

PANGGOLIN

LONDON



TWO IN ONE

CHARLOTTE MAYER AND ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF

It is always a pleasure to see the work of two artists of very different backgrounds and influences juxtaposed in such a way as to allow us new insights into their respective creative projects. The differences and contrasts between the work of Charlotte Mayer and Almuth Tebbenhoff will be immediately apparent, but the correspondence in their sensibilities reveals itself more gradually. Their shared instinct for alighting on the underlying patterns and harmonies within and beyond the natural world is one of the many rewarding things to emerge from this exhibition.

Charlotte Mayer and Almuth Tebbenhoff were both born on the continent of Europe, Mayer in Prague, Tebbenhoff in Fürstenau in north west Germany. Both studied at London art colleges and have lived and worked in London for most of their adult lives. Although they have participated in the same group shows on previous occasions, the present Pangolin exhibition is the first time they have exhibited together side by side. Having known one another for several years, each sees this is an opportunity to speak independently while at the same time entering into a fruitful dialogue with a kindred spirit.

One could point to many similarities in their working methods, for both sculptors are experienced in a wide range of techniques and both continue to engage with diverse materials. More important, however, is their common belief in sculpture's propensity to express deeper human emotions. Like all artists, their creative endeavours are inspired by what they see around them - from Mayer registering spirals, shadows and coiling forms in the animal kingdom and in wind and water; to Tebbenhoff's abiding interest in the cosmos and our position in the wider universe - but the works they create from those meditative engagements have a resonance beyond mere representation.

Nature may never surrender its innermost essence, but it continues to draw Charlotte Mayer into a fertile collaboration with its shapes and surfaces. Her work testifies to a desire to explore the fleeting, evanescent forms of what the writer W.G. Sebald memorably described as "the shadow-filled edifice of the world." She is receptive to the smallest vibrations in the visual field, whether it be the torsion of a crow's neck as it turns to pluck a worm from the lawn; rippling blades of grass agitated by wind; or the spiralling whorls of an ammonite's archaic carapace. When she enters her studio it is as if she herself becomes a kind of vessel from which flow elegant translations of the abstract forms she has stored in her visual memory. These forms are universal; we look at them and see our own experiences echoed there.

Despite the apparent structural complexity of some of Mayer's sculpture - pieces such as *Scintilla*, *Solar* and *Kasta*, for example, comprise multiple conjoined elements - all her work represents a harmonious marriage of idea, material and technique. There is a discipline and constraint in her approach to sculpture, perhaps evidence that she fully absorbed the succinct mantra of her former tutor Frank Dobson - "Keep it simple."



She knows just how far to take it and exactly when to stop. This also seems to manifest itself in her ability to recruit the most humble materials into her sculptural schemes. To her delight she discovered that dried apple peelings (hardly the currency of the traditional sculpture studio) could be woven into delicate spiralling forms. This adds a layer of playful magic to the work entitled *Release*, whose open, coiling volute retains the memory of the peel from which the original maquette was formed. It is extraordinary that such a simple process can ultimately express so much vibrant energy.

Decades of experience have bestowed on Mayer not only an unerring sense of which colour and texture will best suit which material and form, but also an awareness of the longer tradition of European sculpture. The dynamism that emanates from the stainless steel work entitled *Kasta* evidences her sensitivity to techniques and materials, while nodding reverently towards Gabo and the constructivists. It is a static form and yet one senses its latent propensity to hinge and fold into new configurations. Void is as vital as mass in communicating that quality. Similarly, *Selene*, *Sea Pod*, and *Luna*, all of which draw on arrangements of simple crescent-shaped elements, hint at a poetic awareness of the interdependence of the moon and the sea. *Sea Pod* is at once a marine organism and a strange lunar fossil.

The idea of the universe as a self-ordering whole is also a central concern in the work of Almuth Tebbenhoff. Like Mayer, Tebbenhoff has mastered many of the hard-won skills of the traditional sculptor. Her facility at welding steel and modelling clay are well established. Her more recent excursions into marble carving in the Tuscan town of Pietrasanta have further expanded her repertoire of materials.

(Above)
CHARLOTTE MAYER
Sea Pod
Bronze
Edition of 7
17cm high

(Right)
Charlotte Mayer with
Release wax





As the marble pieces in the exhibition clearly show, her regular Italian sojourns have given Tebbenhoff greater versatility in expressing her vision of humanity's place in the cosmos. The work entitled *Portal*, for example, reveals how even a recalcitrant substance like marble can be made to suggest a certain cloud-like insubstantiality.

