

GEOFFREY CLARKE
A DECADE OF CHANGE



Man
1954, Iron
Unique
28.5 cm high

INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Clarke was a pioneer in a golden age of British sculpture. A pioneer because of his fearless experimentation with new materials and processes and a golden age because sculpture in Post-War Britain had never been so exciting. Not only had Henry Moore successfully established an international platform for British sculptors, but there was an important step change in the approach to new materials; an abundance of top quality sculpture exhibitions and a bountiful wave of public commissions, all of which proved the perfect melting pot for sculpture.

With an artist's natural inquisitiveness Geoffrey Clarke adapted his working methods to accommodate new projects and ideas, tirelessly exploring a broad range of materials and perfecting new techniques. As this exhibition highlights, Clarke never lost sight of his visual language despite experiments in scale or material, rather his carefully considered line, bold form and delicate surface textures were the constant whatever the medium.

As one of the last remaining artists from the eminent group of young sculptors that exploded on to the scene at the 1952 Venice Biennale, we are honoured to host this exhibition. It is as a celebration of an immensely fertile period in Geoffrey Clarke's *oeuvre* and we hope that it brings to life the sculptural *zeitgeist* that influenced a momentous age.

POLLY BIELECKA
Pangolin London



Geoffrey Clarke
welding the
iron sculpture
Symbol, 1955

MATERIAL SHIFTS

BY JUDITH LEGROVE

Like Primo Levi's *Periodic Table*, Geoffrey Clarke's life can be mapped through materials: glass, iron, bronze, aluminium, polystyrene, silver, wood. Each holds a chronological place, often more than one real place (studio or site of production), and a sculptural place, shaping and influencing the forms of his work. While categories may overlap – glass combined with aluminium, or iron revisited briefly in the 1980s – it is characteristic that initial contact with a 'new' material heralds the most intense period of engagement and experimentation. The decade 1955–1965 encompasses Clarke's shift from forged iron to cast aluminium, marking a period of febrile, searching creativity. Yet these ten years delimit also a broader questioning of material and form which transformed sculpture from the wounded verticality of 1950s' figuration to the colourful horizontality of Caro and the New Generation, seen at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1965. Clarke's transition was a personal one, driven by materials and a fascination with the possibilities of sculpture in relation to architecture. In its material implications, however, it marks a moment of some significance in the history of British sculpture.

IRON

The pattern of Clarke's relationship with materials, seeded as a student at the Royal College of Art, saw him imprinting images on virtually anything to hand – inked tissue, fabric, stained glass, plaster, painted gesso, steel etching plates and copper as Limoges enamels.¹ What were essentially graphic designs then began to extrude outwards. Deeply bitten etchings became paper sculptures, glass was transformed into acid-reliefs or rugged plaster mosaics, wire twisted into delicate constructions. Iron suggested greater permanence for images that already seemed composed of bars, rods and finials. Finally, a British Oxygen Company welding course at Cricklewood in the summer of 1950 equipped Clarke with the skills to produce a new body of sculpture during his third student year.

The ensuing 'iron age' is now the best documented of Clarke's career. Chosen to represent Britain at the 1952 Venice Biennale, Clarke was swept into the fold of young sculptors whose work Herbert Read characterised as the 'geometry of fear' – as iron waifs, menacing

organisms or icons of despair.² Iron's ubiquity proved part-myth, part-curatorial hype, due to a glove-fit with the ethos of the times and the searchlight of Lawrence Alloway's article, 'Britain's new Iron Age' (1953), which placed its users, Clarke, Reg Butler and Lynn Chadwick, in the role of trendsetters. Yet iron fulfilled Clarke's every purpose: it was cheap, distanced from traditional connotations of fine art, while its hand-working suited his need to express an inner world of symbols. Iron's linear, additive construction in fact mirrored Clarke's preferred language, representing growth rather than the subtraction, or decay, of carving.³

Clarke's first sculptures were spindly affairs, dominated by the unit of the iron rod. By 1954, he was grappling with the same problem as his contemporaries: volume. Butler turned to bronze, in what Patrick Heron described as a process of 'defeating the linear'.⁴ Chadwick filled iron armatures with Stolit (an artificial stone compound of gypsum and iron powder) before also turning to bronze. Clarke initially welded sheet iron into matt-black fortresses or reliefs, described by one critic as 'raffishly ramshackly ... almost *chic*'.⁵ Drawing from Picasso, he incorporated found objects: old tins, sections of wheelbarrow or tool handles, perhaps reflecting the recent move to a dilapidated country house in Suffolk where he set up a smithy. The popular press reacted irascibly to the shape-shifting of this maverick material – likening Clarke's early sculptures to poker or hat-stands, later tubular forms to 'burst plumbing' – although steady approbation persisted in the criticism of Robert Melville and M. H. Middleton. None of this in a sense mattered, since iron was primarily a personal medium, worked in tandem with commissions such as the stained glass for Coventry Cathedral (1953–58).

BRONZE

Clarke's increasing architectural commissions impelled a brief flirtation with bronze. Worked on a large scale, as for the Time-Life sculpture in New Bond Street (1952), iron was intractable. Bronze suggested a durable alternative, although immediately invoking processes of modelling and mould-taking that Clarke instinctively resisted. Various strategies emerged, most conductively the casting of bronze reliefs from plaster for the façade of Martins Bank (1955) or to embellish a cross by Louis Osman (1958). For three-dimensional work, Clarke evolved a makeshift route of welding components cast by a Suffolk engineering iron-foundry: an inexpensive method suiting rougher, more organic forms, and retaining a certain degree of artistic control. *Façade* (p.46), made in this way for the Arts Council's 'Sculpture in the Home' exhibition of 1958, lacks the razor-definition of earlier iron



Symbol for Man XV
1954, Brazed steel
Unique
23 x 21.5 x 16 cm
This work marked a
critical development of
tube penetrating solid



(ABOVE)
Test Piece
 1958/9, Aluminium
 Unique
 30 cm long
 Cast using expanded polystyrene.

(OPPOSITE FROM TOP)
 Mervyn Crawford and William Debenham assembling polystyrene at Stowe Hill, Suffolk, 1964.

Len Pawsey and William Debenham packing polystyrene models in sand, prior to casting, at Stowe Hill, 1964.

Casting at Geoffrey Clarke's studio in Suffolk mid-1960s.

'fortresses' but gains in bronze a softer, patinated domesticity. The catalyst for a wholesale reassessment of working methods proved to be Clarke's largest sculptural commission to date, the 80ft *Spirit of Electricity* (1958–61) for Thorn House, Upper St Martin's Lane. Its exquisite maquette (p.45), with protruding filaments and dished form (still hankering after the linearity of iron), was inspired by images of historic light bulbs and radar antennae in the Science Museum. Translation to bronze required a full-size wood and fibreglass model, spanning the length of Clarke's barn. Ultimately it proved as laborious as working iron, creatively unsatisfactory in the outsourcing of casting to a professional foundry, and financially unrepeatable. Perhaps most significant, however, was Clarke's lack of sympathy with bronze.

ALUMINIUM

For those who know Clarke, his fondness for grey is soon apparent. Aluminium offers the full gamut – from charcoal to silver – allied to a lightness and modernity which was all-visible in mid-1950s' construction and design. Clarke was captivated, listing aluminium's assets as 'economy, excellent durability, comparative handling ease (weight, fettle, melt) ... architecturally more sympathetic & less cosy than bronze'.⁶ During a period when many sculptors experimented with materials, Hubert Dalwood, Austin Wright and Eduardo Paolozzi also turned to aluminium, for a similar mixture of reasons.⁷ Clarke went further, creating a foundry which – though never lavish – was tailored to produce large-scale commissions flexibly and inventively from design to installation.



(OPPOSITE)
Mervyn Crawford
constructing the cross
for All Saints, Langley
in polystyrene, 1964.

