



CARL PLACKMAN  
& HIS CIRCLE

PANGGOLIN

LONDON



(LEFT)  
Carl Plackman  
installing *Decoy* in  
2003 for the *Crooked  
Light* exhibition  
at Royal West of  
England Academy.

## LONDON WAS A RUIN, AND YOU GUYS HAD FUN IN IT \*

In any well-chosen group of students, there's always one who teaches the rest. It's at its best when 'teaching' is an imparting thing, a social space of subtle accretions.

For the best long-term consequences, art students need time and space and materials and, without too many diversions, the best use of disposable time is 'sitting around'.

The years in which I came into contact with Carl Plackman were the years when the square yard of linoleum (on the roll) transformed itself into the vinyl tile.

Black and white became colour.

Carl, more than four years older than myself, arrived at the tarred corrugated huts on the Museum's service road on Queen's Gate in the autumn of 1967. The provisional character of the Royal College of Art Sculpture School was interchangeable with the overall fabric of London at that time. Wear and tear.

Much more like the rest of the world than it knew, London enjoyed these unregulated years. Milk in a bottle kept on a window sill seemed entirely unremarkable.

Carl played the part of 'the boy arriving in the big city' with flair.

A strong West Country accent, a reserved demeanour, carefully judged workaday clothing and a remarkable sense of constancy and reliability.

He 'knew things'.

Carl never saw himself as special, though the exceptional mix of his personal experiences marked him out from others. It took time, even patience, to understand the dimensions of those interests. One never doubted Carl's sense of his own self-esteem, not something you would ever misread as self-importance or hubris. What steadily became clear was the complicated way in which he already 'belonged to himself'.

In those big dusty studios, 'metaphysical' was probably the longest spoken word that you might hear. For the greater part all the sculpture students were free of any highly professionalised language, the kind which may cloud the mind of an undergraduate flying into London to study art in the 21st Century.

Adjacent to Sculpture, but in better huts, were the RCA Film students. It was their use of 'our' toilets which generated conversations.

We were like two villages in the outer margins of Albertopolis, shyly aware of shared landscapes. Them and us.

The most sophisticated public event which we all shared was David Gale's inspirational weekly film nights.

'A Warm Thrill of Pleasure', instituted by David and nourished by a powerful group of fellow students who were undoubtedly the most international and the most highly informed and widely connected College group.

That privilege of proximity, doors that could still be opened by turning handles.

I mention this because Carl's abiding interest in the black and white film still is directly connected to his deep sense of 'staging', his awareness of the 'room set' and the way that any form of spatial display implicates the viewer.

His steady proceduralities, at times as physical as the performance of a gymnast, and at others as fingertip focused as the laborious needlework of a cobbler, allowed him both to draw and to make, day in, day out, a new sort of storyboard art.

Those sets and props have survived him.

Their consistently 'worn' aesthetic rhymed with the way Carl himself looked. Whatever Carl wore, it always appeared 'worn'. It would have amused him that this became a look, the one we call 'distressed'.

In the 'Ernest Shackleton' kitchen at our 1969 studio (now Dilston Grove) it is still easy to imagine Carl studiously rolling a cigarette, a conversation ensuing about 'wear', 'worn', and 'weary', even 'vest', 'investigate' and 'vestigial'. All followed by his gentle private smile.

In other circumstances, other times, other cultures, amidst the climate of counterfactual worlds, how easy it is to propose Carl as a force in the theatre, the cinema, or near any of the interactive projects that have come to describe post-modern life. The ones which now stage and propose all our second hand experiences.

Being near anything that Carl once made makes all of us into his actors.

He makes us present.

RICHARD WENTWORTH  
London, December 2018

\*a paraphrase of an observation by Joe Wentworth (aged 37), August 2017

(RIGHT)  
Installation view  
of *Decoy* during  
*Carl Plackman:  
Obscure Territories* at  
Pangolin London, 2015

(BELOW)  
Richard Wentworth  
*Word for Word*  
2019, Inkjet print  
Unique  
24 x 31.5 cm





(LEFT)  
*Fall from Grace*  
2002, Mixed media  
Unique  
197 x 105 x 45 cm

## CARL PLACKMAN & HIS CIRCLE

Three years after his all too early death, Huddersfield Art Gallery mounted the largest retrospective of the work by Carl Plackman (1943 - 2004) that there has been in 'Beyond Appearances', borrowing from the significant Arts Council Collection and the Tate across three decades of sculpture and works on paper. To coincide with the exhibition, Huddersfield Art Gallery produced a brilliant publication to which we owe a debt of gratitude for inspiring this current exhibition at Pangolin London. Beautifully illustrated and with essays from a wide range of academics, the book also included an extraordinary wealth of personal notes from many of the artists, pupils and colleagues Carl had touched either directly or indirectly.

Having sadly missed the opportunity to meet Carl in person and having relied on his wonderful widow Jane Patton, son Sam, and his friends for anecdotes, the Huddersfield catalogue has been a constant point of reference and inspiration in an attempt to catch a glimpse of the complex character behind these intense, often evasive yet rewarding works. The high regard in which Carl was held in all his many teaching roles was overwhelmingly clear and gave us the idea of showing Carl's work alongside his pupils and friends to explore not only the crossovers and differences, but to offer an insight into the context of an important time in British Sculpture and Plackman's lasting legacy as a teacher, colleague and artist.

The first half of the 20th century, brutally punctuated by two World Wars, saw British sculpture leap from a highly realistic neo-classicism to abstraction with well-known sculptors promoting 'truth to materials' and creating smooth organic forms. The second half in contrast, saw the so called 'Geometry of Fear' artists enjoying their new-found technology of welding to create spiky abstracted figurative forms that were often fragile and weightless rather than solid. By the '60s, when British art schools were entering a Golden Age of art education, the New Generation of sculptors were reacting against these artists and forged their way by exploring new, often brightly coloured, industrial materials abandoning the plinth in exchange for large works that challenged our physical sense of sculpture.

In this over-simplified context it seems natural that the offspring of these energetic generations of sculptors would carry the mantle and continue to explore the expanded field of sculpture, a discipline which in seven decades had been completely transformed. Now that the boundaries of presentation in sculpture and its material had been broken down, the artists of the 70s had the challenge of where to go next. Pioneers such as Carl Plackman took a turn from the macro, large constructions used to communicate mass and volume to focus on the micro with multiple objects carefully constructed, reconstructed and placed to give mass on both a physical and mental scale. Perhaps it was the rapid rise of the consumer and its proliferation of cheap objects to work with that Plackman and his peers began this return to the object. Not as the Surrealists had done - by taking singular objects and transforming their meaning - but by taking a wide variety of everyday objects that were sensitively juxtaposed to offer multiple meanings. The viewer was asked to bring to the table their own interpretation and experience and to explore meaning rather than be dictated to by the usual formal concerns

of sculpture - it was the nascent years of what we loosely call conceptual art but in the case of Carl Plackman it was also something new, very different and very exciting.

One of the most startling signals that sculpture had undergone such a rapid transformation in a mere few decades was the exhibition *British Sculptors '72* at the Royal Academy which was curated by the first abstract sculptor to be elected an academician, Bryan Kneale. With a seemingly brazen almost mischievous audacity Kneale painted the inside of this venerable institution bright white throughout and gave each of the sculptors he invited enough space, sometimes an entire room, to present their sculpture and seriously 'shake things up'.<sup>1</sup>

Carl Plackman and Nigel Hall were the youngest of the twenty-four artists, who had each (bar Michael Sandle) created a new work specially for the exhibition. It was not intended as a survey of tradition or 'school' but as Bryan Robertson wrote in his introduction 'it represents the involved work and radical thinking of twenty-four idealists at a time when so much of life is undermined by compromise and the second-rate'.<sup>2</sup> Including works by many of the sculptors exhibiting here at Pangolin London forty-seven years later with artists such as Ken Draper, Nigel Hall, Garth Evans, Martin Naylor and of course Bryan Kneale, the exhibition also presented works by older sculptors considered to be more established such as Kenneth Armitage, Bernard Meadows, Geoffrey Clarke, Ralph Brown and Eduardo Paolozzi. Works ranged from abstract figurative forms to works that explored formal concerns of shape, material and volume, to works by Plackman and Martin Naylor that introduced the possibility of sculpture as a collection of objects.

Taking over an entire room with what seemed at first to be a sprawl of random yet interconnected objects Plackman presented '.....towards an economical statement', 1971 which both physically and mentally challenged the viewer. Bryan Robertson wrote:

*Carl Plackman's sculpture is like that of an architect who changed to the props and appurtenances of domestic interiors, only to renounce it all and create poetry about the human dramas and shifts in authority successively played out in those interiors. His work is haunted; and so, in a different way which comments more directly on the nature of objects and their separate formal validity, is the scene-of-the-accident haunted work of Martin Naylor. Both artists are making abstract tableaux of great complexity, sobriety and tension.*<sup>3</sup>

This work and Plackman's other floor based works of the time had a significant impact on those that saw them as Clive Phillpot noted:

*...in the case of Carl Plackman it was different because of the sustained excitement that I felt at the radicality of the 1970s floor pieces, and their strangeness. They were unlike any works that I had seen before. They appeared to be rejecting the status and attributes of art, while still conjuring humble elements into mechanisms that could cause perceptual interference. They were truly memorable.*<sup>4</sup>

If Sol LeWitt's interpretation of conceptual art was that the planning and decisions are 'made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair'<sup>5</sup>, then Plackman's work was something slightly different. His work had a dedication to craftsmanship with many instantly recognisable 'everyday' elements, which could easily



*Any Place to Hang your Hat: Wedlock*  
1978, Mixed media  
Unique  
340 x 350 x 35 cm  
Arts Council Collection

be overlooked, painstakingly remade to give the illusion of a sham or façade mocking the lazy viewer and rewarding the investigative one.

