

BOWMAN SCULPTURE X CANOPY COLLECTIONS

6—27 MAY 2022

Bowman Sculpture

6 Duke's Street

St James's

London SW1Y 6BN



When Matter Becomes Form

An exhibition with works by Robert Adams, Joanna Allen, Hanneke Beaumont, Maurice Blik, Helaine Blumenfeld, Richard J. Butler, William Cobbing, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Barbara Hepworth, Auguste Rodin and Emily Young.

Co-curated by Mica Bowman (Bowman Sculpture) and Louise Chignac (Canopy Collections).

Bowman Sculpture and Canopy Collections are delighted to announce their joint exhibition, *When Matter Becomes Form*, to open on Friday 6 May 2022. This exhibition will be presented at Bowman Sculpture's iconic gallery space in the heart of St James's, London, and will be their first collaboration with an upcoming gallery who represent emerging and mid-career artists.

When Matter Becomes Form will bring together a diverse selection of artworks by eleven artists from the 19th century to the present day, whose work is rooted in the tradition of sculpture. Conjuring up an atmosphere of contemplation, the exhibition will be an unmissable review of how artists transform raw matter, be it clay, stone, pigments or metal, into unique works of art. It will examine the materials themselves and how they are manipulated and transfigured by the hands of the artists to become visceral artworks.

Celebrating the contemporary, the modern and the classic in an intuitive manner, this exhibition does not aim to be an academic survey but a tactile experience. Visitors will be invited to discover parallels and differences in the way artists have embraced their medium to produce pieces that revel in and reveal the complexity of their own making. The selected works will embody notable examples of the artists' masterful use of materials, tools and techniques to create connections between their distinctive repertoire of forms. On display for the first time will be Richard J. Butler's series of 'figure' paintings, new sculptures by Hanneke Beaumont and Emily Young, as well as Joanna Allen's first series of bronze sculptures and a special digital installation. Transcending epochs, the works will cohabit within the exhibition with no emphasis on chronology, while materials such as onyx, pigment, bronze, terracotta and jesmonite will be found in their raw form throughout the exhibition.

When Matter Becomes Form is co-curated by Mica Bowman (Bowman Sculpture) and Louise Chignac (Canopy Collections). With Bowman specialising in European sculpture from the 19th century to the present day and Canopy Collections sourcing exclusively contemporary works, this exhibition will provide a refreshing analysis of how the past subconsciously influences the future of art and how the contemporary is still in dialogue with past eras. Working closely, the young curators will provide an original insight into the range of works presented by both galleries, researching and, in turn, highlighting the theme of matter and form through a collaborative and atemporal approach.

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The Artists

Robert Adams (1917–1984, British)

Called “the neglected genius of post-war British sculpture” by critics, Adams’ affiliation with his fellow English carvers, such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, extended only as far as an initial desire to carve in stone and wood. Unlike his contemporaries, Adams did not appear to show much interest in the exploration of the human form or its relationship to the landscape, embracing instead undiluted abstraction. Adams experienced his most prolific years of sculpting between 1950 and 1980, when he became one of the foremost sculptors of the British avant-garde in the post-war period. His exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1952 cemented his name in the ‘Geometry of Fear’ movement alongside Lynn Chadwick, Geoffrey Clarke and Eduardo Paolozzi, while his approach to sculpture shifted from carving to working in bronze, welded iron and cast concrete. Ten years later, Adams presented at the British Pavilion a series of welded screens, which now form a significant part of the artist’s lasting legacy. *Untitled (Screen Form)* from 1962 is a striking example of Adams’ experimentation with light and pierced forms, demonstrating his commitment to not forcing his sculpture upon its environment, but rather allowing its rough, unobtrusive surfaces to become an elegant, slightly distorted tableau.

Adams’ works are housed in prominent collections around the world, including Tate Britain, England; São Paulo Museum of Modern Art, Brazil; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Smithsonian Institute, Washington. He also completed several large-scale sculptures that have become important landmarks, including at The Custom House, UK; Shell Mex House, UK; and Musiktheater im Revier, Germany.