(BELOW)
Four Slabs & Plane I
outside Stowe Hill,
Suffolk (mid-1960s).

Test Piece
1958/9, Aluminium
Unique
30 cm long

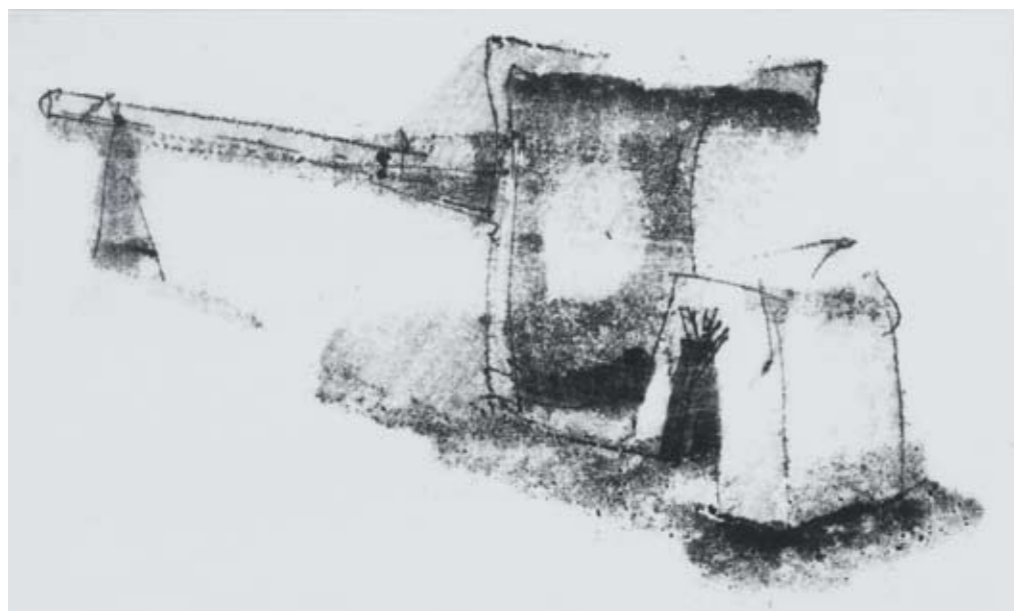
Open-casting was Clarke's first step: impressing an image into the foundry sandbed before pouring molten aluminium to an even depth. It was ideal for reliefs, especially for an artist of Clarke's graphic turn of mind. Demonstrated on a large scale – for the two-floor mural for Castrol House, *Extraction and Refining of Oil* (1959) – the results could be breathtaking. Castrol proved that open-casting was viable for large commissions, simply by using steel straps to divide a design into sections small enough for the aluminium crucible. The sand imprinted beautifully, allowing subtle shading in the relative depths of marking, and in the softness or sharpness of forms. The limitation lay in open-casting's resistance to three dimensions, precipitating once again a shift in practice.

EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE

Clarke's adoption of expanded polystyrene catapulted him full-circle from iron age to 'space age' sculptor.⁸ The crucial medium, expanded polystyrene, had spread perniciously from the early 1950s, breeding applications from architectural insulation to food containers, Christmas baubles, museum models and window mannequins. It could be cut, carved with a hot wire, or sliced (as one journalist noted) like a grapefruit. Used for full-mould casting, patented in the US in April 1958, it could be packed in sand, with runners attached, and would vaporise on contact with molten metal to leave a precise casting.⁹ The technique was developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology by sculptor Alfred M. Duca, news of whose bronze *Pegasus* (1959) spread like wildfire, prompting David Smith's laconic endorsement – 'I admire anybody who spends time inventing for artists'.¹⁰

Quite how Clarke heard of full-mould casting remains unclear, although he was given samples of expanded polystyrene by his father (an architect) and one can only imagine that a combination





Battersea I
1962, Monoprint
Unique

of curiosity and craftsmanship took him the rest of the way.¹¹ The process appealed because of its directness, transforming a block of expanded polystyrene, almost instantly, into metal sculpture. Clarke amassed an archive of reports, corresponded with experts in Germany and the US, and submitted observations to trade journals. Small testpieces document his early experiments – a kebab-like skewer, a dished 'boat' (pp.9,36)– and by 1961 he was combining cast aluminium and glass in large-scale commissions for Plymouth and Ipswich.

Full-mould casting revolutionised Clarke's foundry practice, enabling him to become the most commissioned British sculptor of the mid-twentieth century. Assisted from the outset by local blacksmith, Len Pawsey, by 1962 he had two young foundrymen, William Debenham and Mervyn Crawford, who helped assimilate successive areas of Clarke's house and grounds into a hive of production. A former billiard room became a polystyrene cutting studio. Large commissions were assembled by hand or crane in the yard. Full-mould casting took place in the barn, while the adjacent coach house provided basic sleeping accommodation (above) and a social area with dartboard, fire and bar (below) to encourage assistants to linger.

This social aspect impacted on the creation of Clarke's work, nudging it from the aesthetic interiority of the 1950s, with its solitary iron-working, towards a profile suited to communal working. The three works produced for Battersea Park, among Clarke's earliest using polystyrene,



Battersea II
1962, Aluminium
Unique
319 cm long

sized up the sculptural opposition for what remains a historically significant event.¹² The germ of the *Battersea Group* dates from a 1951 cartoon of a stick-man vigorously chiselling his own initials ('GPC' – Geoffrey Petts Clarke) into what looks suspiciously like Henry Moore's reclining figure for the Festival of Britain. By 1962 Clarke's tiny brass maquettes, more like guns or ploughshares, retain vestiges of breasts but little more. Scaled in polystyrene, the forms were roughly hewn and glued by the foaming agent Clozell. Clarke emphasised this organicism, asking Crawford to roughen the forms further rather than smooth them before casting. Construction thus became a virtue.

If (in the words of the *Observer*) the Batterseas were sluggishly vital reptiles,¹³ subsequent works saw a sloughing of skins to sleeker contours. Commissioned works continued to be produced from Clarke's hand-pieced maquettes, delicate seeds of ideas requiring all the ingenuity and lateral thinking of his assistants to translate to polystyrene, then cast.¹⁴ In parallel, another practice evolved. Using his favourite medium of monotype, Clarke produced print after print, crisply delineated on tissue paper, honing a new vocabulary of abstract shapes – troughs, bars, angles, slabs – spreading the full-length of the New Room workbench as they dried. Crawford was entrusted to replicate these designs in editions of up to ten, each shaped individually but each uncannily, vitally faithful to the original. Curves and planes mirrored the ritual of carving with a hot wire, solidity derived from the bulk of



(LEFT)
Toriii
 1965, Aluminium
 Edition of 10
 16.5 cm high

(ABOVE)
Toriik ii and Torijj ii
 'Tragedy and Comedy'
 1965, Aluminium
 Edition of 10
 6 and 10 cm high



polystyrene, light and shade from sandblasting or waxing. Thus evolved Clarke's solo Redfern exhibition of 1965, a body of work inhabiting an interworld between design and symbol: proximate to contemporary architecture but equally an innovative response to the 'where next' of contemporary sculpture. At the time it was outshone by the more extrovert physicality of painted steel and fibreglass at other venues in London. Yet it retains a quiet, compelling presence; its forms compact, self-possessed, curiously engaging.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Clarke did not study sculpture, but enrolled in 1948 in Graphic Design before changing to Stained Glass, a department known particularly for the freedom allowed its students.

² Herbert Read, 'New Aspects of British Sculpture', catalogue essay for the British Pavilion at the XXVI Venice Biennale (1952). The sculptors exhibited were Robert Adams, Kenneth Armitage, Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, Geoffrey Clarke, Bernard Meadows, Eduardo Paolozzi and William Turnbull. A single work by Henry Moore was shown outside the Pavilion.