Over the next two decades Plackman gave much of his time to teaching and adjudicating with his longest position held as Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths for 28 years. Returning to the studio full time in 1999 Plackman worked with a renewed energy and fervour exhibiting both in the UK and USA and with works entering significant public collections such as *Any Place to Hang Your Hat: Wedlock*, 1977-8 which was given to the Arts Council Collection by the Arnolfini Gallery. This exhibition includes works primarily from this energetic period and includes a number of rarely seen sculptures and works on paper. These works still concentrate on bringing together objects but often now incorporate an exquisitely drawn two-dimensional element. Sometimes these include a central animal character such as in *Fall From Grace*, 2002 where a giraffe delicately splays its legs to drink, a position which looks decidedly vulnerable but as sculptors will know is strong in its triangulated base - is that his tail or a zebra's stuck in the concrete pot below? One cannot help but feel an element of humour has crept into these later works.

One large work in the exhibition that also uses a two dimensional element as if setting a stage is *Looking For England*, 2003 which relates to a series of works of that title which began on a happy residency in Alayrac near Cordes in France. It is inspired by the idea of looking back across the Channel to England and depicts a largely monochromatic craggy coastline held up by five constructed supports upon which the central struts balance two



*Small Stacking Cups*  
1982/3, Hand-painted  
bronze  
Unique  
37 x 8 x 8 cm

stainless steel flasks, and below two brightly painted rocks lie as if they have just tumbled from the cliff. Another large, freestanding work is the enigmatic *All The Great Minds* whose central column, an everyday crate with ornate skirting, is topped by a bowl from which hangs an eclectic array of spoons. On the adjacent side a lead weight and a copper ball seem to be attempting an ascent by the use of grappling hooks. Leaning precariously against this seeming font of knowledge is a mock-Victorian plant stand with an empty drum full of silvered walnuts, a motif which recurs often in Plackman's later work, and beside it a further brass plant stand capped with a flowerpot tied intricately with string and two weighty pierced stones. What the meaning is of these works is infinitely multifaceted and ultimately private – a chef's table of rich ingredients with which to make a myriad of recipes for a dinner for one.

In contrast to these large sculptures is a rare small work *Small Stacking Cups*, 1982-3. This quintessential 'modern' children's toy with its saccharine grin on the last cup to reward youngsters once they have completed the intended task of stacking, has been cast in an ancient material and has had its brightly painted surface worn away as if the patina of age renders it an archaeological find. Even in its apparent simplicity it is equally obtuse in giving away a singular meaning however as with all of Carl's *oeuvre* still offers us a visually beautiful and elegant work.

The second half of the exhibition is devoted to works by a diverse and generous range of artists who were either taught, inspired or touched by Carl and his work. As with the Huddersfield Art Gallery exhibition artists have written short excerpts but this time have also chosen a work which they feel reminds them of or resonates with Carl's work. On occasion where artists are no longer with us their partners have kindly helped select works they feel would be appropriate. The range is as one would expect very varied but the crossovers are also clear. Three aspects in particular seem to be apparent - a constant questioning often realised through objects and how we relate to them in space and life in general such as in the work of Tony Carter, Dunhill and O'Brien, Brian Falconbridge and Nigel Hall; an importance given to exquisite draughtsmanship as seen in the works of Michael Kenny and John Maine (possibly thanks to these artists enjoying the last vestiges of an education in sculpture which forced academic style drawing classes); and the transformation of everyday objects through process such as with the work of Alison Wilding, Jonathan Callan or Damien Hirst.

At a time when the arts are slowly being eroded from our National Curriculum and Art Schools are such weighty beasts that they seem to struggle for the independence and freedom they enjoyed in the '60s and '70s, we hope this exhibition will remind us all of the desperate need for and importance of good teachers. Carl's persistent dedication to teaching has left a legacy that reaches far beyond tuition hours and grades, and in our time of instant visual gratification his work continues to teach us to stop, look carefully and question.

POLLY BIELECKA  
Pangolin London

<sup>1</sup> In conversation with Bryan Kneale, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Bryan Robertson, *British Sculptors '72*, The Royal Academy of Arts, 1972

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Clive Phillpot, *Carl Plackman: Sculpture, Drawing, Writing*, Huddersfield Art Gallery, 2007

<sup>5</sup> Sol LeWitt, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, Artforum Vol.5, no. 10, Summer 1967, pp. 79-83





*Plackman's work is not readily explainable in a text panel nor in an exhibition label - indeed, to attempt to do so would be to go against the artist's very resistance to the constraints of language. Instead it demands the viewer's time, concentration and commitment: ever-precious virtues in our busy, impatient and fast-paced world.*

NATALIE RUDD

*All the Great Minds*  
1999, Mixed media  
Unique  
265 x 127 x 102 cm



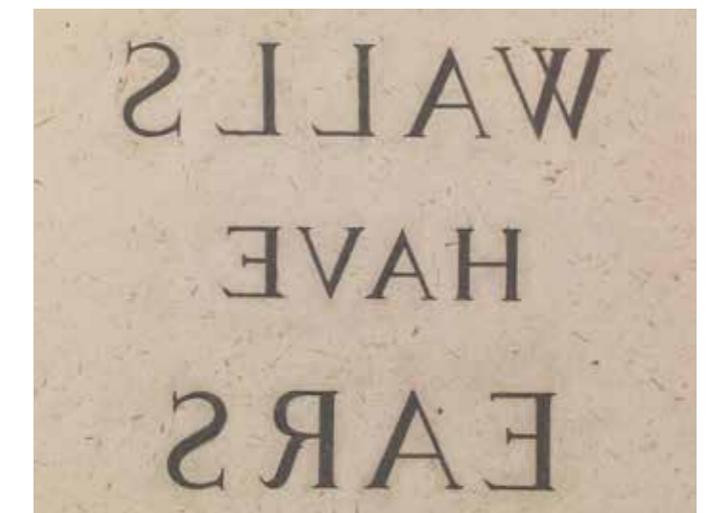


(LEFT)  
*All the Great Minds* (detail)  
1999, Mixed media  
Unique  
265 x 127 x 102 cm

(RIGHT)  
*Walls Have Ears*  
Graphite on paper  
Unique  
36 x 43 cm

*I also try to make a part of the work contain physical illusions - things like façades, shams - so there's a sense in which a lot of the sculpture deals with - I used to call it in a rather pompous way 'the impenetrability of matter', a superficiality of appearance - things are never what they appear to be. Because of their use - through habit - if you think of all the things we use, they have been established over a long period of time and they dictate the pattern of our lives.*

CARL PLACKMAN



*Comedy of Errors:  
Two and Counting*  
2002, Mixed media  
Unique  
64.5 x 91 x 5cm





*Small Stacking Cups*  
1982/3, Hand-painted  
bronze  
Unique  
37 x 8 x 8 cm

*People are made/become objects and possessions (knowledge is obtained through objects not by experience through action/expression). Language and ideas of sexuality are often the root cause of this. Words are often used to incorporate phenomena into our consciousness which we really don't understand. The need to dominate, even in the realms of language, often produces a kind of literary fascism. Most of the men who have contributed to the creation of our present society were orators - the one or two women, activists.*