Through her work she strives to see beyond the seen, to create forms that hint at concepts above the material world that might otherwise never occur to us. The idea of a fossilised cloud sounds something of an oxymoron until we encounter Tebbenhoff's *Cloud Fossil*, which reveals the fundamental importance of absence within the grammar of sculpture. One senses a presence evaporated or drained away.

Tebbenhoff often settles on a shape or form and proceeds to explore its full syntactical potential through multiplication and variation, testing the extent to which it will logically express ideas beyond itself. The boat - or husk-shaped elements that make up *Hampelmann (I, II and III)* is an example of this approach, here evoking a sense of arrested sequential movement, there hinting at the limits of sculptural balance.

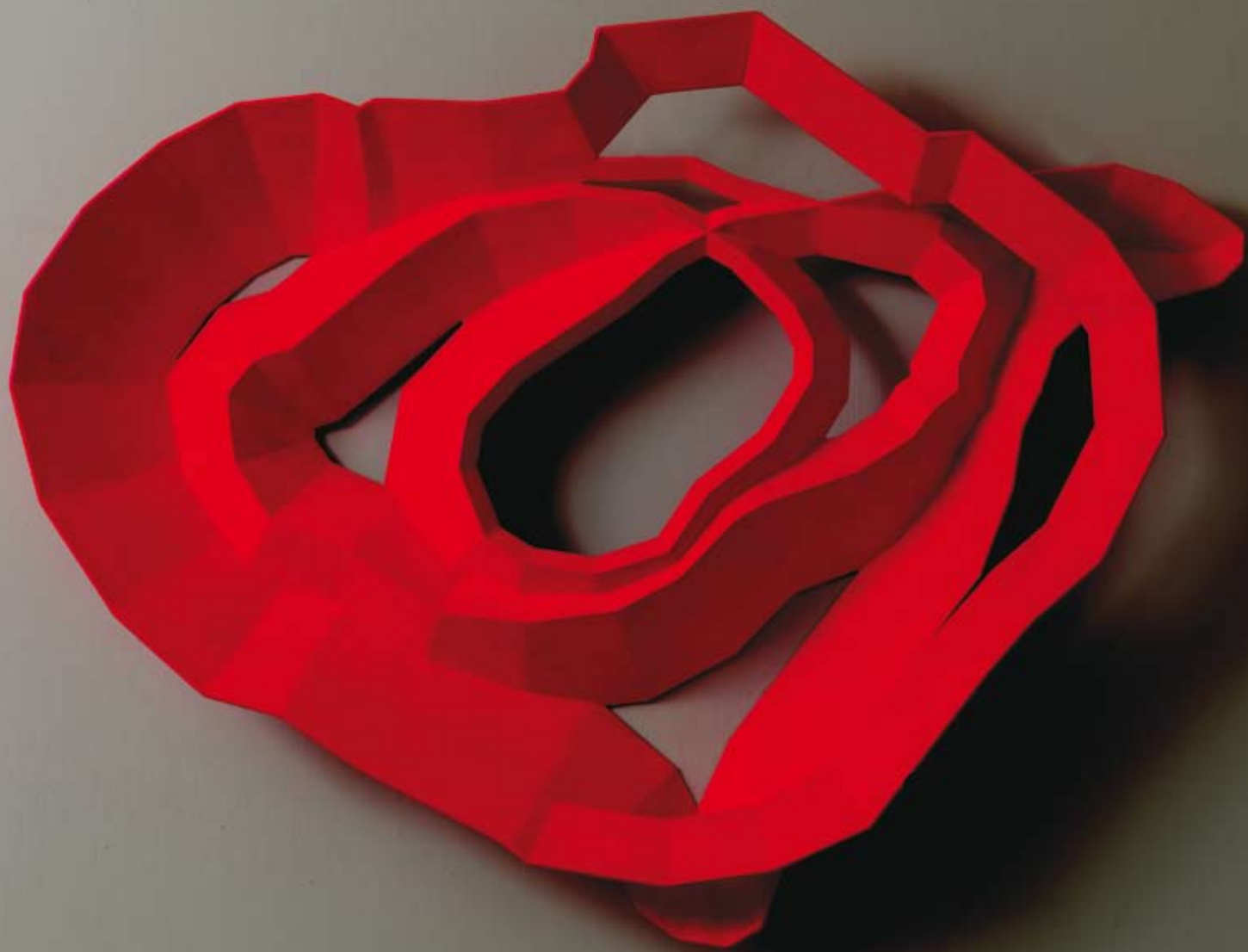
When we last met, Almuth urged me to seek out some demonstrations of the Belousov-Zhabotinsky experiment - a biological reaction in a petri dish - which had inspired some of her recent work. It is a measure of the lightness of touch she brings to everything she does that instead of disappearing down the rabbit-hole of non-equilibrium thermodynamics she instead used the experiment's mesmerising concentric circles as a springboard for her *Pocket Universe* series. These miniature solar systems in bronze and clay have a lovely haptic quality as they sit in the palm of your hand. If the orrery was the quintessential Enlightenment contraption, Tebbenhoff's *Pocket Universe* might be seen as its pataphysical progeny, a talismanic toy urging us to dream about the mysteries of the universe.