³ Clarke, notes for his student thesis, 'Exposition of a Belief', ca. 1951.

⁴ Patrick Heron, *The Changing Forms of Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), note 45, p. 226, quoted in Martin Harrison, *Transition: the London Art Scene in the Fifties* (London: Merrell Publishers Limited in association with Barbican Art Galleries, 2002), p. 69.

⁵ Robert Melville, 'Exhibitions', *Architectural Review*, Vol. cxvii No. 699 (March 1955), p. 199.

⁶ Clarke, [*Notes for A Sculptor's Manual*] (ca. 1967) [Clarke archive].

⁷ Dalwood's first works in aluminium date from 1957, Wright's from 1961 and Paolozzi's from 1961/2.

⁸ 'Space age sculptor at work', *Formula* No. 8 (July 1961). Clarke's favoured materials, aluminium and expanded polystyrene, brought about reciprocal relationships with Alcan and Shell Chemical Company (manufacturers of 'Styrofoam'), the latter of whom produced the documentary film 'Cast in a New Mould' (1964).

⁹ Harold F. Shroyer, 'Cavityless Casting Mold and Method for Making Same', US Patent No. 2,830,343.

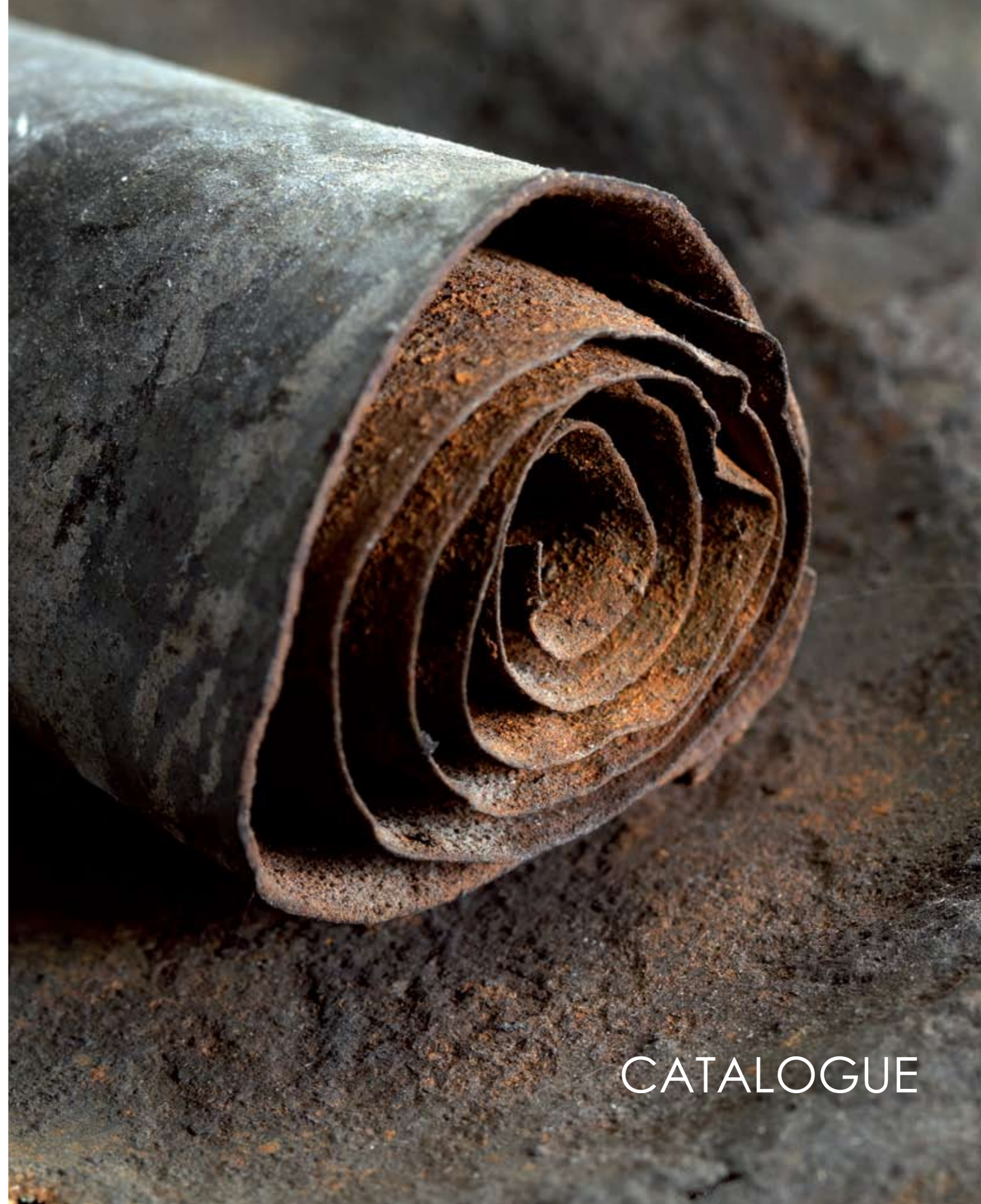
¹⁰ 'Any dope can use it', *Newsweek* (21 March 1960).

¹¹ The sculptor Frank Roper (1914–2000) appears to have been experimenting with full-mould casting concurrently in Wales, although documentation of his practice is as yet untraced. My thanks are due to Robert Harding for this information.

¹² The London County Council's exhibition of 'Sculpture in the Open Air', Battersea Park (1963), included forty-two works by contemporary British and American sculptors.

¹³ Nigel Gosling, 'Odd shapes in the park', *Observer* (9 June 1963).

¹⁴ Each commission, ranging from Coventry Cathedral's High Altar Cross (cast with difficulty from silver) to the monumental screens for Wellington Barracks Guards Chapel, required its own method of construction and approach to casting. The extraordinary achievement of Clarke's foundry, and the many assistants who worked there, remains to be fully documented.



CATALOGUE



(OPPOSITE ABOVE & PREVIOUS PAGE)

Still Life I: Salmon

1954, Iron relief

Unique

16.5 x 24 cm

EXHIBITED:

Gimpel Fils, 1955; The Redfern Gallery, 1965;

The Fine Art Society, 2000

(BELOW)

Fish V

1954, Iron relief

Unique

19.5 x 34 cm

(THIS PAGE)

Fossil

1954, Lead

Unique

20 x 32 cm



Symbol for Man IX
1954, Iron on aluminium base
Unique
26 x 18.5 x 11 cm

NOTES:
Exhibited Gimpel Fils, 1955, The Redfern Gallery, 1965; Taranman, 1976; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 1994; Fine Art Society, 2000; Strand Gallery, 2003; Pangolin London, 2012. Also described as 'Man', 'Man as a Fortress I' and 'Man as a Fortress II'. Series numbered in 1955.