CARL PLACKMAN

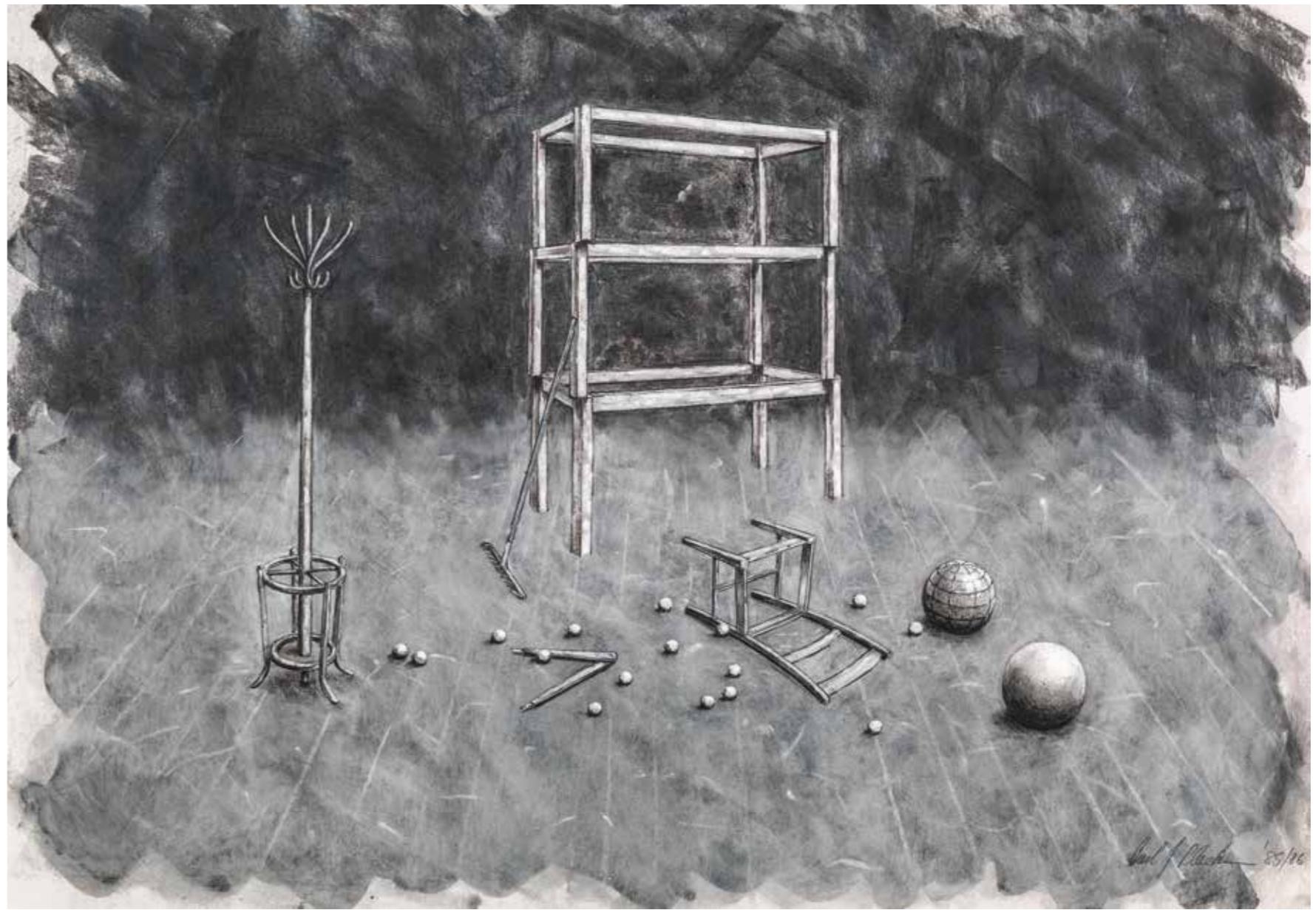


*Fidelity*  
1980, Charcoal, chalk,  
pencil & gouache  
Unique  
63 x 86 cm

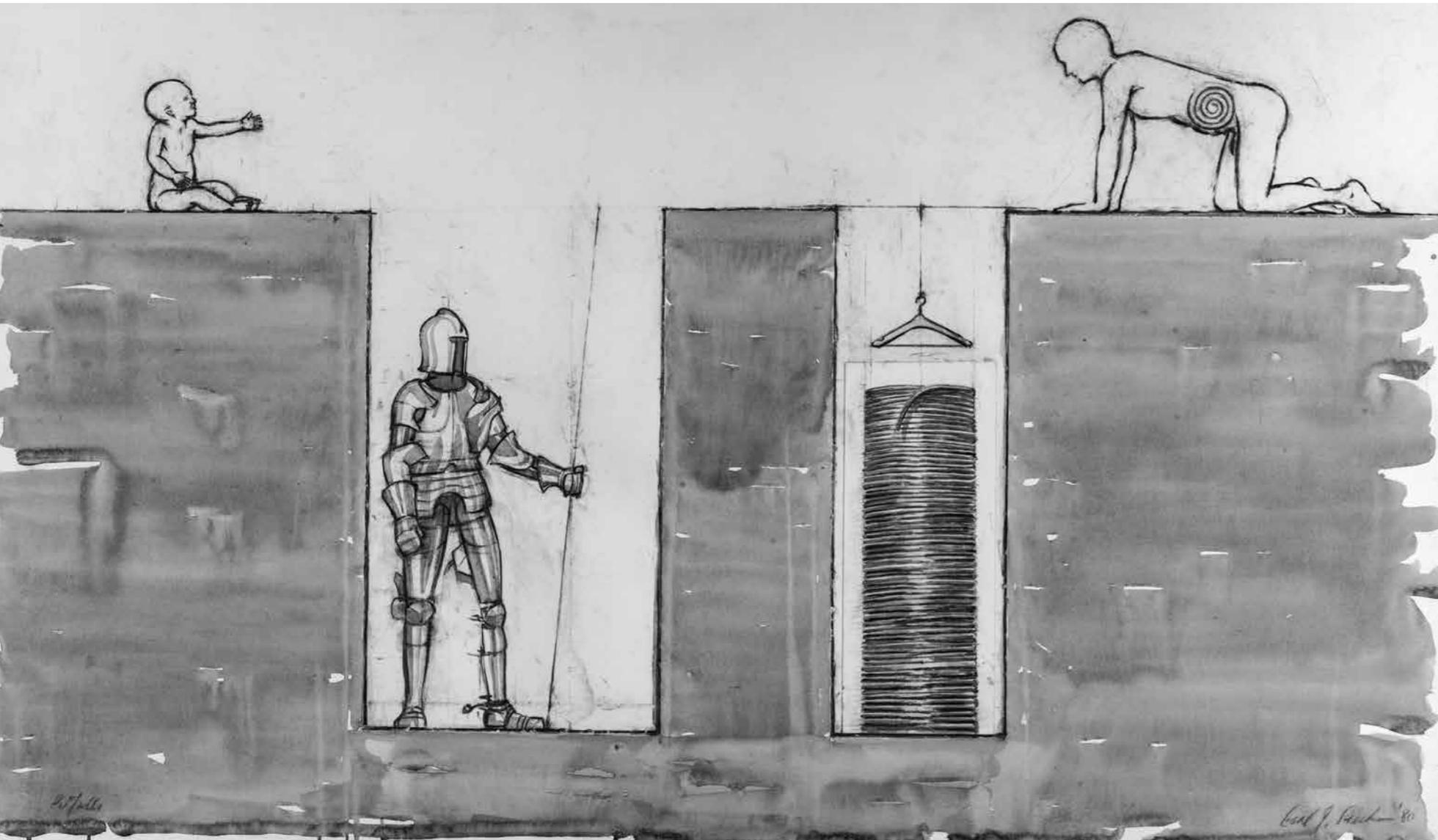


(RIGHT)  
*The Immigrant*  
1985 - 86, Charcoal and  
Conte stick on paper  
Unique  
90 x 116 cm

(LEFT)  
*The Immigrant*  
1985-7, Mixed media  
Unique  
225 x 380 x 310 cm  
The Tate Collection, London







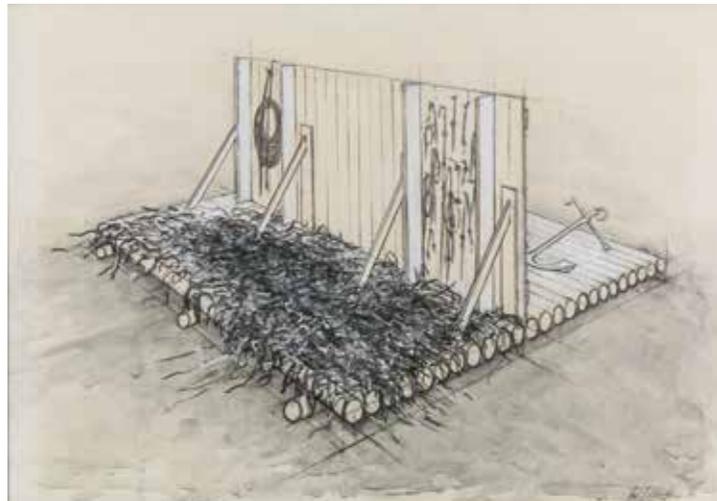
(LEFT)  
*Pitfalls*  
 1980, Ink and charcoal  
 on paper  
 Unique  
 58 x 90 cm

(PREVIOUS AND RIGHT)  
*The Pendulum: Passing  
 Through*  
 1980, Mixed media on  
 paper  
 Unique  
 63 x 89 cm



*I am constantly reminded while making drawings of their 'object'ness and the obsession with materialism that I see around me. So they are often evocative of situations where objects have priority of value and position in the world and people are made to fit in as best they can. In many cases the absence of the human presence is itself significant. Where animals occur and the way in which they are depicted, suggests a metaphor for some aspect of the human predicament.*

