954
 Vintage Bromide Print
 The National Portrait Gallery



LYNN CHADWICK
(ABOVE)
Teddy Boy & Girl I
1956, Ink on paper
Unique

(RIGHT)
Standing Figure
1956, Bronze
Edition of 9
31 cm high





LYNN CHADWICK
Second Stranger
 1956, Bronze
 Edition of 9
 47 cm high

GEOFFREY CLARKE
b.1924

*I have always been conscious of this very delicate life form
surrounded by an outer shell which protects it...The man in
armour..the man who hides his character*

Man
1951, Iron
and aluminium
Unique
25 cm high





GEOFFREY CLARKE
Man

1951, Forged iron
and aluminium
Unique
26.5 cm high

Fish

1951, Welded iron
relief on slate
Unique
54 cm long

(OPPOSITE)
Man

1950, Etching
Edition of 25





GEOFFREY CLARKE

(ABOVE)

Man

1951, Iron on stone

Unique

18.5 cm high

(RIGHT ABOVE)

Man

1950, Etching

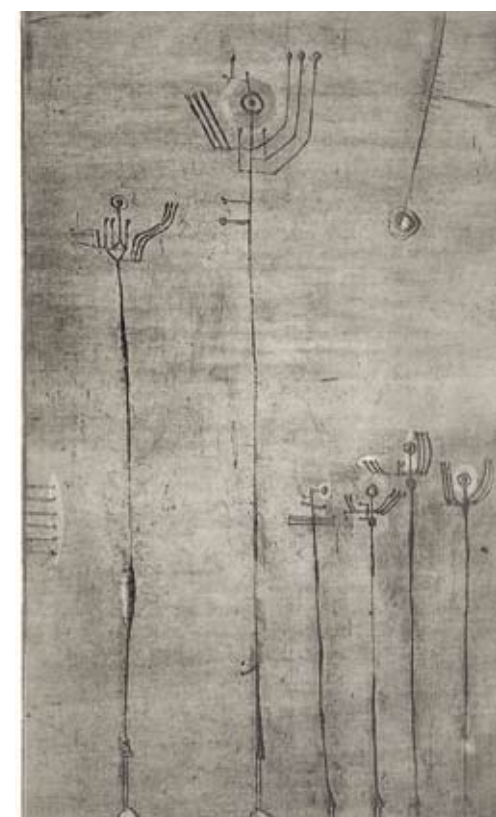
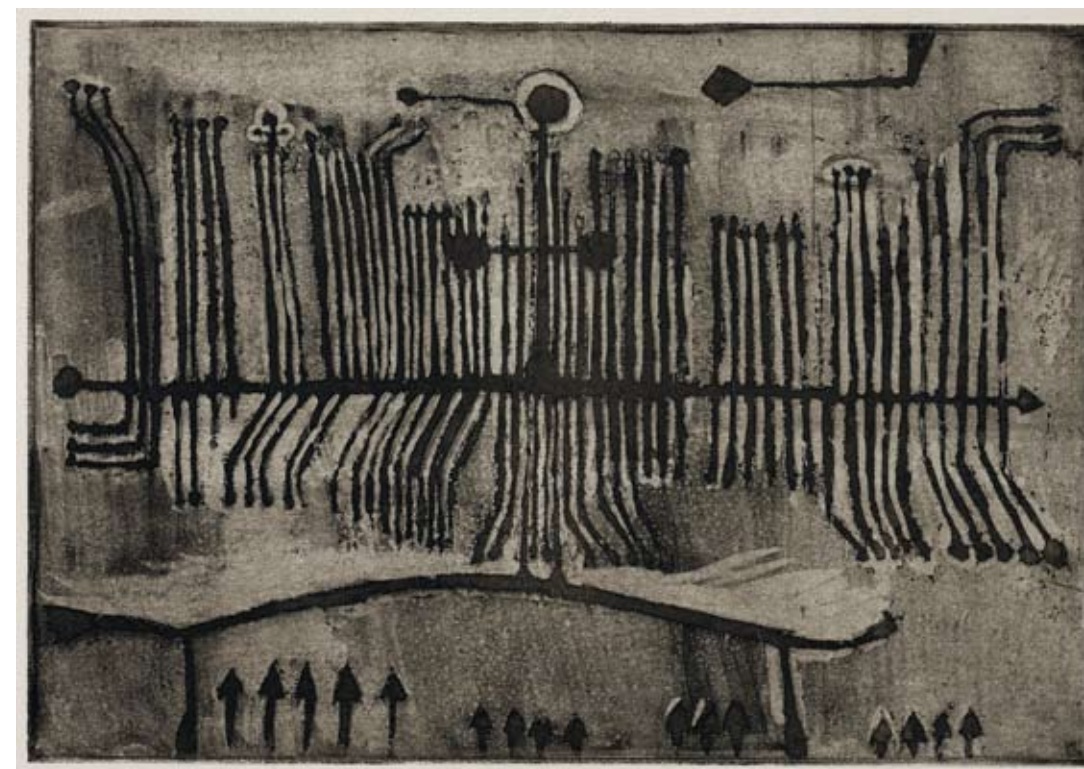
Edition of 25