Head
1953, Iron on aluminium base
Unique
28 x 6 x 7 cm

EXHIBITED:
Strand Gallery 2003 & 2007



Head
1956, Aquatint
Colour proof
23.5 x 24.5 cm

EXHIBITED:
Taranman Gallery, 1976; Royal Academy, 1994;
Strand Gallery, 2004; Linton Court Gallery, 2011

Woman
1956, Aquatint
Edition of 20
98.6 x 60.5 cm

EXHIBITED:
Symbols for Man (Touring Exhibition) 1994-5;
Fine Art Society, 2000; Linton Court Gallery, 2011

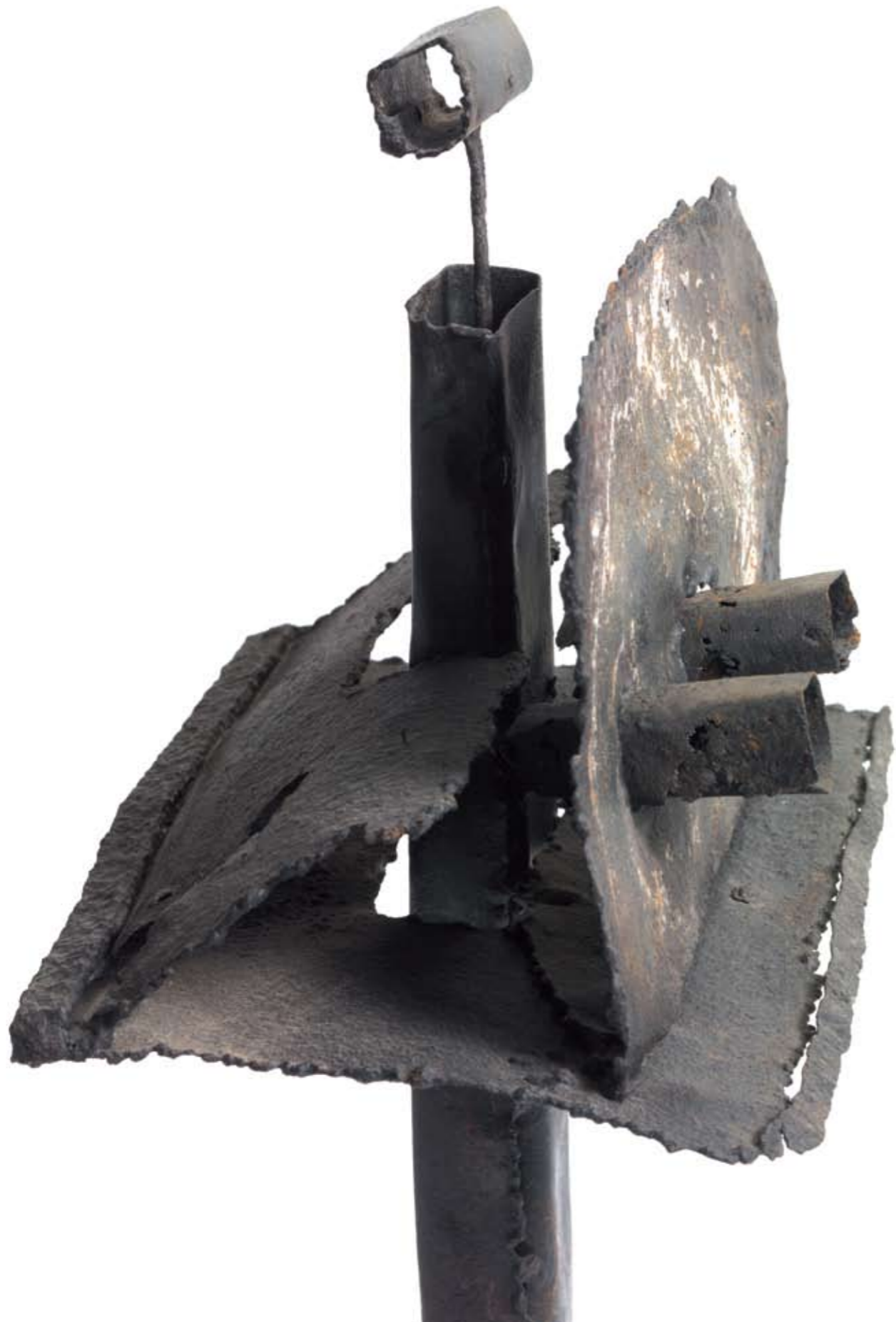




Man
1954, Iron
Unique
42.5 x 27 x 18 cm

NOTE:
Later titled 'Flower' c.2000 by the artist





Man
1954, Iron
Unique
28.5 x 11.5 x 16 cm

NOTES:
Included in *Symbols for Man* Touring Exhibition 1994-5.
Later titled 'Man as an Eerie' c.2000 by the artist.



Warrior
1956, Ink & wash on paper
Unique
152.5 x 72 cm



Symbol for Man X
1954, Iron on aluminium base
Unique
9 x 18.5 x 8.5 cm

NOTES:
Exhibited Gimpel Fils, 1955; The Redfern Gallery, 1965; Strand Gallery, 2003
Also titled 'Symbol for Man No.4' (Gimpel 1995), 'Man'. Series re-numbered in 1955.



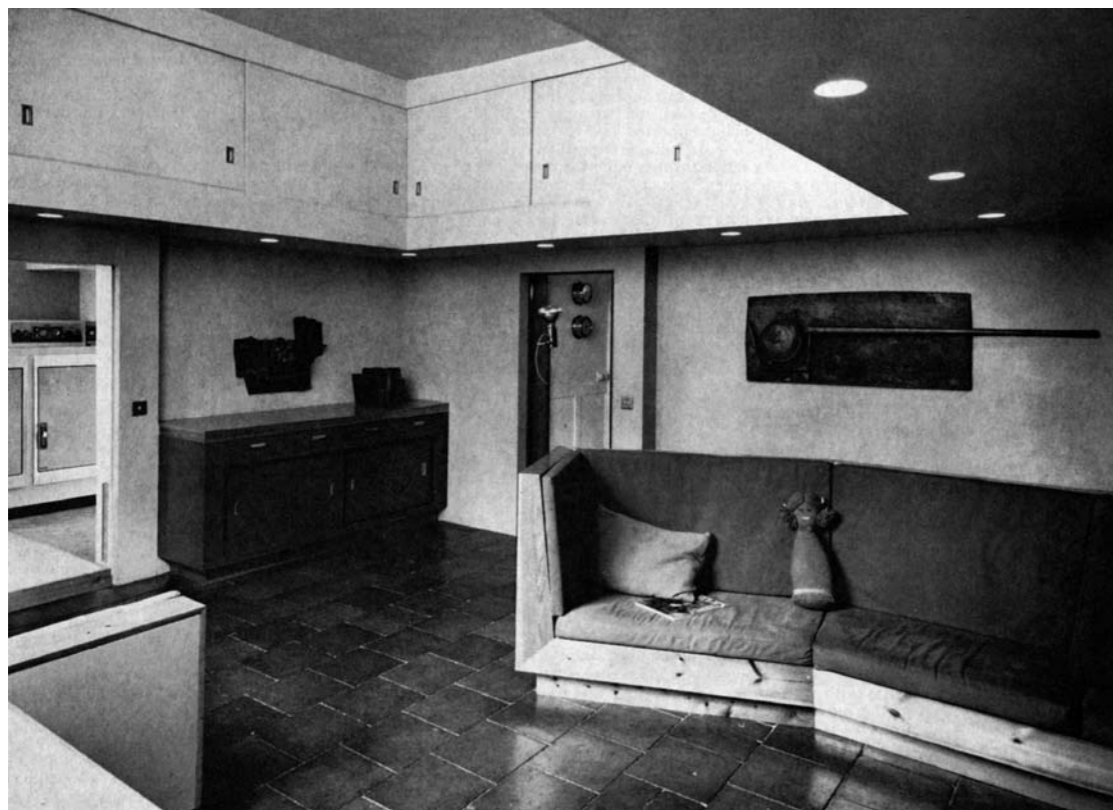
Symbol for Man XI
1954, Iron on aluminium base
Unique
11.5 x 14 x 6.5 cm
Private Collection

NOTES:
Exhibited at Gimpel Fils, 1955; The Redfern Gallery, 1965; Taranman, 1976
Also titled 'Man', 'Man as a Façade' (Taranman). Series re-numbered in 1955



Fragment
1958, Aluminium
Unique
51 x 174.5 x 12 cm

NOTE: Hung in the artist's 'living kitchen' for 45 years. See image overleaf



Square World V
1959, Aluminium
Unique
209 x 77 cm

NOTES:
Open-cast aluminium. Commissioned for St. Chad's Rubery (Architects: Lavender, Twentyman & Percy). Installed but removed before consecration. Photo: the 'living kitchen' Stowe Hill, 1965.





