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PANGOLIN LONDON

London's dedicated sculpture gallery presents

Ralph Brown at Eighty: Early Decades Revisited

18 March – 3 May 2009



Ralph Brown, *Queen*, 2008, Bronze

Pangolin London presents a major show of the early work of celebrated sculptor Ralph Brown, the first in over two decades. Born in Leeds in 1928 Brown was the younger contemporary of the eminent group of Yorkshire sculptors that included Henry Moore, Kenneth Armitage and Barbara Hepworth.

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LONDON

Kings Place
90 York Way
London
N1 9AG

020 7520 1480

Like Moore, who befriended him and encouraged him by buying his work, Brown's art is deeply rooted in the figurative tradition. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, when abstraction prevailed in British sculpture, Brown remained faithful to the human figure and he has long stood out among his contemporaries as a master of human anatomy.

Brown's ability to capture the human form and condition through modelling is truly outstanding and is in many ways absolutely unique. This exhibition hopes that through revisiting the early decades of Brown's work we will appreciate once more an artist who has for too long been overlooked.

Brown's sculptures can be seen as enigmatic contradictions, they are shocking yet sensuous, savage yet imbued with a humanist concern for the pathos of the human condition. Their surfaces pulsate with an often erotic energy with clefts and folds, pits and creases, which contrary to popular depiction, explore sculpting the body from the inside out. The graphic genital imagery or 'erotic equivalent forms' as Brown terms them, were in the 1950s and 60s truly shocking. His sculptures had to be removed from exhibitions and photographs blacked out in catalogues. The ox's gaping body cavity in *The Meat Porters* is as obvious a metaphor as Sarah Lucas' *Chicken Knickers*. The *Tiresias Head* and *Female Head* pre-empt the Chapman brothers' supplementation of genitalia for facial features decades later.

Not all Brown's sculptures convey such forceful sexuality however. His *Swimmers* series are immensely graceful in their weightlessness. His *Running Girl with Wheel* is a playful and touching childhood moment captured and his *Tragic Group* a mournful but dignified response to the horrific revelations after the Second World War of Nazi death camps.

Ralph Brown was elected a Royal Academician in 1972 and his work can be found in many public collections including the Arts Council of Great Britain, Bristol City Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, The National Museum of Wales and the Tate Collection.



QUOTES

'So much of Brown's sculpture is his search for equivalents, in formal terms, for sensual experiences.'

Denis Farr *Ralph Brown Sculpture and Drawings*

'...a female back is a beautiful thing – an immensely complicated shape, full of power and tension... without it being too obtrusive... I know a lot about the human figure, but I can't know all about it, no one can.'

Ralph Brown in conversation with Denis Farr February 1988

'I don't know whether it is true or not, but in England, north country people are looked upon as being very matter-of-fact, practical, hard-headed people. This may have something to do – I don't know; it's just a fanciful idea, probably – but this may have something to do with the fact that in England now there are some twenty or thirty young sculptors who've cropped up since the war; four or five of them are certainly Yorkshire. There's me, there's Barbara Hepworth, there's [Kenneth] Armitage, there's Ralph Brown and [Leslie] Thornton.'

Henry Moore, from Warren Forman, *5 British Sculptors*

EDITOR'S NOTES

Pangolin London is closely affiliated with Pangolin Editions, Europe's leading sculpture foundry, casting sculpture for an international clientele to any scale, and is one of the last foundries still practising the traditional skills of lost wax block investment alongside the latest technologies

Gallery information and opening times:

Pangolin London, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9AG

(020) 7520 1480

polly@pangolinlondon.com

www.pangolinlondon.com

Tuesday – Sunday 10am-6pm, Monday by appointment only

Prices range from £1,500 to £100,000.

A full colour catalogue will accompany this exhibition.

IMAGE SHEET - For press information please contact Polly Bielecka
Pangolin London 020 7520 1480

Ralph Brown, 17 March – 3 May 2009. Photography: Steve Russell.



RALPH BROWN
Female Head, 1963



RALPH BROWN
Tragic Group, 1953



RALPH BROWN
Ox-Carriers, 1957-60



RALPH BROWN
Clochard, 1955-56



RALPH BROWN
Woman Bathing, 1960



RALPH BROWN
Swimming, 1959-60

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