(RIGHT BELOW)

*Father, Mother
and Children*

1950, Etching

Edition of 25





GEOFFREY CLARKE
Landscape, Death of a Flower
1951, Etching
Edition of 50

ELISABETH FRINK
b.1930 - 1993



Sentinel
c.1960, Bronze
Edition of 5
67 cm high



ELISABETH FRINK
(ABOVE)
Fallen Warrior
1963, Charcoal
on paper
Unique



(RIGHT)
Soldier's Head
1963, Bronze
Edition of 6
35.6 cm high

GEORGE FULLARD
1923 - 1974

Head 4
1960, Bronze
Edition of 3
33 cm high





GEORGE FULLARD
(LEFT & ABOVE)
Storm
1957, Bronze
Edition of 3
49.5 cm high

(ABOVE RIGHT)
Mother and Child
1960, Pencil
on paper
Unique



Standing Figure
Welded steel
Unique
54 cm high

JOHN HOSKIN
1921 - 1990



JOHN HOSKIN
Big V
1963, Welded steel
Unique
103 cm high





JOHN HOSKIN
Casino Royale
1964, Welded mild steel
Unique
90 cm high



BERNARD MEADOWS
1915 - 2005

I look upon birds and crabs as human substitutes, they are vehicles, expressing my feelings about human beings. To use non-human figures is for me at the present time less inhibiting; one is less conscious of what has gone before and is more free to take liberties with the form and to make direct statements than with the human figure: nevertheless they are essentially human...

Shot Bird
1964, Bronze
Edition of 6
39 cm high





BERNARD MEADOWS
(LEFT)
Maquette for Flat Bird
1956, Bronze
Edition of 6
28 cm high