Test Piece
1958/1959
Aluminium
Unique
12.5 x 34 x 13 cm

NOTE:
Cast using
expanded
polystyrene.
Also illustrated p.9.

SP: One of the most interesting features of your sculpture today is the method of producing. As far as I know there is nobody else in Britain – or for that matter on the Continent – using your particular technique. Perhaps you can explain how you first turned to working with polystyrene?

GC: I have always admired and been inspired by the art of primitive peoples. Chinese vessels of the Bronze Age, Egyptian carvings and the primitive art of our own time make an impression on me because their communication to the viewer is direct. In the early-fifties I was one of the first English sculptors to use welding in my work. But with iron sculpture – even with a power hammer – I found there were severe limitations on what I could achieve. As I have never had the feeling to model in clay or to use the traditional casting methods I realised that I must discover a more rapid and direct technique. A friend told me about polystyrene. And so since 1958 I have been working with polystyrene and aluminium.

SP: Would you describe the actual process that you employ?

GC: Polystyrene, as you know, is a solid but light aerated packing material which costs about 6s. per cubic foot. Expanded polystyrene is, incidentally, about 98.5% air. For the most part I use a hot electric wire to cut into the polystyrene. To some extent the material dictates the shapes although I have found there is a natural affinity between my designs and the way polystyrene can be cut. After I have finished the shapes I want, the work is then embedded in casting sand and molten aluminium is poured through a funnel into the sand mould filled by the polystyrene. The polystyrene evaporates simultaneously as the aluminium fills the mould. Later the set aluminium is ready to be dug out of the sand and thus you have your piece of sculpture in much less time than traditional methods could possibly allow. The advantages of polystyrene are therefore twofold, for me at least. Firstly, it allows me the chance to work directly in a manageable material and, secondly, there is the important factor of speed.

The Arts Review, March, 1965. Vol XVIII no. 4
Taken from the profile by Sturt-Penrose



Test Piece
1958/1959
Aluminium on slate
Unique
21 x 10.5 x 11.5 cm

NOTES:
Cast using expanded polystyrene. Exhibited Chappel Galleries, 1994.
Dimensions of slate 38 x 27 cm. Also titled 'Incident Series'.





Relief I: Towards Abstraction

1960, Aluminium

Unique

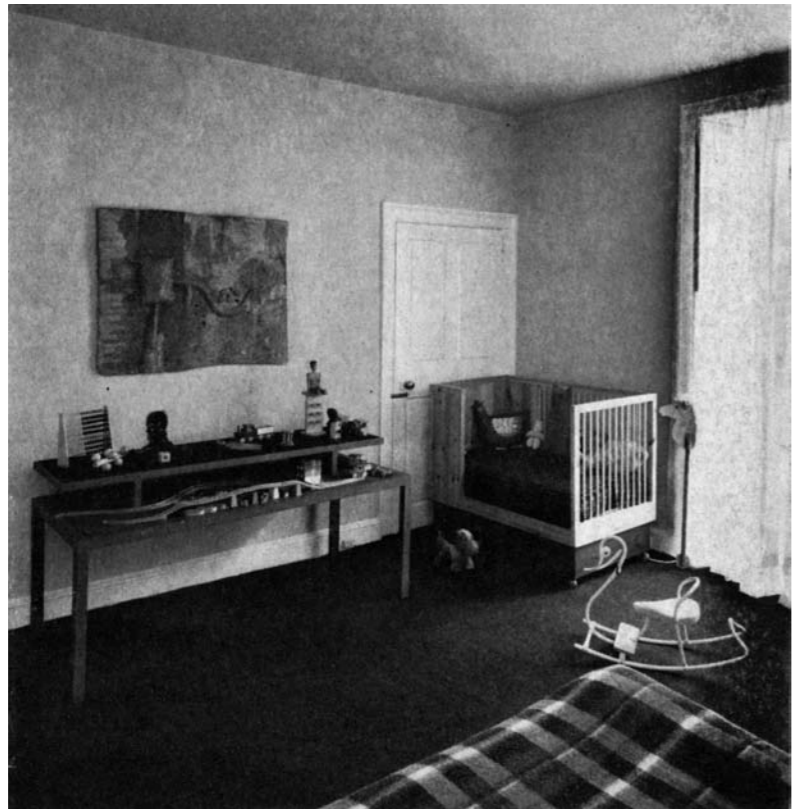
80 x 97 x 12 cm

NOTES:

Exhibited Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 1994; 'Symbols for Man' (touring), 1994-5

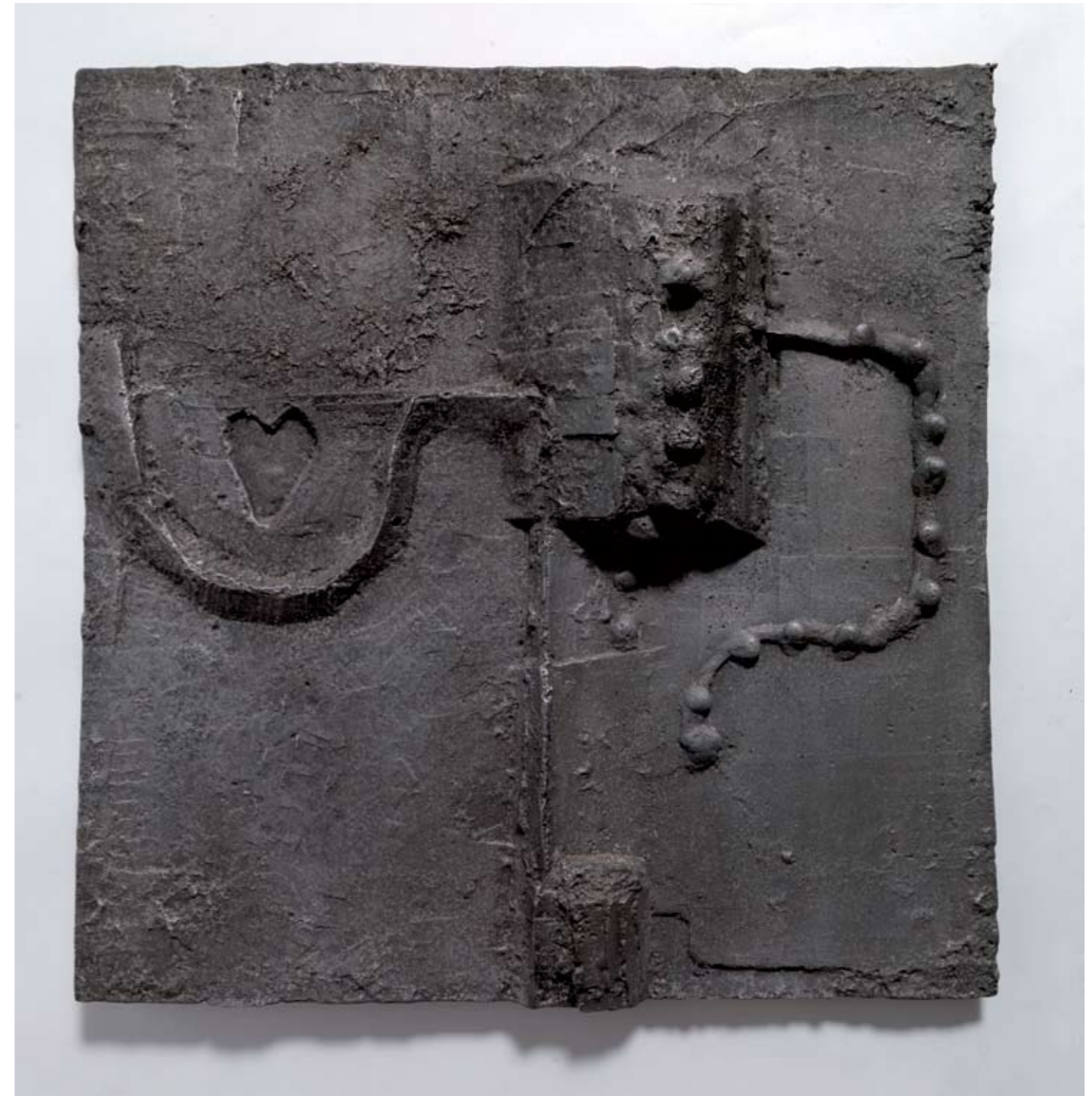
Originally titled 'Relief I'. Open cast aluminium relief. Also illustrated p.42.