Both Mayer and Tebbenhoff see sculpture as more than merely a process of making three-dimensional objects. It is a language through which to express the spiritual dimension of their lives. For Mayer, who has experienced great sadness in her past, sculpture is essentially affirmative, a way of communicating hope and meaning at times when both might seem lacking. Her public projects, such as the *Tree of Life* made for the North London Hospice, have profound personal significance, and emerge from a conviction that art nourishes and strengthens the soul. The objects she is exhibiting here offer an opportunity to see those convictions expressed on a smaller scale.

Tebbenhoff too believes in art's propensity to counter the overwhelming vastness of the universe by affirming its underlying harmonic structures. "The infinity of cosmic space reduces us to mere atoms," she has said. "I mean my sculptures to be emblematic of a world built on foundations of love and compassion."

ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Pocket Universe II
Bronze
Edition of 12
12.5cm high

TOM FLYNN



CATALOGUE

ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF

Pink

Fabricated steel, painted

Unique

75cm wide

CHARLOTTE MAYER
Turning II
Bronze
Edition of 9
22cm high



ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Hampelmann I
Bronze
Unique
32cm high





CHARLOTTE MAYER
Turning
Painted wood
Unique
104cm high

ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Rise - work in progress
Santa Croce marble
Unique
110cm high



CHARLOTTE MAYER
Solar
Bronze
Edition of 8
106 cm high



ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
From Dusk to Dawn
Fabricated steel, painted
Unique
100cm high