Joanna Allen (b. 1969, UK. Lives in the UK)

Working with bronze, marble, clay, and plaster, Allen’s unique style is characterised by the combination of figurative, abstract, and conceptual thinking, along with exploration into questions of self, gender, culture and society. Her use of clay and plaster stems partially from her academic background, but mostly from the malleability of these materials and the visceral connection she translates from her hands to the finished pieces. Allen’s creative experimentation with colour and light also gives her pieces a rich, multidimensional feel. She eschews traditional plaster for building plaster and uses different blends of oils to create a unique patina and retain inimitable detailing. The essence of her work is typically raw and emotional, addressing such timely themes as the portrayal of gender in society and art, human consumption of the planet, and the deep connection between the self and the material.

Allen’s works are exhibited in museums and private collections throughout the UK, Europe, and the USA. Her sculptures have earned accolades from The Portrait Sculptors Society, The Royal Society of British Artists, and the European Museum of Modern Art. In 2020, her evocative bust, *Chronic*, was added to the European Museum of Modern Art’s permanent collection.

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Hanneke Beaumont (b. 1947, The Netherlands. Lives in Belgium)

At first glance, Beaumont's sculptures are eye-catching, monumental human figures crafted from terracotta clay or cast in bronze or iron. Their true meaning and inspiration, however, are found far deeper beneath these raw and natural surfaces. The inner workings of Beaumont's sculptures allow for a universal approach to humanity's psychological condition of a constant battle between self-doubt and confidence, contentment and yearning, strength and fragility. Hanneke strives to represent the human being, regardless of age, gender, what they do or where they come from. She believes that some feelings and experiences are universal to mankind and wishes to express these through her sculptures, depicting the same figure each time but making subtle changes to her subjects' posture and body language. She does not work from a live model but rather has created an imagined face of mankind. All of her works are open to interpretation and require the viewer to engage with them on a personal and subjective level.

Beaumont's work has been exhibited at the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park in the USA, the Museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague, the Fondation Benedictine in Fécamp, France, and the Baker Museum in Florida, among others. She is particularly well-known for her monumental installations in Brussels, such as *Stepping Forward* in front of the European Council building, *Le Départ* at Brussels Airport and *Le Courage* at the entrance to Erasmus Hospital.

Maurice Blik (b. 1939, The Netherlands. Lives in the UK)

A survivor of the Holocaust, Blik has overcome the traumas of his early life and focused his energy on creating sculptures that evoke movement, freedom and life. In the 1980s, after having an extensive career in Art Education, teaching at all levels from Primary to Post Graduate, he began experimenting with clay, subsequently rediscovering his passion and talent for the medium. Sculpture began to slowly materialise itself in Blik's life as a form of therapy and the expression of sub-conscious discourse with past memories. Blik uses clay as his preferred medium for sculpting; for him, it represents the beginning of time. As Prometheus created mankind from the earth, so does the feeling of wet clay encapsulate the birth of a new creation. The physical act of sculpting, squeezing the clay through his fingers and shaping the features of his figures with his hands allows him to connect past memories with his daily life.

Blik's status as one of art history's most prominent sculptors was cemented in 1996, when he was elected President of the Royal British Society of Sculptors, shortly before becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. His works are part of important private and institutional collections around the world, including Middlesex University, UK; Chandler Hospital, University of Kentucky, USA; and the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, UK. Blik recently released his autobiography, entitled *The Art of Survival*.

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The Artists

Helaine Blumenfeld (b. 1942, UK. Lives in the UK)

Hailed by the *Financial Times* as 'the Henry Moore of the future', Blumenfeld is now established as one of the most accomplished and respected figures in contemporary sculpture. After studying philosophy in New York and Oxford, she moved to Paris in the late 1960s to sculpt and became a pupil of Ossip Zadkine. She returned to England in 1973 and exhibited the same year at Kettle's Yard in Cambridge. 1978 marked a turning point in Blumenfeld's work when she first visited Pietrasanta in Italy and started carving marble. In 1985, she had a joint exhibition with Henry Moore at the Alex Rosenberg Gallery in New York entitled *Moore / Blumenfeld: a Dialogue*. Blumenfeld has been acknowledged as a master of both bronze and marble, with a career that spans over five decades. In 2007, she was the first woman to receive the prestigious award Il Premio Pietrasanta e la Versilia Nel Mondo, adding her name to the list of winners of this honour including Botero, Pomodoro and Marc Quinn. A year later, The Royal British Society of Sculptors held a major retrospective of her work, and in 2011 Blumenfeld was awarded an honorary OBE. Similarly to Moore, Blumenfeld's sculptures are inspired by nature and organic shapes. The forms she creates are abstractions of humanity, either in form or in nature and are inspired by her philosophy on life and her own personal experiences. The undulating shapes she creates in stone, wood or bronze encapsulate emotion, movement and spirituality.