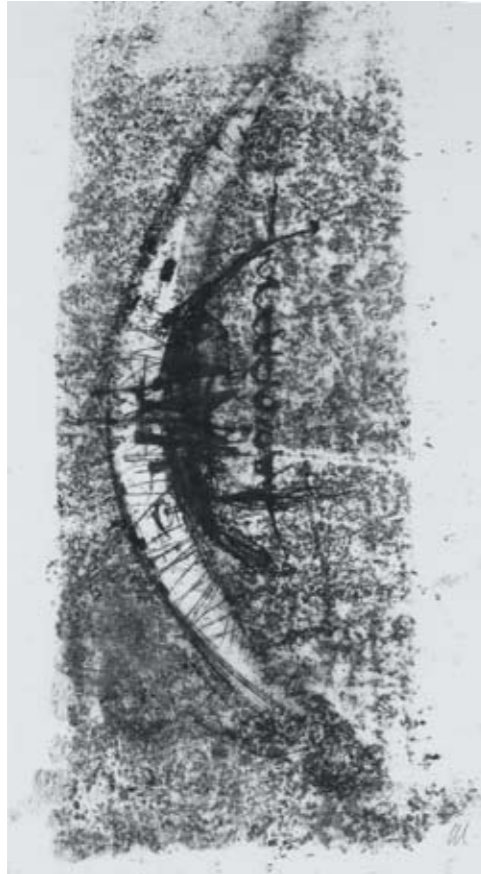




Relief IV
1960, Aluminium
Unique
58.5 x 57 x 9 cm

NOTES: Open cast aluminium
PHOTOGRAPH: Jonathan Clarke's bedroom, Stowe Hill, with *Relief I*, 1965





Sketch for Spirit of Electricity
1958/9
Monoprint
Unique



Spirit of Electricity Maquette
1958/9, Brass
Unique
52 cm high
Private Collection

NOTE:

Spirit of Electricity was a commission for Thorn House, London (Architect: Basil Spence). The large version is in bronze and 240cm high. It was later moved to the side of the building but can still be seen from Upper St Martin's Lane.

PHOTOGRAPHS: Thorn House, 2013 now known as Orion House; Assistant Len Pawsey with the full size model of *Spirit of Electricity* at Stowe Hill, Suffolk c.1960.

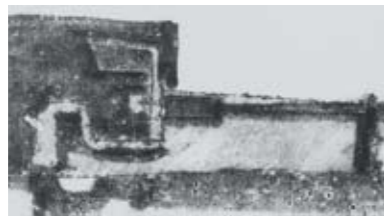
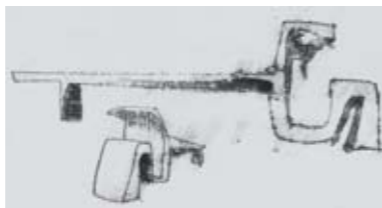
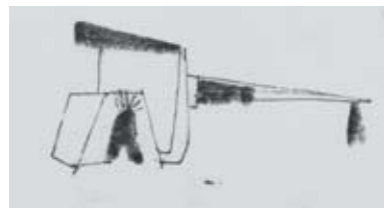
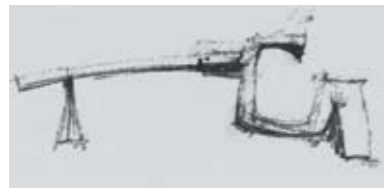
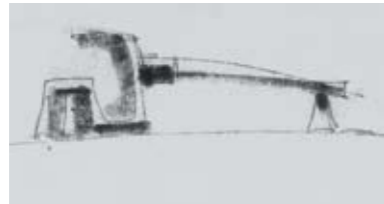
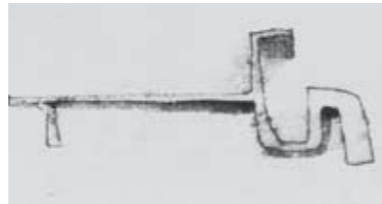
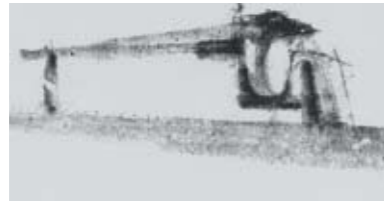




Façade
1958, Bronze
Edition of 4
29 x 29 x 8 cm
Private Collection

NOTES:
Cast by Cornish and Lloyd agricultural engineers, Bury St Edmunds.
Later titled 'Man as a Fortress'. Exhibited in 'Sculpture in the Home',
1958; James Hyman Fine Art, 2002; Strand Gallery, 2003.





Sketches for Battersea I
1962
Portfolio of 10 monoprints
Unique

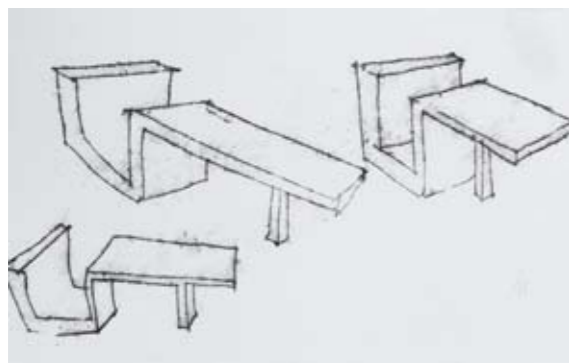
PHOTOGRAPH:
Geoffrey Clarke with
Monoprints (late 1960s)



(PREVIOUS PAGE)
Battersea III
1962, Aluminium
Unique
122 x 395 x 107.5 cm

NOTES:
Exhibited Battersea Open-Air Sculpture
Exhibition, 1963; 'Towards Art II', Arts
Council, touring, 1965; King's Lynn Festival,
1968; Ickworth Park, 1968; Abingdon Old
Gaol, 1975; 'Sculpture in the Close', Jesus
College Cambridge, 1999





(PREVIOUS PAGE)
Battersea II
 Aluminium
 1962, Unique
 76 x 319 x 137 cm

EXHIBITED:
 Battersea Open-Air Sculpture Exhibition, 1963; Norwich Central Library Courtyard, 1964; British Sculpture in the Sixties, Tate, 1965; King's Lynn Festival, 1968; Ickworth Park, 1968; 'Sculpture in the Close', Jesus College Cambridge, 1999

PHOTOGRAPH:
 The yard at Stowe Hill, with *Battersea III* (right) and windows for the Taunton Deane commission in the background (c.1963).

(TOP LEFT)
 Sketch for *Channel & Plane*
 1964, Monoprint
 Unique

(RIGHT)
Channel & Plane
 2013, Sterling Silver
 Edition of 5
 5.1 x 18.7 x 5.5 cm

NOTE:
 Special limited edition cast of 1964 aluminium of the same title.