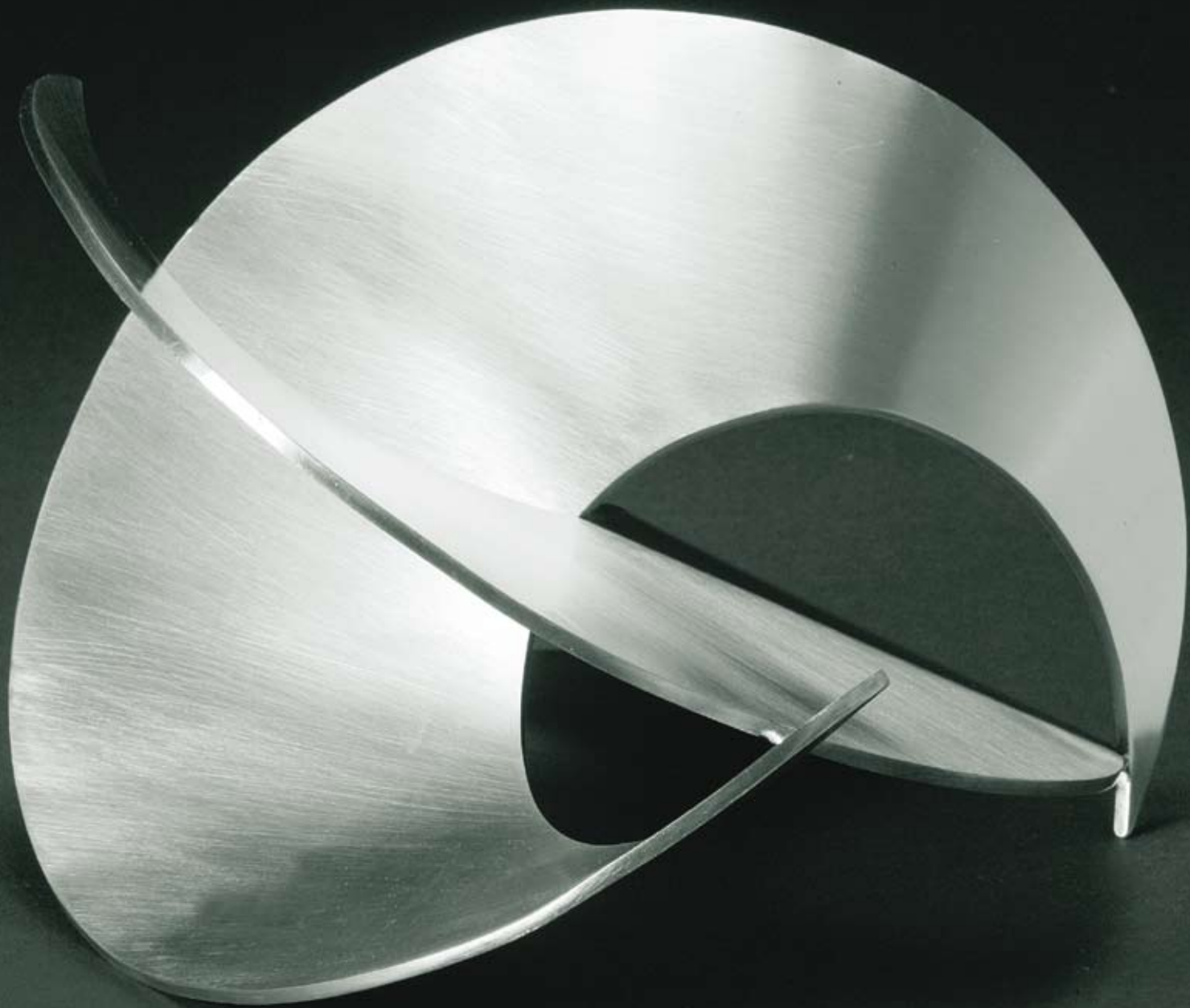
(Left)
CHARLOTTE MAYER
Scintilla (detail)
Bronze
Edition of 8
45 cm high

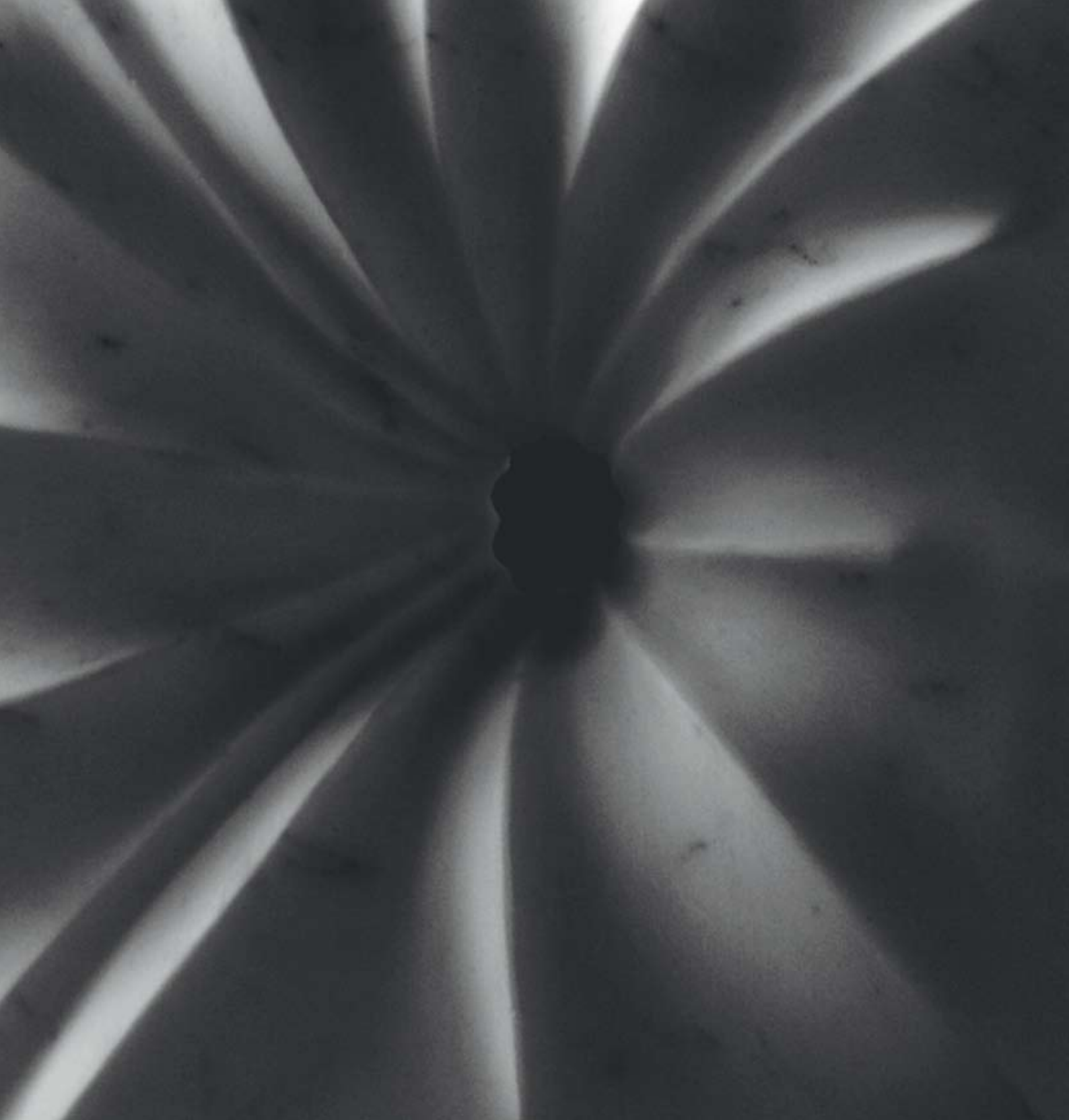
(Above)
Scintilla
Bronze
Edition of 8
45cm high



ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Five Star
Fabricated steel, painted
Unique
250cm high

CHARLOTTE MAYER
Moon Flip
Stainless steel
Edition of 6
16cm high







(Left)
ALMUTHTEBBENHOFF
Portal (detail)
Statuario marble
Unique
48.5cm high

(Above)
Portal
Statuario marble
Unique
48.5cm high

CHARLOTTE MAYER
Release
Bronze
Edition of 8
49.8cm high



ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Hampelmann III
Bronze
Unique
26cm high



CHARLOTTE MAYER

Luna

Bronze

Edition of 8

95cm high





ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Giocoliere
Statuario marble
Unique
39cm high

CHARLOTTE MAYER
Flight
Bronze
Edition of 12
40cm high



ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Hampelmann II
Bronze
Unique
39.5cm high



CHARLOTTE MAYER
Kasta
Stainless steel
Edition of 6
71cm high



ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Yellow Crack
Fabricated steel, painted
Unique
375cm wide







(Left)
CHARLOTTE MAYER
Sea Scarf (detail)
Bronze
Edition of 6
35cm high

(Above)
Sea Scarf
Bronze
Edition of 6
35cm high

ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Core
Ceramic
Unique
14.5cm high





CHARLOTTE MAYER
Wind
Bronze
Edition of 8
58cm high

ALMUTH TEBBENHOFF
Stacked Pocket Universe
Bronze
Edition of 12
39cm high



CHARLOTTE MAYER
Selene
Sterling silver
Edition of 12
15cm high



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pangolin London would like to primarily thank Charlotte Mayer and Almuth Tebbenhoff for taking part in *Two in One*. Our thanks also go to Tom Flynn for writing the introduction to the catalogue and offering an insight into the work of these two talented sculptors.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the Pangolin Editions team whose assistance has been invaluable, to Steve Russell as always for his beautiful photography and finally to everyone else who has helped in making *Two in One* a reality.

PHOTO CREDITS

Photographs of works by: Almuth Tebbenhoff p. 2 & 17 are taken by Keara McMartin and p. 28 & 36 by Sebastiano Leta.

All other photographs have been taken by Steve Russell

Published to accompany the exhibition:

Two in One: Charlotte Mayer and Almuth Tebbenhoff

14 March - 5 May 2012

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Printed in Century Gothic and Corbel

Designed by Pangolin London

Printed by Healeys Printers

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