CARL PLACKMAN



(RIGHT)  
*Looking for England*  
2003, Mixed media  
Unique  
132 x 190 x 51 cm

(LEFT)  
*Raft*  
1976, Mixed media  
on paper  
Unique  
67 x 93.5 cm



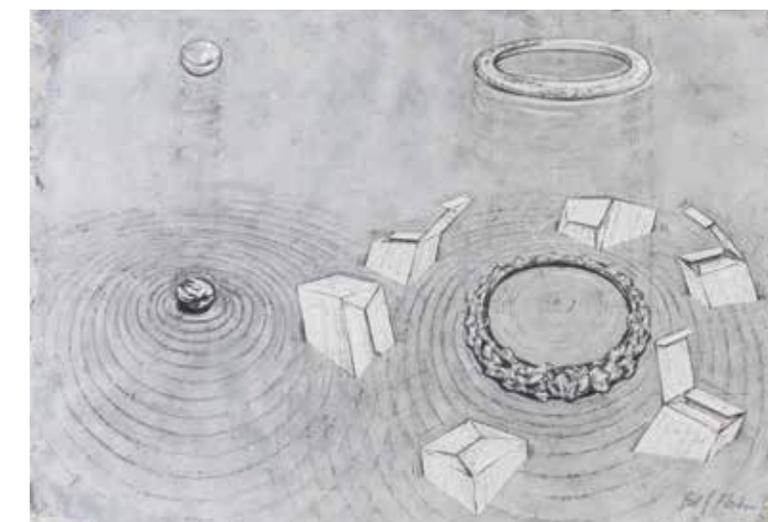


(RIGHT)  
*Green Shoots*  
 1997, Mixed media on  
 handmade paper  
 Unique  
 55 x 80 cm

(LEFT)  
*Island*  
 1980, Mixed media on paper  
 Unique  
 64 x 84 cm

*Bringing readymade things together with made things, and also words and pre-existing images and on occasion sound, Plackman commands a multilevel communication system. And what he communicates, like all the artists who matter, all serious writers and composers too, is life itself: his experience of it generalised and given form. There it is, for anybody willing to give time and to bring his or her experience of life to it.*

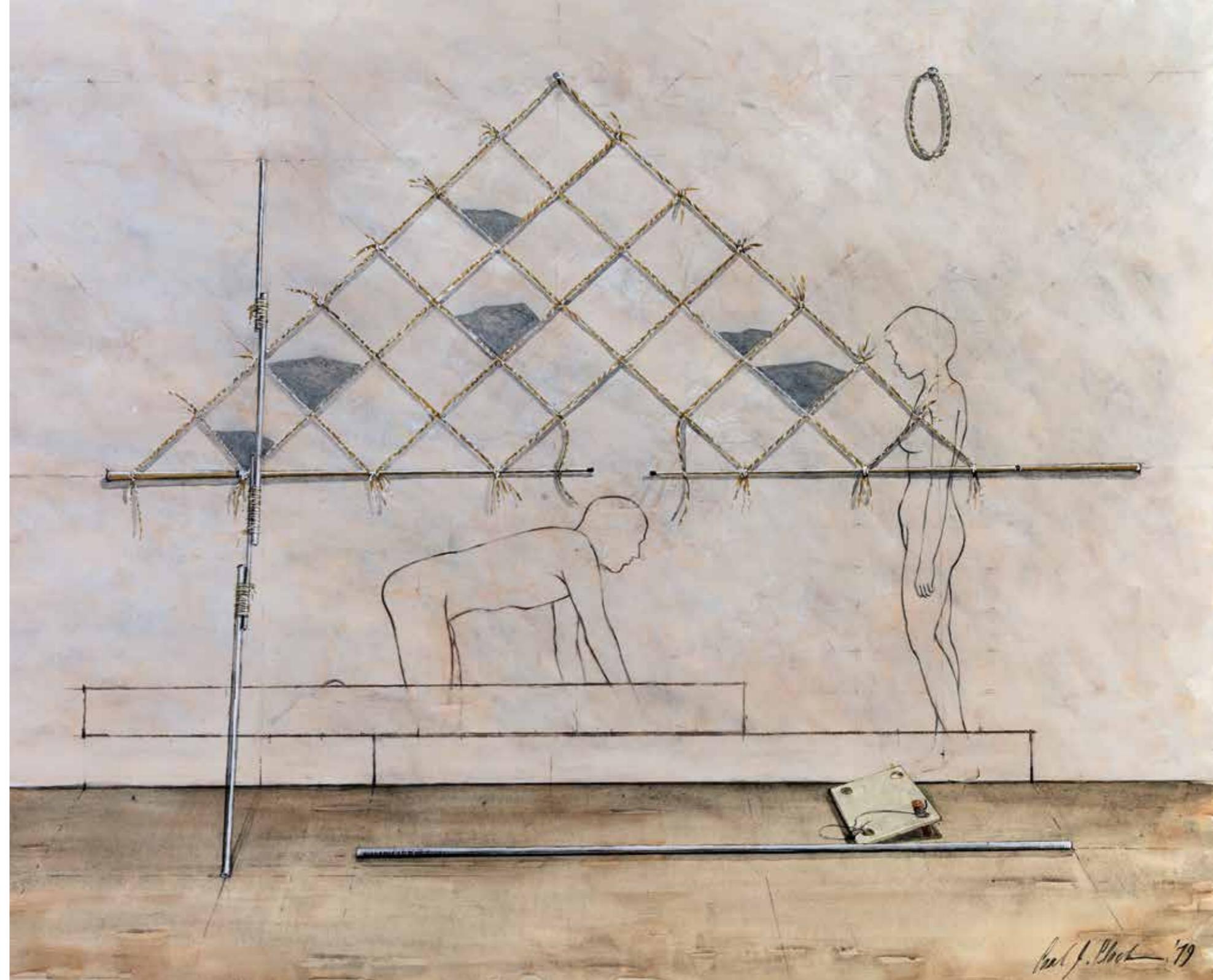
NORBERT LYNTON

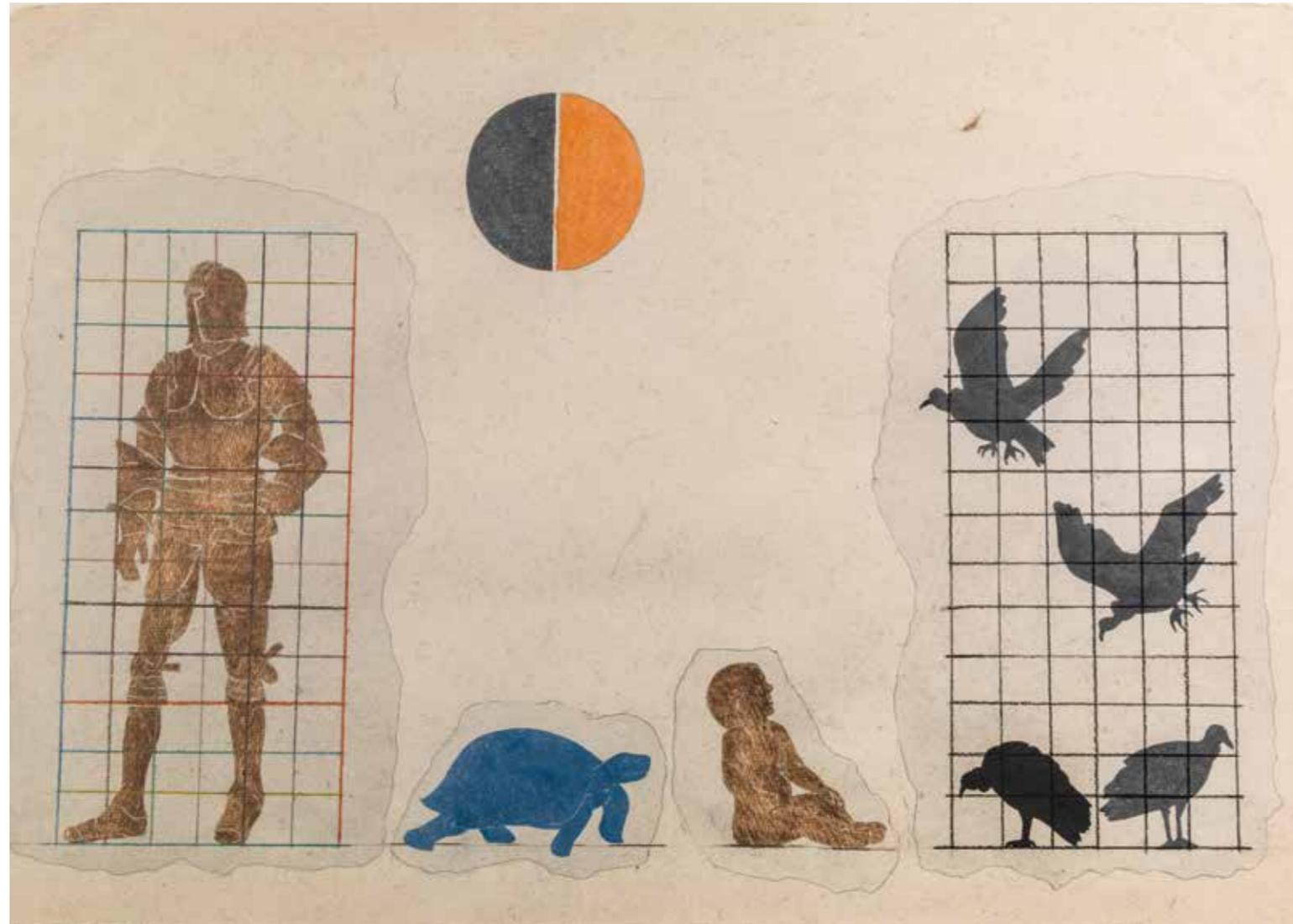


*Through his careful stage managing we are invited and implicated in these generous, puzzling games, like actors 'performing' amongst undiscovered props on a stage, the lines unknown and the narratives still to be discovered. In a sense, his work was always up against the impossible liaisons that art and life might together sometimes offer up. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why it was in drawing and on the page that he also often felt at home - crafting compelling and stunning beautiful, tentative and unreal scenarios, 'impossible sculptures' that only exist on the page you might say, with a gentle, but certain and precise pencil-drawn line.*