(ABOVE)
Maquette for Fallen Bird
1958, Bronze
Edition of 6
30 cm long



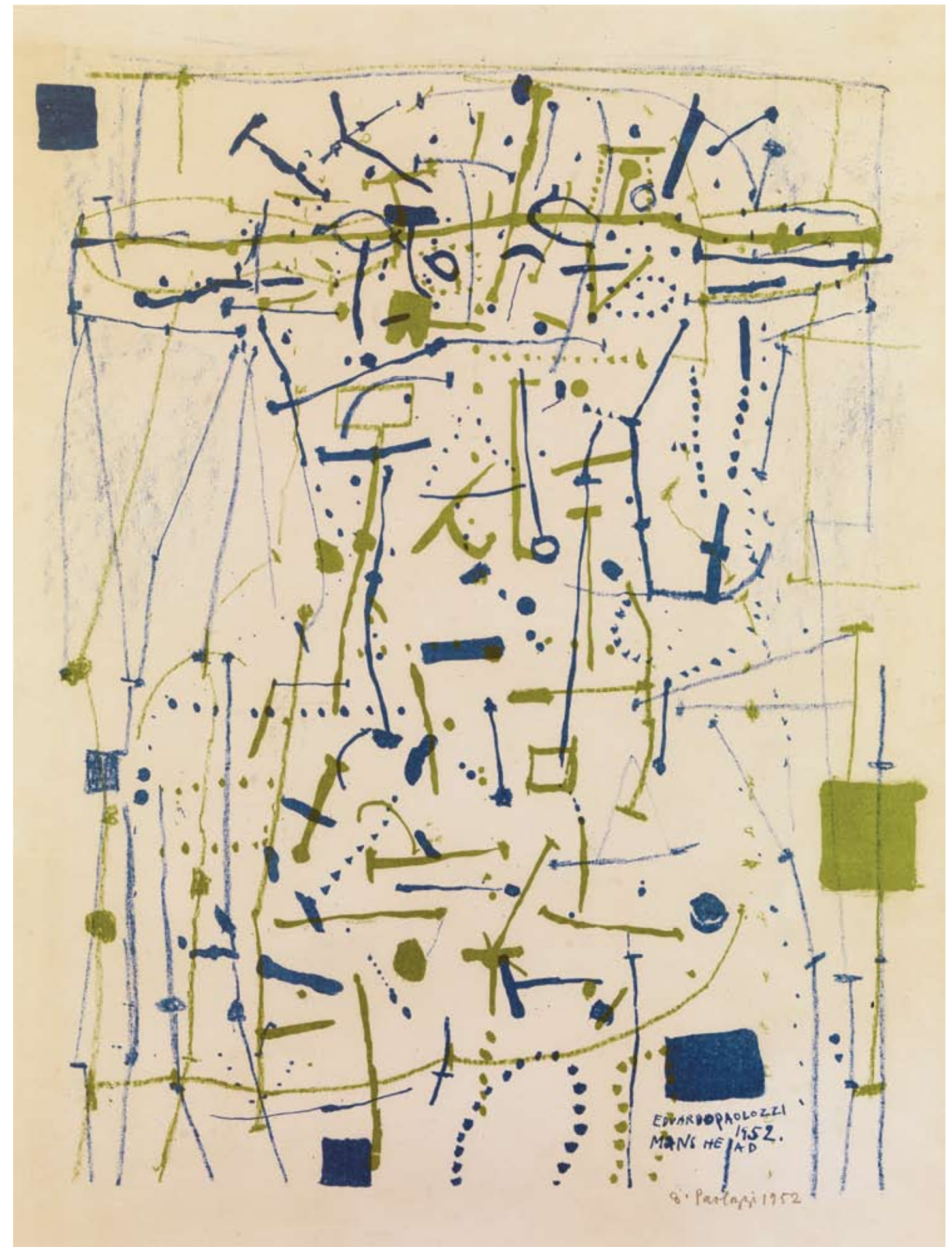
BERNARD MEADOWS
(LEFT)
Study for Sculpture 1
1964, Pencil and watercolour
on paper
Unique

(ABOVE)
Study for Sculpture 2
1964, Pencil and watercolour
on paper
Unique

EDUARDO PAOLOZZI
1924 - 2005

In England, Moore is known and his work is a continual source of visual surprise and inspiration. However, he is still a man of the 30s and the idea of holes in wood for sculpture is not for us today. In architecture the ideal of the 30s was to bring colour into people's lives, ours is to bring order and to eliminate the arbitrary – similarly in sculpture.