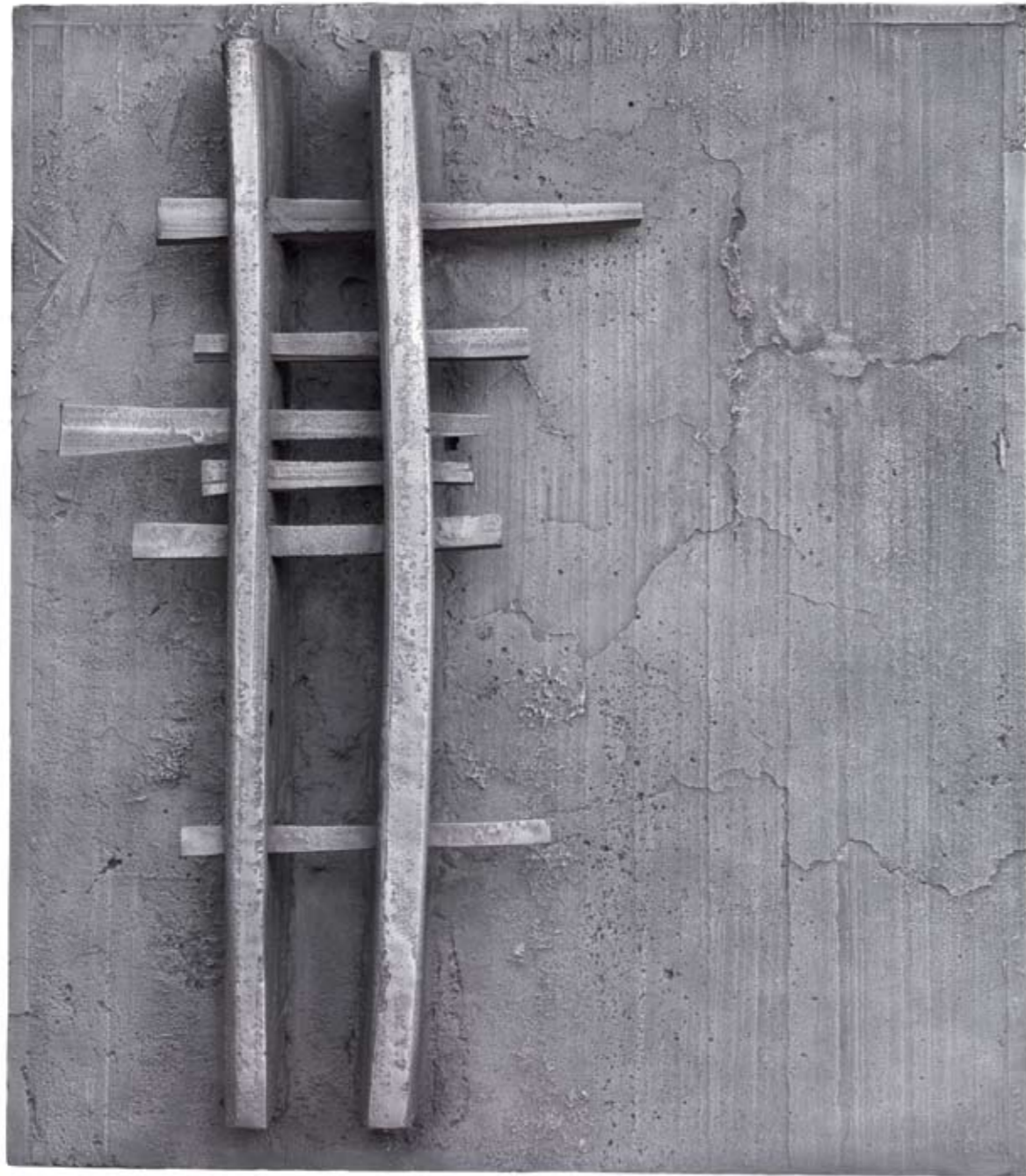




Taunton Deane Crematorium: Test Panel
1963, Cast aluminium & coloured glass
Unique
213 x 30 x 24 cm

NOTE:
Test panel for Taunton Deane Crematorium
stained glass windows (Architect: Robert Potter).





Slab & Bar Relief (Maquette)

1964, Aluminium

Unique

146 x 129 x 18 cm

NOTES:

Exhibited at The Redfern Gallery, 1965 & 66; 'Symbols for Man' (touring), 1994-5; Jesus College, Cambridge, 1999

ABOVE: Geoffrey Clarke pictured with Slab & Bar Relief, 1964, commissioned by Westminster Bank, Bond Street (Architect: Russell Hodgson & Leigh). Branch now closed. Sculpture now at Warwick University.



Two Troughs and Flat Bar
1964, Aluminium
Edition of 4
38 x 165 x 54 cm

The only way to describe this sculpture is as a solid form of Chinese and Japanese brush-and-ink calligraphy modelled in the round and cast in aluminium of rough-polished texture.

It is Geoffrey Clarke's first exhibition since 1955 and shows his development since then. On leaving the Royal College of Art, where he studied sculpture, stained glass and other media, he set out in 1951 to produce what he has called "applied sculpture": sculpture for buildings, exhibitions, and so on, instead of for collectors and art galleries.

This seems to have been a wise decision, and he has an impressive list of public and other important commissions...Whereas he previously tended to favour iron he now uses aluminium for sculptures from 6 in. to 10ft. long. These sculptures are like records in metal of writing in the air.

The inclusion in his exhibition of some actual brush calligraphy designs printed by monotype on rice paper is a logical outcome of his sculptural approach; and also the large aquatints in grey monochrome of similarly calligraphic design such as 'Warrior'.

Some of the tapered and flattened metal forms, although cast, have the feeling of hand-forged metal, as in 'Two Slabs and Flat Bar' and 'Two Troughs and Flat Bar'.

I find here the same ambiguity regarding the medium as I found at the current sculpture show at the Tate and the Royal College Sculpture Exhibition now at the Arts Council Gallery where one type of medium seems to be trying to change into another and one subject is captured in the act of changing into another.

Richard Seddon, *Birmingham Post*, 10th March, 1965

Two Troughs and Flat Bar
1964, Aluminium
Edition of 4
38 x 165 x 54 cm

NOTES:
Exhibited The Redfern Gallery, 1965; 'British Sculpture in the Sixties', Tate, 1965; Pittencrieff, 1967; Redfern, 1966; King's Lynn Festival, 1968; Ickworth Park, 1968; Redfern, 1970; 'Symbols for Man' (touring), 1994; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 1994; Fine Art Society, 2000, Strand Gallery, 2004. Full edition cast. Titled in Redfern catalogue 'Two Troughs and Flat Bar II'. Photo: The gallery, Stowe Hill (c.1965).





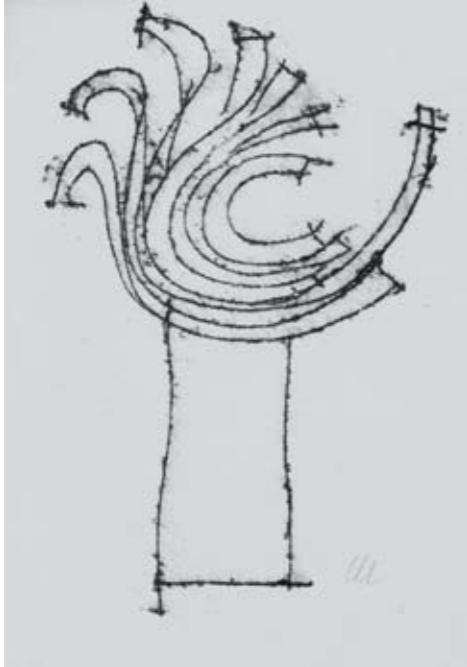
(LEFT & TOP RIGHT)
Torii Prone Two
1965, Aluminium
Edition of 10
9.2 x 22.8 x 7.7 cm

EXHIBITED:
The Redfern Gallery, 1966; Pottergate
Gallery, Norwich, 1974; 'Symbols for
Man' (touring) 1994-5; Strand Gallery,
2004 & 2007.