JON WOOD

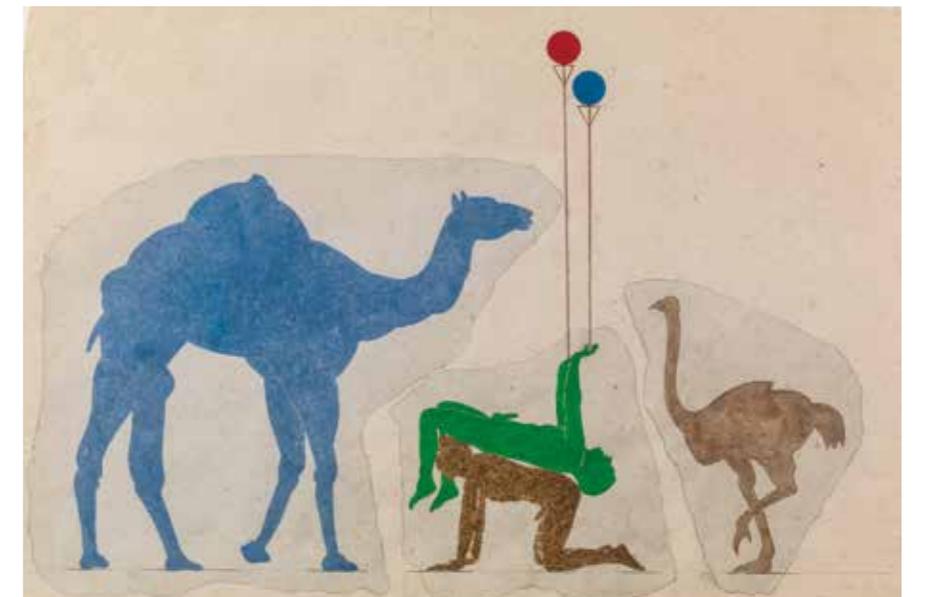
*The Pendulum:  
Day & Night  
1979, Mixed media  
Unique  
64 x 86 cm*





(RIGHT)  
*Fragments Desert Survival*  
 1999, Mixed media  
 Unique  
 48 x 65 cm

(LEFT)  
*Fragments The Time  
 before After a Time*  
 1999, Mixed media  
 Unique  
 48 x 65 cm





PHYLLIDA BARLOW RA  
b.1944

*For me, Carl's work, as well as Martin Naylor's, had a profound and lasting influence on the art produced in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and early 1980s. I envied the poetic quality inherent to his work, its use of fragmentation and its oscillation between the familiar and the unfamiliar. I use images of his work when giving lectures and questions are always asked in relationship to what is shown. Inevitably his work provokes surprise and wonder. Where can it be seen is an all too familiar refrain. He was an artist in every respect, and quintessentially a poet.*

PHYLLIDA BARLOW  
2007

*Untitled: Broken Arch*  
2017, Mixed media  
Unique  
146 x 48.5 x 48.5 cm



# TONY CARTER

1943 - 2016

*Tony referred to Carl Plackman's life's work as exemplifying art's power to be redemptive.*

*Of his own work, Tony wrote:*

*'At one level of intention my work stands in opposition to the values of consumerism. Within [that] system the meaning of objects tends to be one-dimensional. No need for ambiguity. No need for metaphor. . . For me, the value of the art object is in its ability to be self-revelatory for, and within, the spectator, in proportion with his or her experience. Its meaning therefore will not be fixed, though it will be confined within certain limits of coherence. . . I'd be at pains in any discussion of my intentions to stress the non-intellectual part of experiencing the work. Unashamedly, I want the spectator to engage with something beautiful or charismatic . . . there will also be, and should be, much that is beyond precise rationalisation. A work of art isn't a puzzle to be solved. Its continuing life will be to some extent in its resistance to . . . definition and verbal transcription: in its mystery, if you like.'*

*What Carl and Tony both knew was that metaphor is often not merely the most direct route to meaning but the only one.*

WENDY SMITH  
December, 2018

*Deposition*  
2015/2016, Mixed media  
Unique  
240 x 122 cm



JONATHAN CALLAN  
b.1961

*I remember Carl as an artist who did stuff with objects. Which at the point I knew him - 1980-84 was quite refreshing as the field seemed to be dominated by minimalism and conceptual art. He was like a John the Baptist figure, he laid the path for all the new object sculptors. It's a shame he was a little overlooked at the time. I remember him saying in a seminar that the older and more experienced he got the harder it became to make art.*

*I think he was trying to say that once the naivety of youth fell away you begin to understand the obstacles you have to overcome. Which of course is a hard thing to say to a room full of people barely out of their teens. But he said it anyway. He reminds me now, thinking back, as someone who would take his bouts with the objects he was wrestling with and would lay them out, carefully, for the inspection of the school, not with any arrogance or pride, quite the opposite, with the understanding that we were all in this thing together and maybe we could make something of it.*

*The Birth and Death of  
Meaning in Clingfilm*  
2015, Paper and  
clingfilm  
Unique  
11.5 x 36 x 31.5 cm



BRIAN CATLING RA  
b.1948

*A conversations of recognitions and slippage, spoken quietly to corner enigma. 'In Search of Bones' is a Gnostic title, coming from the restless wanderings in pursuit of knowledge, and origin. A simple saint's kit rendered in wood. Yew over a shadow of Oak with a touch of Ash.*

*I think it would have made Carl smile.*



(LEFT)  
*In Search of Bones*  
2018, Wood  
Unique  
18 x 183 x 100 cm

(RIGHT)  
Working drawing for  
*In Search of Bones*  
2018, Graphite on paper  
Unique  
29 x 21 cm



ANN CHRISTOPHER RA  
b.1947



*When I was in my first year at art college Carl was in the third year – a mysterious private man who we as students admired from afar with his quiet and concentrated work ethic. It was only much later in life that Carl and I became friends - sadly for only a few years.*

*Travelling Stones 1-5  
2017, Bronze  
Each an edition of 9  
15 x 62 x 4 cm*

KENNETH DRAPER RA  
b.1944

*Carl and I were students together at the Royal College of Art in the mid 60's and taught together at Goldsmiths through the 70's. Hence I knew this amazingly gifted man well and he is still sorely missed.*

*Like a number of artists in the 60's, we shared an interest in that ambiguous area between the illusion of drawing and real structures which occupy space. Although our work is different in many ways, we shared a number of beliefs and aspirations.*

*Poetry, paradox, ambiguity and metaphors discovered during processes whilst actually making the work are slowly transfused into the mysterious world which finally evolves.*

*Storm Cloud*  
2014, Mixed media  
Unique  
65 x 60 x 10cm



## DUNHILL & O'BRIEN

*As a student I was immediately drawn to the fragile concrete-ness and allusive certainty of Carl's works. His ability to co-opt familiar objects and modest materials into playful diagrammatic narratives reverberating with a quiet anxiety was always impressive. Meanwhile, his intense observations of the human condition and concern for the environment is clearly never more relevant and urgent than ever.*

*It occurred to us that 'Grasp the Sparrow's Tail' with its reference to a Tai Chi move and the simple mechanical apparatus mobilising a cast rock and a handkerchief has a certain Plackmanesque quality about it.*

MARK DUNHILL



*Grasp the Sparrow's Tail*  
2016, Mixed media  
Unique  
120 x 100 x 80 cm



# GARTH EVANS

## b.1934

*White Column began life as a small two-color relief constructed from hardboard, plywood and wood. Because I was dissatisfied with this work I made a fibreglass mould of it in order to reproduce it with the intention of putting four together to create a larger relief. As soon as this larger work was realised, however, I still felt dissatisfied with it.*