Man's Head
1952
Lithograph





EDUARDO PAOLOZZI
Frog Eating Lizard
1957, Bronze
Unique
35.5 cm high



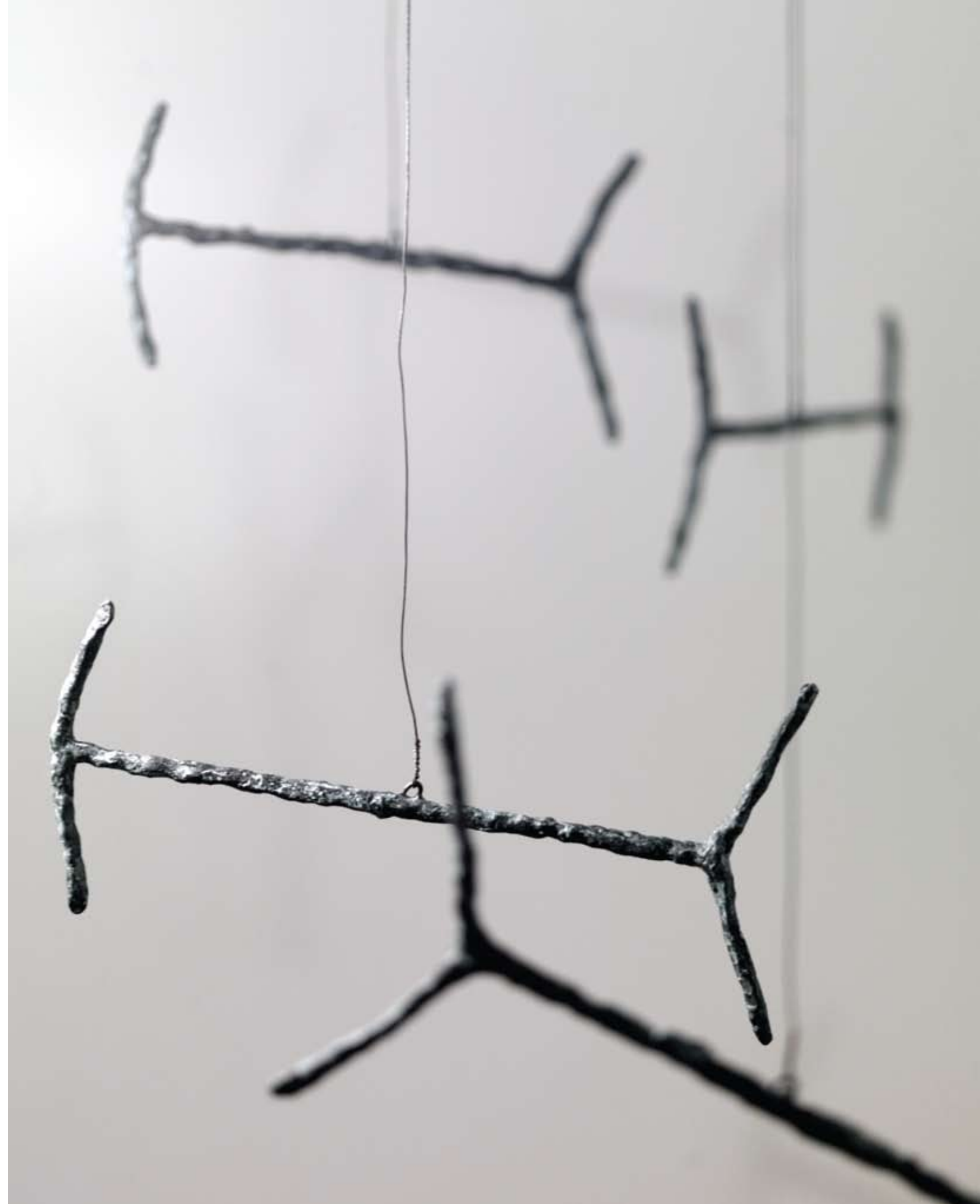


EDUARDO PAOLOZZI
Collage
1967, Mixed media
Unique

WILLIAM TURNBULL
b. 1922

I was very involved with the random movement of pinball machines, billiards (which I played a lot) and ball games of this sort; and the 'predictable' movement of machines (in the Science Museum). Movements in different planes at different speeds. I loved aquariums. Fish in tanks hanging in space and moving in shoals. The movement of lobsters. I became quite expert with a diabolo. I was obsessed with things in a state of balance.

Hanging Sculpture (detail)
1949, Bronze and wire
Unique
122 cm diameter





WILLIAM TURNBULL
(LEFT)
Hanging Sculpture
1949, Bronze and wire
Edition of 6
121.9 cm high



(RIGHT)
Strange Fruit
1959, Bronze
Edition of 4
35 cm high inc. base



NEW ASPECTS OF BRITISH SCULPTURE

The nine sculptors whose work is shown in the British Pavilion this year are not members of an organised group. They are individuals participating in a general revival of the art of sculpture, and they are related to each other only by some obscure instinct which has touched them all to life. Henry Moore is in some sense no doubt the parent of them all, and a single work of his, more recent than anything yet shown by him at Venice, stands at the entrance of the Pavilion to give an orientation for the surprising developments that will be found within. But the younger sculptors are not imitators of Moore. They have learnt from him, as they have learnt from Picasso, Calder and Giacometti; but only in the sense that these artists of an earlier generation have put at their disposal certain technical inventions which they have proceeded to exploit according to their own temperaments and vision. They have their own inventions - in sculpture there has been nothing like the entomological articulations of Butler (though the paintings and drawings of Wilfredo Lam or Masson might be brought into comparison); nothing like Armitage's agonised diaphragms or Paolozzi's conglomerate monoliths. But originality is merely incidental to a collective event such as these young sculptors represent. They are all involved in some wider manifestation of the creative will, some general extension of consciousness.