Blumenfeld's public commissions include the monumental marble sculptures *Tempesta* at The Lancasters overlooking Hyde Park in London, which was installed in 2012, as well as *Spirit of Life* which was exhibited on Park Lane in London in 2014. Her most ambitious work to date is a monumental bronze titled *Fortuna* which was commissioned by London's Canary Wharf Group and is now on public display as part of their growing public art collection located at Jubilee Park.

Richard J. Butler (b. 1986, UK. Lives in the UK)

Drawing inspiration from ancient art and mythology, Butler's alluring paintings skirt the boundary between figuration and abstraction, painting and sculpture. Constructed of intricate surfaces built up in layers of grated pastel and dust, his work often depicts figures and silhouettes that seem to dissolve within vast colour fields. Over the past seven years, the artist has developed a unique technique that consists of pressing large blankets onto the still wet surface, leaving a systematic imprint on the canvas whilst distorting the image. When viewed from a distance, recognisable forms appear while up-close, miniature abstract landscapes abound, creating sensual and hallucinatory surfaces that explore painting's illusionistic and sculptural potential. Butler's latest series of 'figure' paintings are on display for the first time as part of this exhibition.

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Butler's work is held in private collections in the UK, France and Belgium. He has exhibited with Hannah Barry Gallery, London; Modernity Stockholm, London; J. Hammond Projects, London; Kreuzberg Pavilion, Berlin; KARST, Plymouth and ATTIC, Brussels. In 2015, he contributed to the inaugural edition of the Art Night festival in London with his very first series of large-scale canvases.

William Cobbing (b. 1974, UK. Lives in the UK)

Starting from a sculptural sensibility, William Cobbing's art practice encompasses various media, including video, photography and installation. In his work, performative encounters are devised with material such as clay in which the protagonists are engaged in a repetitive and absurd cycle of manipulating formless surfaces. His works allude to concepts of entropy, underlining the extent to which earthly material is irreversibly dispersed, giving rise to a definitive blurring of the boundaries between the body and the world. The works on display include ceramic masks and large-scale hand sculptures, which were completed in the summer 2021 during the artist's residency at the prestigious ceramic centre EKWC in The Netherlands.

Cobbing's work is held in international collections including the Wellcome Trust, London; NOMAS Foundation, Rome; MONA Museum of Old and New Art, Tasmania; Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University, UK and Bouwfonds Art Collection, The Netherlands. He has exhibited with the Hayward Gallery, London; Tate Liverpool; Camden Arts Centre, London; TENT, Rotterdam; Studio Voltaire, London; Keramiek Museum Princessehof, The Netherlands and The Issey Miyake Foundation, Tokyo.

Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904, French)

Gérôme was one of the most influential French artists of the 19th century, renowned for his Orientalist paintings. His career was defined by his extensive travelling: the encounters in Northern Africa and the Near East were especially influential in the development of his oeuvre and artistic language. His debut at the Paris Salon caused a sensation with *The Cockfight* (1846), which resulted in the painting being purchased by the State, now in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay. From the 1870s onwards Gérôme devoted himself to sculpture. He would go on to say that his fascination of the human body slowly and subconsciously influenced his decision to turn to this new medium. Gérôme never stopped innovating his sculptural style and would often combine ivory, marble and gilt, silvered or patinated bronze in his works.

The work exhibited here is a rare version of Gérôme's model *Nude Unveiling*. It is believed to have been one of the three marbles inventoried in the artist's atelier in 1904, two years after his death. The sculpture's composition was inspired by one his paintings from 1859, *Le roi Candaules*, in which the ancient Lydian king

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Candaules is seduced by his wife, while his lieutenant Gyges awaits in the doorway for the right moment to enter the room and stab him to death. Gérôme decided to re-invent his model, producing a marble version of it, which seems to develop the composition of the female figure in the painting. *Nude Unveiling* is a sensual work, which is not tied to a specific iconographic programme, allowing the viewer to focus on the artist's masterful carving of the marble.

Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975, British)

One of the most influential sculptors of the mid-20th century, Hepworth is renowned for her lyrical forms and feeling for materials. In 1919 she enrolled in the Leeds School of Art where she befriended fellow student Henry Moore. Their lifelong friendship and reciprocal influence were important factors in the parallel development of their careers. Central to Barbara Hepworth's art is an engagement with the raw elements of nature. The texture of stone, the coincidence of tree branches, the rhythmic movement of the tide, and even the formal quality of the night sky were formative influences upon her. Hepworth's earliest works were naturalistic with simplified features, however, as purely formal elements gradually gained greater importance, her later sculptures became almost entirely abstract. During the late 1930s and 40s, she concentrated on the counterplay between mass and space, with her works becoming increasingly open, hollowed out, and perforated, while she accented and defined the sculptural voids by stretching strings taut across their openings. Having dedicated the first two decades of her career to 'direct carving' in stone and wood, Hepworth turned to bronze relatively late. She began to have works cast in bronze during the late 1950s and quickly discovered that the versatility and strength of this medium considerably broadened both the range and scale of her work.

On display in this exhibition, *Disc with Strings (Sun)* was first exhibited at a solo exhibition of Hepworth's held at Marlborough Fine Art in 1970. It was displayed alongside *Disc with Strings (Moon)*, a work that was evidently conceived as a companion piece to this work. *Disc with Strings (Sun)* is made from bronze whereas *Disc with Strings (Moon)* is made from aluminium. The contrasting effects of warmth and coolness suggest the relation of the two named celestial bodies.

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917, French)

Rodin is considered to be one of the greatest artists of all times, as well as the greatest sculptor of the 19th and 20th centuries. Among Rodin's most famous works are *The Kiss*, *The Thinker* and *Eternal Spring* – all conceived for his lifetime-project of the *Gates of Hell* – a massive set of doors originally planned for the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris but never delivered by the artist. In light of his influence on the

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Following generations of artists and sculptors in France and abroad, Rodin is regarded as the father of modern sculpture. The artist left his studio in Paris, the Hôtel Biron, in his will to the French State, now known as the Musée Rodin, which houses the largest collection of his work as a sculptor and draughtsman.

On display in the exhibition, *Jardinière des Titans (Vase of the Titans)* is an extremely fine terracotta sculpture modelled by Rodin whilst he was in the employment of the eminent Romantic sculptor Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse. The four Titans, mythological giants conquered by the gods of Olympus and doomed to support the hefty vessel, have been imbued with strong introverted gestures and robust musculature. This is typical of Rodin's work and reminiscent of Michelangelo's figures on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The *Vase of the Titans* was exhibited in 1957 during the exhibition *Rodin, ses collaborateurs et ses amis* at the Musée Rodin and was also produced in a glazed ceramic version that can be found in several museum collections, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Musée Rodin in Paris.

Emily Young (b. 1951, UK. Lives in the UK and Italy)

Hailed as 'Britain's greatest living stone sculptor' by the Financial Times, Young has established her legacy with unique free carvings that marry the ancient medium of stone with the human spirit. She finds her materials in abandoned quarries in the UK, near her home in rural Tuscany but also in more exotic locations across the globe. This has led her to unveil works in diverse materials, such as malachite, alabaster, dolomitic limestone, and semi-precious stones such as Lapis Lazuli. Her timeless carvings in stone focus on humanity's relationship with the planet and depict the beauty and rarity of life on Earth. Young's iconic style has garnered her critical praise alongside public adoration. This is widely attributed to the fact that the universality and timelessness of her chosen subjects engage the viewer with both a visual and intellectual appreciation. For Young, there is no greater message than one that spans the infinite cultures and eras that our planet experiences. It is fitting that such raw, eternal and universal messages be expressed through material over three billion years old and with a future similarly everlasting.

Young's work is in important public and private collections throughout the world. She has exhibited at many prestigious museums, including The Getty, California; The Imperial War Museum, London; The Whitworth, Manchester; Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids; and The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.