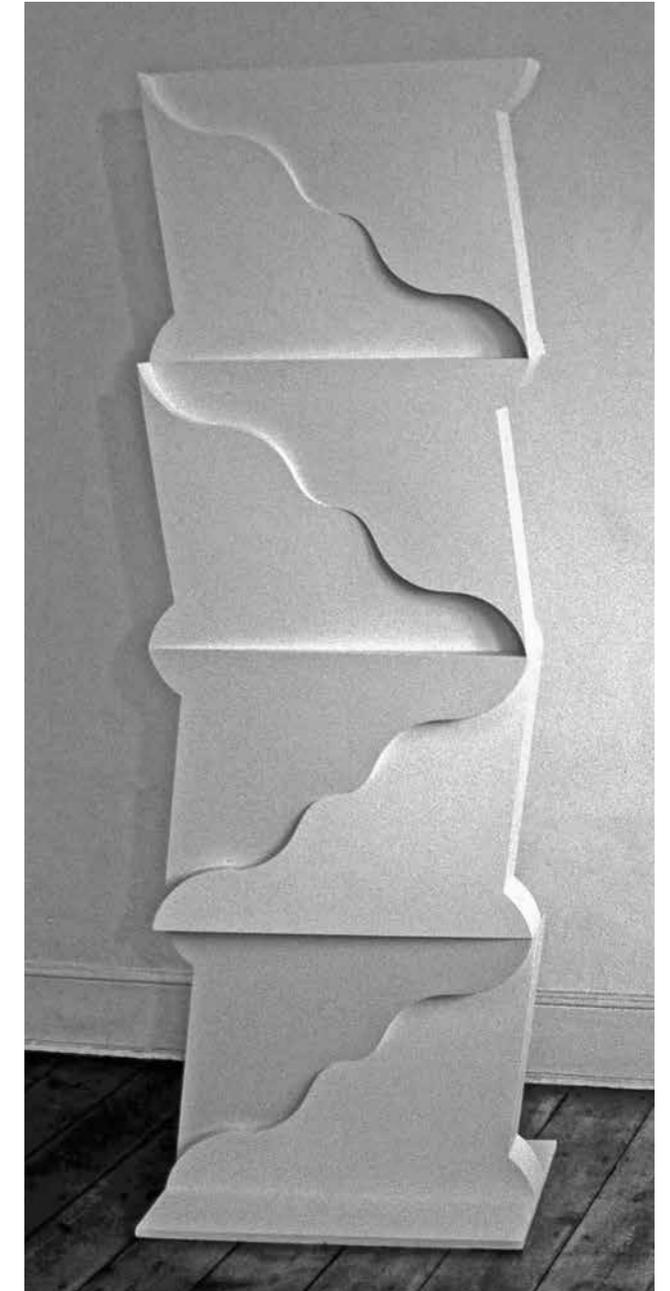
*I had been making reliefs for some years and had begun to feel constrained by their dependence on the wall. I had a physical desire to move around the work to the other side. I tried laying the relief on the floor, which allowed me to circle and see it from various angles but realized that I wanted to be able to confront it. I was not ready to give up the kind of direct encounter that had first drawn me to make reliefs so I doubled the number of parts to make a freestanding, two-sided relief.*

*I imagine Carl spent a good deal of time, as I did, contemplating things, rearranging, selecting and rejecting but Carl, I think, was after something different. I wanted the work to have something I thought of as "presence", as if the "viewer" might feel the object being there, whether it was being looked at or not. Carl's work was, in contrast, elusive.*

*When I first came to know Carl's work it astonished me, it seemed to have an ambition entirely different from my own. On a formal level Carl made work that comprised any number of diverse elements that were physically disconnected and arranged without any apparent pattern. As the roots of my work were in the human body it was unthinkable to me that a sculpture could comprise such a variety of parts or the parts be dispersed in space.*

*I have come to believe that Carl was interested in absence. His work was it seemed to me to be about yearning, about loss, about what was absent. While I had been concerned to make something that had presence Carl's endeavour was almost the reverse. I never had the opportunity to ask him but I like to think he would embrace this idea - making absence present. He was as much a poet as a sculptor.*

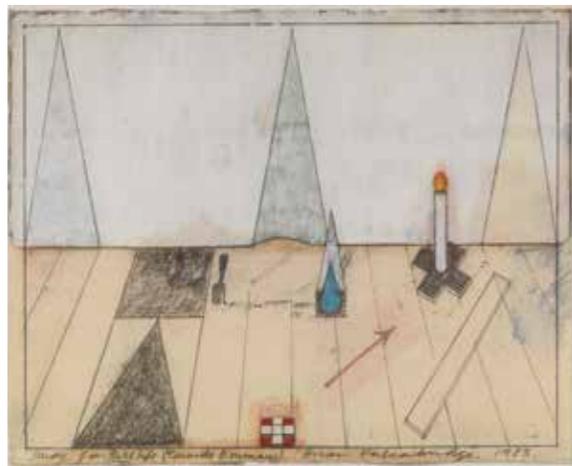
*White Column*  
1963, Fibreglass  
Unique  
183 x 46 x 38 cm



# BRIAN FALCONBRIDGE

b.1950

*Imagery and physical compositions in my work over the last 40 years have been much informed by the disposition of forms and the spatial awareness found in European Still Life painting initially particularly including by such as Caravaggio and Francisco de Zurbaran. This is evident in the early drawing Study for Still Life (towards Emmaus). Further nuanced by an appreciation of Japanese aesthetics, these two cultural strands then begin to converge in sculpture in bronze where strict placement of 'still life' elements and geometrical forms use relative proportion - as in 'Maquette for Candle & Lemon' (1991) - to carry the implication of the monumental while remaining firmly committed to the reduced scale in defining the object as a statement of sculpture.*



(LEFT)  
*Study for Still Life  
(Towards Emmaus)*  
1983, Mixed media  
on paper  
Unique  
40 x 45 cm

(RIGHT)  
*Maquette for Candle  
& Lemon*  
1991, Bronze  
Unique  
12.2 x 22.5 x 12 cm



NIGEL HALL RA  
b.1943

*Although near contemporaries and both from Bristol, Carl and I didn't coincide at either the West of England College of Art or the Royal College. We only met through both exhibiting at the Felicity Samuel Gallery in Savile Row in the seventies.*

*Carl was a gentle, softly spoken West countryman and something of an enigma who conjured tableaux of mind-baffling strangeness but of enduring fascination. I would compare them to metaphysical cryptic crosswords but without the hope of tomorrow's newspaper to offer a solution. Rather like life, they stimulate the imagination without offering any easy answers.*



*Large Interior*  
1965, Painted fibreglass  
& metal wire  
Unique  
27 x 77.4 x 75.8 cm



DAMIEN HIRST  
b.1965

*Carl Plackman taught me at Goldsmiths (1986-89) and we talked about many things. I don't know why, but I was surprised at how easy going and understanding he was. We talked about many things, in a calm clear way; about the existence of a clear universal visual language, and the way that it could be used to communicate ideas much in the way that advertisers manipulate it to sell us things (sadly mostly shit we don't need) and how clever artists can use it in a much more generous way.*

DAMIEN HIRST  
2007

7 Pans  
1987, Household gloss on  
pots and pans  
Unique  
68.5 x 52 x 48 cm



PHILL HOPKINS

b.1961

*Carl once told me that his accountant wouldn't believe that he wanted to claim for a television set, that he'd used in a work, against tax. I like the absurdity of this story.*

*The Giantess and The Tower Block share similar and seemingly irrational theatre found in the work of Carl.*

*The Giantess and  
The Tower Block*  
2018, Emulsion paint, gloss  
paint, varnish, board and  
dolls house steps  
Unique  
57 x 23.5 x 23.5 cm



MICHAEL KENNY RA  
1941 - 1999

*Michael Kenny was first inspired by Dante when, as a young boy in the early 50s, he was "drawn to the beautifully evocative and romantic painting" of Dante and Beatrice by Henry Holliday at the Walker Art Gallery. Over 40 years later in 1994 he completed a series of large drawings based on images from Dante's Inferno, allowing him to pursue - in his words - "relationship between poetry and pictorial imagery - pictorial poesis". In his depiction of the figure in The Waster, Kenny creates an atmosphere of the sheer existential intensity of the human condition and it is in this regard that he and Plackman, as sculptor/draughtsmen, while distinct one from the other, are kindred spirits.*

BRIAN FALCONBRIDGE  
November 2018

*The Waster - Dante's  
Purgatorio Canto XIX  
1996, Mixed media  
Unique  
126 x 160 cm*



BRYAN KNEALE RA  
b.1930

*In 1972 the Royal Academy agreed to let me and my fellow sculptors have the building to put on a major show. We took over the place with a vengeance. Galleries were ruthlessly painted white, marble doorways notwithstanding, turning the whole place into a perfect venue for a huge range of highly diverse and exciting works with most people having an entire gallery.*

*Carl was chosen because there was no doubt in the opinion of the committee that he would make a major contribution, and of course he did just that. In his space he created a hugely complex encyclopaedic work, made up of many interacting pieces of sculpture, cameras etc...the whole constituting an invitation to the observing mind to explore his imagination.*

*Carl was admired and respected both as an artist and as a human being, his gentle sensitive appraisal when teaching has left a lasting influence on all those who had the fortunate experience of meeting him. His works speaks eloquently for itself.*