They are all under forty, for the most part born during or immediately after the First World War. Two of them were only sixteen at the beginning of the Second World War. It would be unreasonable therefore, to look for the classical images that an earlier generation had seen reflected in the untroubled waters of their childhood. These new images belong to the iconography of despair, or of defiance; and the more innocent the artist, the more effectively he transmits the collective guilt. Here are images of flight, of ragged claws 'scuttling across the floors of silent seas', of excoriated flesh, frustrated sex, the geometry of fear. Gone forever is the serenity, the monumental calm, that Winckelmann had imposed on the formal imagination of Europe; gone, too, the plastic stress of Rodin. Moore returned to organic prototypes; worked as the elemental forces of wind, fire and water work. Barbara Hepworth, whose work will be remembered from the Biennale of 1950, sought for the more transcendental values of abstract form. The Constructivists turned away from the ruins to create new values, to create the images of a civilisation not yet born, perhaps never to be born. These young men are not so ambitious. They express their immediate sensations, sometimes with an almost sophisticated grace (Butler), sometimes with a scorn of bourgeois 'finish' (Paolozzi). Their art is close to the nerves, nervous, wiry. They have found metal, in sheet, strip or wire rather than in mass, their favourite medium. Picasso had anticipated them, as he has anticipated us all, but these British sculptors have given sculpture what it had never had before our time – a linear, cursive quality. From Calder some of them have taken the notion of movement in sculpture (Chadwick). The consistent avoidance of massiveness, of monumentality, is what distinguished these epigoni even from their immediate predecessor, Moore. They have seized Eliot's image of the Hollow Men, and given it an isomorphic materiality. They have peopled the Waste Land with their iron waifs.

I am attributing to them a collective unity which they might not acknowledge. Robert Adams, for example, is isolated in his architectonic pursuits: he builds his forms with small but compact masses, generally of wood. At the other extreme Eduardo Paolozzi (Italian by name, but born in Edinburgh) has moved from skeletal hulks to blind encrusted larvae, formless in mass, logs that seem to have drifted from the primordial Id. Turnbull inhabits a world of marine filaments, of petrified twigs or broken hoar-frosted grasses. Meadows has a baroque fantasy; from an animal form, a cock or a crab, he will elaborate a vortex in which the animal's virtue is caught as in a snare. Armitage is an expressionist, a degothicised Barlach, moving, in his latest work, towards a sardonic commentary on the stretched agony of human relationships, a master of the superficial intricacies of cast bronze. Chadwick has more playfulness than the others, and is ingenious in his invention of interweaving forms, toys, armed, however, with vicious teeth and claws. Geoffrey Clarke, with Paolozzi the youngest of the group, forges his iron in strong symmetrical forms, preserving the smelted texture of the metal.

Butler stands somewhat apart from the rest, not only because his forged figures are more complex in organisation, and more carefully finished in their execution, but also because his work is based on a more precise study of the morphology of nature; also because his imagination is constructive within the logic of natural forms. In this sense he is nearest to Moore, but whereas Moore confines himself to variations within the logic of a single form (the human form for preference), Butler interchanges the idioms of distinct species (man and insect, for example), and creates convincing hybrids, endowed with vitality and grace.

All the work exhibited belongs to the last two or three years. Its variety is explained by the intensely creative spirit which animates the group, and which compels them to move quickly from stage to stage in the progressive exploration of new possibilities of plastic expression.

HERBERT READ

*Transcribed from the British Pavilion catalogue for the XXVI Venice Biennale, 1952.
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1952, Birch
Unique
57.1 cm high
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p.20, The Ingram Collection



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Unique, 43 cm high
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KENNETH ARMITAGE
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KENNETH ARMITAGE
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GEOFFREY CLARKE
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REG BUTLER
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Unique
103 cm high
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BERNARD MEADOWS
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1964, Bronze
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BERNARD MEADOWS
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1956, Bronze
Edition of 6
28 cm high
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BERNARD MEADOWS
Maquette for Fallen Bird
1958, Bronze
Edition of 6
30 cm long
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BERNARD MEADOWS
Study for Sculpture 1
1964, Pencil and
watercolour on paper
Unique
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BERNARD MEADOWS
Study for Sculpture 2
1964, Pencil and
watercolour on paper
Unique
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EDUARDO PAOLOZZI
Frog Eating Lizard
1957, Bronze
Unique
35.5 cm high
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EDUARDO PAOLOZZI
Man's Head
1952, Lithograph
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EDUARDO PAOLOZZI
Collage
1967, Mixed media
Unique
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WILLIAM TURNBULL
Hanging Sculpture
1949, Bronze and wire
Edition of 6
121.9 cm diameter
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WILLIAM TURNBULL
Strange Fruit
1959, Bronze
Edition of 4
35 cm high inc. base
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