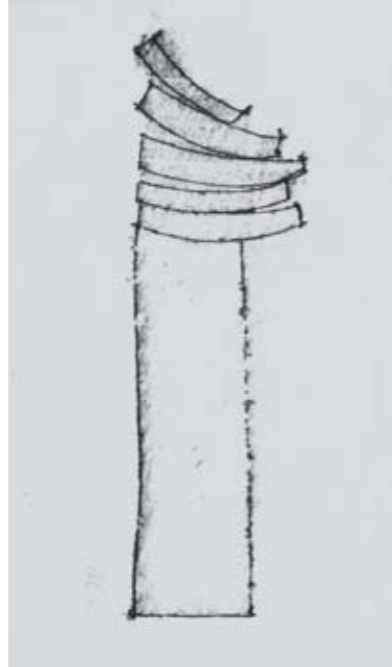


(ABOVE)
Slab Torii One (ii)
1965, Aluminium
Unique variant
7.8 x 20.8 x 5 cm

NOTES:
Exhibited Strand Gallery, 2007.
Only one of edition cast.



(ABOVE)
Torii Sketches
1965, Monoprints
Portfolio of 10
Unique



(RIGHT)
Toriiis
1965, Aluminium
Edition of 10
20 x 5 x 6.2 cm

NOTES:
The Redfern Gallery, 1970; Pottergate
Art Gallery, 1974; Burlington House,
1978; Strand Gallery, 2004 & 2007.





Toriik (i)
1965, Aluminium
Edition of 10
19 x 13.5 x 8 cm

EXHIBITED:
Seibu Department Store,
Tokyo, 1969; Phoenix Gallery,
1980; Strand Gallery, 2007.

Plateau III
1965, Aluminium
Edition of 10
6.5 cm high; 21 cm diameter

NOTES:
The Redfern Gallery, 1969; Seibu Department
Store, Tokyo, 1969; Phoenix Gallery, Lavenham,
1980; 'Symbols for Man' (touring), 1994-5;
Strand Gallery, 2004.

BIOGRAPHY

1924 Born Darley Dale, Derbyshire
 1941–2 Studies at Preston and Manchester Schools of Art
 1943–6 War service with RAF
 1947–8 Studies at Lancaster School of Art
 1948–52 Studies stained glass at Royal College of Art
 1951 *Icarus* (iron and glass relief) for Festival of Britain
 1952 Exhibits at Venice Biennale; solo exhibition at Gimpel Fils, London; Iron sculpture for Time Life building, London
 1952–3 Competitions for 'Unknown Political Prisoner' and 'Football and the Fine Arts'
 1953–8 Nave windows for Coventry Cathedral
 1954 Moves to Stowe Hill, Hartest, Suffolk. Sets up foundry for forged iron
 1955 Solo exhibition at Gimpel Fils, London
 1956 *Warrior* aquatints printed at Atelier Lacourière, Paris
 1958/9 First works cast using expanded polystyrene and aluminium
 1959 Aluminium relief, *Extraction and Refining of Oil*, for Castrol House, London. Tapestry for Surra Palace, Kuwait
 1960 Stained glass for Lincoln Cathedral Treasury
 1960–61 Open-cast reliefs for P&O liners *Oriana* and *Canberra*
 1961 Aluminium and glass windows for Church of the Ascension, Crownhill, Plymouth, and Ipswich Civic College; bronze sculpture for Thorn House, London
 1962 Sculptures for Coventry Cathedral (High Altar cross and candlesticks, Crown of Thorns, Flying Cross), Newcastle University, Bishop Otter College Chichester
 1963 Screens for Guards' Chapel, London. Exhibits at Battersea Park
 1964 *Cast in a New Mould* (Shell film about Clarke's casting technique)
 1965 Exhibits at Tate Gallery and Arts Council. Solo exhibition at Redfern Gallery. *Torii* and *Plateau* series of sculptures
 1966/7 *Triunii* and *Uniforge* commissioned by Federal Land Bank, St Paul, Minnesota
 1968–73 Head of Light Transmission and Projection Department, RCA
 1968 *Post-Inert Phase* series of sculptures. *A Sculptor's Manual* (with Stroud Cornock). Gates for Civic Centre, Newcastle
 1969–71 *Landscape Investigation* series of sculptures
 1970 Elected ARA
 1972 Exhibits in 'British Sculptors '72', Tate Gallery
 1973 Series of medals. Gates for Churchill Archive, Cambridge
 1974 Aromatic sculptures
 1976 Elected RA. Pulpit, font and altar for All Souls, Langham Place. *Ladder* series.

1981 *Cumbrian Project*, landscape relief series
 1982–3 Sculpture for York House, Pentonville Road, London
 1984 *Pyramus* and *Thisbe* medals, *Tankman* series
 1986 *One and One* series, *Bang, Bang, Britannia*
 1988–92 *Extension* series (paintings with aluminium relief figures)
 1994 *Pilgrim* series. Solo exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Touring exhibition: 'Geoffrey Clarke: Symbols for Man' to Wolsey Art Gallery, Ipswich; Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry and Pallant House, Chichester.
 1999–2003 *Artist* series (wooden constructions and prints)
 2000 Solo exhibition at Fine Art Society, London. Commission for Millennium Wood, Hartest, Suffolk
 2002 Exhibits in 'Henry Moore and the Geometry of Fear', James Hyman Fine Art
 2003–4 Solo exhibitions at Strand Gallery, Aldeburgh; touring exhibition: 'Geoffrey Clarke: Aesthetic Detector' (Bury St Edmunds and Derby)
 2006 Solo exhibition (prints) at Fine Art Society, London
 2011 Solo exhibition at Linton Court Gallery, Settle
 2012 Exhibits in 'Exorcising the Fear' and 'Sculptors' Drawings', Pangolin London. Solo exhibition at Strand Gallery, Aldeburgh, to launch *Geoffrey Clarke: a sculptor's prints* by Judith LeGrove (published Sansom & Company)

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Lawrence Alloway 'Britain's New Iron Age', *Art News* (NY), Vol. 52 No. 4 (June–August 1953)
 Peter Black *Geoffrey Clarke: Symbols for Man. Sculpture and Graphic Work 1949–94* (London: Lund Humphries, 1994)
 Peter Black *Geoffrey Clarke RA* (London: Fine Art Society, 2000)
 Geoffrey Clarke and Stroud Cornock *A Sculptor's Manual* (London: Studio Vista, 1968)
 Tanya Harrod *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1999)
 J. P. Hodin 'Geoffrey Clarke: maker of art', *Studio* (May 1963), pp 210–215
 J. P. Hodin *Geoffrey Clarke: Recent Sculptures 1965* (London: Redfern Gallery, 1965)
 Judith LeGrove 'A renaissance in glass: the work of Geoffrey Clarke', *Decorative Arts Society Journal*, No. 32 (2009), pp 126–147
 Judith LeGrove *Geoffrey Clarke: a sculptor's prints* (Sansom & Company, 2012)
 Edwin Mullins 'Sculpture Out of Air', *Sunday Telegraph* (29 December 1963)
 Shell Chemical Company *Expanded Polystyrene in Art* (London: Shell Chemicals U.K., 1965)
 W. J. Strachan *Towards Sculpture: Maquettes and Sketches from Rodin to Oldenburg* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976)
Cast in a New Mould (Shell film, 1964), 35 mm, colour, 10 mins, by Alan Fabian (camera), Alvin Bailey (editor), Michael Heckford (director) and Adrian Cruft (composer)

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This exhibition would not have been possible without the help and support of Geoffrey Clarke, his son Jonathan and Judith LeGrove. We are also grateful to the other lenders in the exhibition - Harry Cayton, Keith Chapman, Michael Forgacs, and Ron Howell as well as to Darbyshire Framers and Steve Russell for his photography.

IMAGE CREDITS

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E: gallery@pangolinlondon.com

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