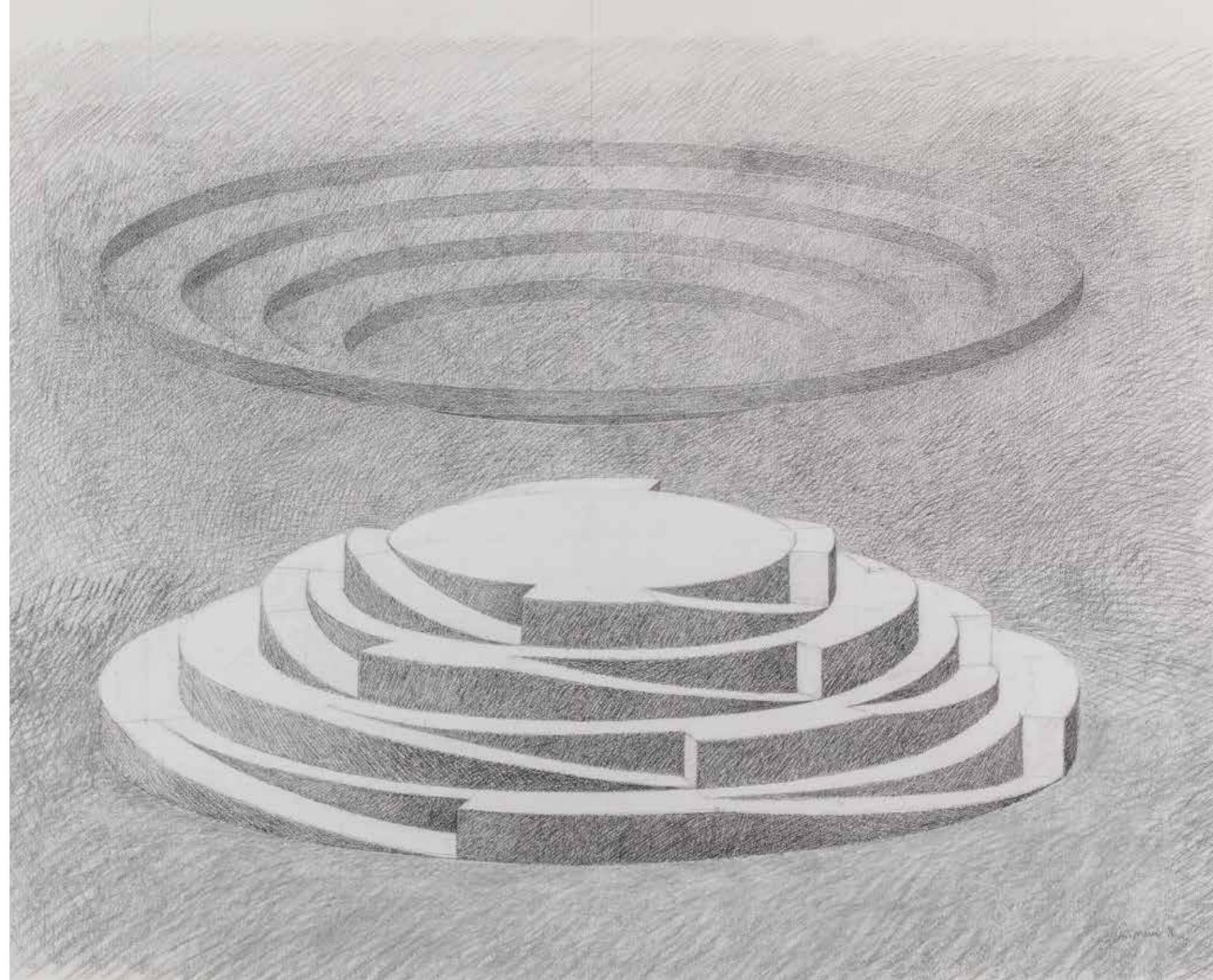
*Spider*  
c. 1996, Painted brass  
Unique  
45 x 18 x 18 cm



JOHN MAINE RA  
b.1942

*There was a strong emphasis on objective drawing at Bristol in the sixties when Carl and I were both students at different times. This took the form of life drawing and studies of objects in space, which became the basis for more personal work. Later at the Royal College of Art we developed individual approaches to drawing, and Carl explored issues of language and the identity of objects, leading to his extraordinary installations. I particularly respond to his enigmatic work combining two and three dimensions.*

*Echo*  
2016, Pencil and conte  
Unique  
110 x 150 cm

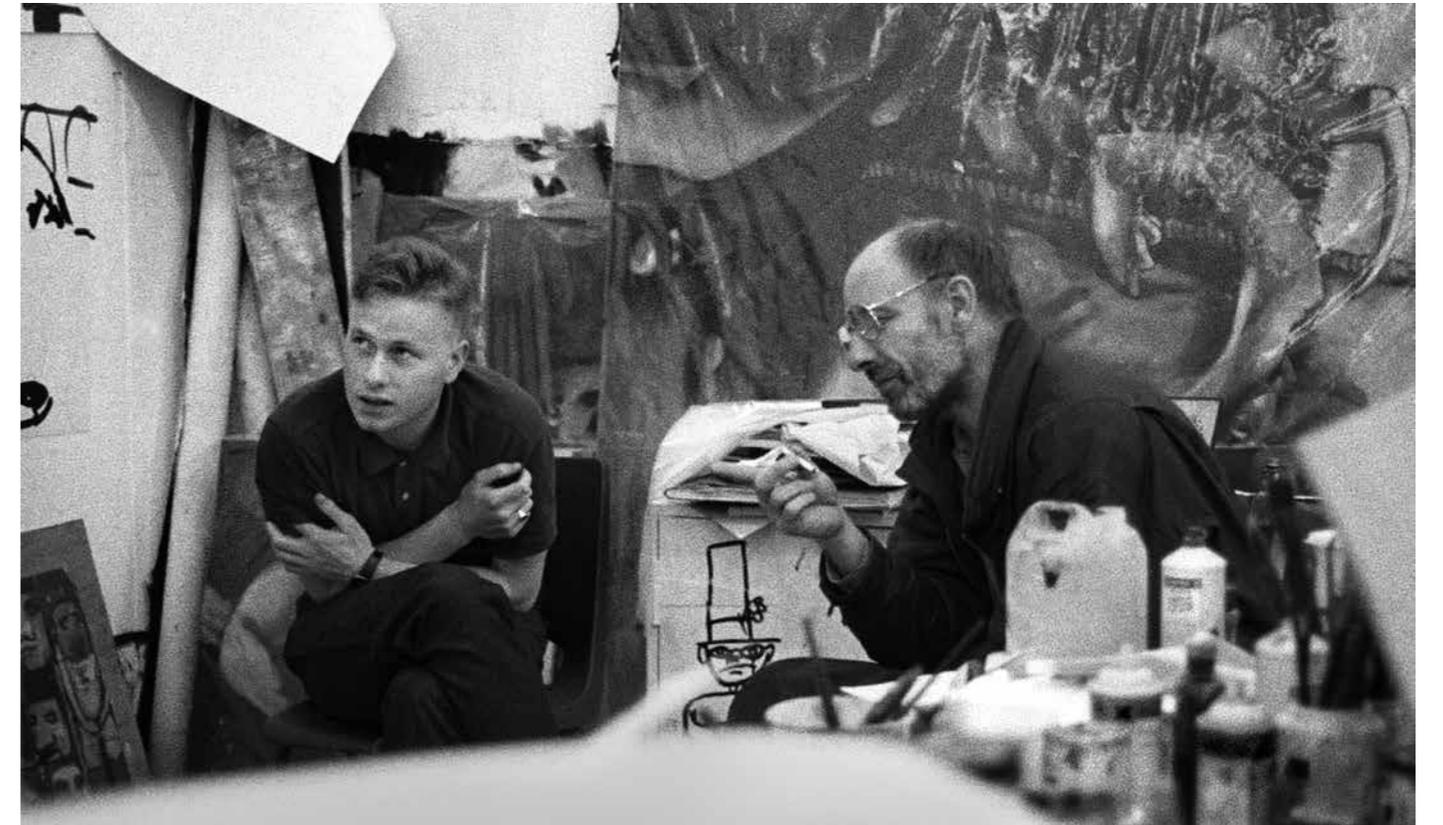


# LALA MEREDITH-VULA b.1966

*This photo is the view I saw from my studio space while studying Fine Art at Goldsmiths, and captures Carl's teaching ethos. The concentration and command in Carl's face and all the while holding a rolled cigarette! It was a time of revolution and freedom with no artistic constraints and many tutors such as Carl treated us as equals. The Fine Art department at Goldsmiths moved shortly after this picture, from the Millard building in Camberwell to New Cross. Someone painted 'Et in Arcadia Ego' in the closing months of the department move - summing up the end of an era.*



(LEFT)  
'Et in Arcadia Ego'  
1987/2018, Black  
and white film  
Edition of 20  
50 x 70 cm



(RIGHT)  
Carl Plackman  
and Peter Kennelly in  
the studio at Goldsmiths,  
Department of Fine Art,  
Millard Building,  
Camberwell 1987.

From the series  
'Et in Arcadia Ego'  
1987/2018, Black  
and white film  
Edition of 20  
50 x 70 cm

MARTIN NAYLOR  
1944 - 2016

*We met and shared through a haze of smoke our first MA year studio at the sculpture school, RCA in 1967. The awkward, but perceptive Professor Bernard Meadows put us side by side. I noted Carl's liking for the imagery of Michael Sandle. I was similar affected. We both recognised this and speedily abandoned it in search of our own visual voices, though the rigorous attitude prevailed.*

*Our practical manner of art making made us firm friends.  
Art thinking being not too far off.*

MARTIN NAYLOR  
2007

*Discarded Sweater  
"THE JIM FARRAR  
SERIES" 1998  
1998, Ink on paper  
Unique  
43x 53 cm*



ALISON WILDING RA  
b.1948

*I selected this work instinctively, not thinking there was any obvious correlation with Carl's sculpture. True, the zinc enclosures are slightly trashed, the metal had been around for decades and I cut up the zinc at a time when I was totally stuck, so re-visiting old material got me going again, and I think Carl would have appreciated me using up old stock, being economical.*

*But I know we would have had a lot to talk about: just what is it about black balloons? They are so un-celebratory, totally joyless, and moreover the tag on each one is inverted like a navel, so is it a balloon or is it now an egg? Balloon, egg, navel, black, - these proposals are all swimming in the same space.*

*Recently this work sparked an on-line spat: someone's assumption that my sculpture was a critique on the cuckoo's lifestyle completely shocked me- because my title is a hook upon which anything can hang and is not the subject of an essay. But inevitably with Carl the subject of cuckoos would be raised: Can we talk about the cuckoo without anthropomorphising it as something awkward and yet powerful, someone out of place?*

*And when did you last hear a cuckoo anyway?*

*Who knows where that conversation would have gone?*

*Cuckoo II*  
2015, Galvanised steel,  
5 cast fibreglass balloons  
Unique  
24 x 33 x 38 cm



# CARL PLACKMAN

## BIOGRAPHY

- 1943 Born in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire  
1947 Family moves to Bath  
1959 - 60 Begins architectural apprenticeship, Bath  
1962 -67 Attends West of England College of Art, Bath  
1967 - 70 Attends Sculpture School, Royal College of Art, London  
1968 Awarded Walter Neurath Drawing Prize (R.C.A)  
1970 Awarded Sculpture Drawing Prize (R.C.A)  
1970 - 99 Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths College of Art, London  
1971 - 81 Lecturer at Ravensbourne College of Art  
1980 Part time lecturer at St Albans College of Fine Art (until 1990), Camberwell School of Art (until 1990) and visiting lecturer at Slade School of Art (until 1986), Reading University, (until 1983), Cardiff College of Art (until 1985) and Central School of Art (for the year).  
1982 - 84 Sits on the Sculpture selection panel at the British School of Rome  
1983 Visiting lecturer at the Art Institute of Chicago, USA  
1983 Selection Panel of Northern Young Contemporaries, Manchester  
1984 - 95 Part time lecturer at Royal Academy Schools Sculpture department  
1984 - 86 Visiting lecturer at Chelsea School of Art  
1985 On selection panel for SOGAT Sculpture Prize Camberwell School of Art; Eastern Arts Exhibition, Laing Gallery, Newcastle and Tolly Cobbold Eastern Arts, 5th National Exhibition.  
1986 - 90 Appointed Co-opted Governor to the Board of Governors at Falmouth School of Art and Cardiff School of Art  
1994 Fine Art Co-ordinator at Goldsmiths College of Art, London  
2002 Begins artist residency in Alayrac, near Cordes, France  
2004 23rd January, Carl dies at the age of sixty

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1977 Felicity Samuel Gallery, London  
1978 Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol  
1979 Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff  
1980 Felicity Samuel Gallery at Seven Dials Gallery, London  
1987 Chisenhale Gallery, London  
1987-88 Huddersfield Art Gallery, West Yorkshire  
2001 Woodlands Art Gallery, London  
2003 *Crooked Light*, Royal West of England Academy, Bristol  
2007 *Beyond Appearances*, Huddersfield Art Gallery  
*Beyond Appearances*, Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston-on-Thames  
2011 *Alternative Universe*, Hales Gallery, London  
2015 *Carl Plackman: Obscure Territories*, Pangolin London

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1969 *Young Contemporaries*, Whitechapel Art Gallery  
1970 *Three Sculptors*, Royal College of Art  
*New Sculpture '70*, Arts Council Travelling Exhibition  
1972 *British Sculptors '72*, Royal Academy  
*British Sculptors '72: Drawings*, Redfern Gallery  
*Sculpture in the Open Air*, Holland Park, London  
*3 Sculptors*, Serpentine Gallery  
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford  
1973 *Magic and Strong Medicine*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool  
1974 *Critic's Choice*, Tooth's Gallery, London  
*British Sculpture - Attitudes to Drawing*, Sunderland Art Gallery  
1975 *British Art of the Mid-70's*, Frankfurt & Cologne, Germany  
*Contemporary British Drawings*, XIII Bienal de São Paulo  
*Body and Soul*, Walker Art Gallery  
1976 *Arte Inglese Oggi 1960-1976*, Palazzo Reale, Milan, Italy  
1976-78 *Recent British Art*, British Council touring exhibition (Europe)  
1977 *Works on Paper, The Contemporary Art Society's Gifts to the Public Galleries 1952-77*, Royal Academy, London  
1978 *Scale for Sculpture*, Serpentine Gallery  
*20th Century Drawings*, Chelsea College of Art

1979 *Sculptor's Drawings*, The Minorities, Colchester  
 1980 *Whitechapel Open*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London  
 1980-81 *The Human Factor*, Arts Council Touring Exhibition  
 1981 *British Sculpture of 20th Century Part 2 'Symbol & Imagination' (1951-1980)*  
 Whitechapel Art Gallery  
 1982 *Whitechapel Open Exhibition*  
*Plackman/Kardia recent sculpture and drawings*, A.A. Gallery, London  
 1987 *Athena Art Exhibition*, Barbican Centre  
 1988 *Fire and Metal*, Goldsmith's Gallery, London  
 1989 *A Spiritual Dimension*, Arts Council Touring Exhibition  
 1990 *It's a Still Life*, Arts Council Touring Exhibition  
 1991 *Art for Amnesty : 30th Anniversary*, Bonhams, London  
*Bodylines 3 Artists - 3 Installations*, Chisenhale Gallery, London  
*The Green Contemporary Art Exhibition*, Phillips Fine Art, London  
 1991-92 10th Cleveland (U.K.) International Drawing Exhibition  
 1992 *A Marked Difference*, International Drawing Exhibition, Maatschappij Arti et Amicitiae,  
 Amsterdam  
 1993 *Flesh and Blood*, Proteus Artists Network, International Exhibition, Lancaster  
 1996 *Life Drawing*, The Space, Isle of Dogs, London  
 1996 *Whitechapel Open*, WhiteChapel Art Gallery, London  
 1996 & 97 *Sculptor's Choice*, Royal Academy  
 1997 & 98 *Drawings for Domestic Spaces*, Derbyshire Arts Festival  
 1999 *Paperworks*, Royal West of England Academy, Bristol  
 2000 *Live in Your Head (Concept & Experiment in Britain 1965-75)*, Whitechapel Art Gallery  
 2001 Arts Festival Hamburg, Germany  
 2001-02 *Out of Line*, Drawings from the Arts Council Collection - Touring Exhibition  
 2004 *Summer Exhibition*, Royal Academy  
 2008 *Anxious Object*, Store Gallery, London  
 2009 *Open Studios*, Chisenhale Studio, London  
 2010 *From Floor to Sky*, P3 Gallery, London  
 2011 *United Enemies*, Leeds Art Gallery  
 2012 *Sculptor's Drawings*, Pangolin London  
 2015 *Sculptor's Prints and Drawings*, Pangolin London  
 2016 *Spring Showcase*, Pangolin London  
 2018 *Decade*, Pangolin London  
 2019 *Carl Plackman & His Circle*, Pangolin London

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Tate Collection, London  
 Arts Council of England  
 British Council  
 British Museum, London  
 Henry Moore Institute  
 Huddersfield Art Gallery  
 Victoria and Albert Museum  
 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff  
 Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia  
 Eastern Arts Association  
 British Medal Society  
 The Courtauld Institute, London  
 The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester  
 Bury Art Museum, Lancashire  
 Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry  
 The Ingram Collection

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#### QUOTES

- p.14 - Natalie Rudd, *Carl Plackman: Sculpture, Drawing, Writing*, Huddersfield Art Gallery 2007, p.31  
p.17 - Carl Plackman, Notes from *Back to Front*, 1973  
p.21 - Carl Plackman, *Carl Plackman: Sculpture, Drawing, Writing*, Huddersfield Art Gallery 2007, p.124  
p.30 - *Carl Plackman: Sculpture, Drawing, Writing*, Huddersfield Art Gallery 2007, p.126  
p.33 - Norbert Lynton, 'Carl Plackman' *Arnolfini Review*, Bristol, Nov/Dec 1978  
p.34 - Jon Wood, *Carl Plackman: Sculpture, Drawing, Writing*, Huddersfield Art Gallery 2007, p.13  
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p.66 - Bryan Kneale, *Carl Plackman: Sculpture, Drawing, Writing*, Huddersfield Art Gallery 2007, p.40  
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#### PHOTOGRAPHY

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