

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

Richard Rogers as Newton

EDUARDO PAOLOZZI (Scottish, 1924–2005)

Born in Edinburgh in 1924 to Italian immigrant parents, Sir Eduardo Paolozzi was one of the most important British artists of the late twentieth century. A sculptor, collagist, printmaker, draughtsman, textile designer, filmmaker, and writer, he developed a remarkably wide-ranging practice shaped by both material experimentation and an equally broad cultural reference. He studied at Edinburgh College of Art, St Martin's School of Art in London, and later at the Slade School of Fine Art, where he trained as a sculptor. In 1947, after completing his studies, he moved to Paris, where he encountered artists and writers including Jean Arp, Constantin Brancusi, Fernand Léger, Alberto Giacometti, and Tristan Tzara. These formative contacts introduced him to a rich avant-garde milieu and helped shape the eclectic and associative character that remained central to his work throughout his career.



Eduardo Paolozzi, *Newton after William Blake*, 1995, British Library, London, The UK

Paolozzi returned to London in 1949 and established a studio in Chelsea and began to develop the distinctive artistic language for which he became internationally celebrated. Paolozzi was a founder member of the *Independent Group*, established in London in 1952, now widely regarded as a precursor to British Pop, although he neither particularly liked nor embraced the term for his own work. His art is better understood as an expansive and personal engagement with modern life,

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

shaped by a fascination with mechanisation, scientific discovery, mass culture, and the history of art. Throughout his career, he cultivated a visual language in which the mechanical and the organic, the rational and the irrational, the ancient and the futuristic are brought into dialogue.

Alongside his artistic practice, Paolozzi taught extensively including at the Central School of Art and Design, St Martin's School of Art, the Royal College of Art, the University of California, Berkeley, and later in Cologne and Munich. He was awarded a CBE in 1968, elected to the Royal Academy in 1979, and knighted in 1988. Eduardo Paolozzi's work is held in a number of major museum collections, most notably the National Galleries of Scotland, which also houses his reconstructed studio, as well as Tate and the British Museum in London, The MOMA and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



William Blake, *Newton*, 1795

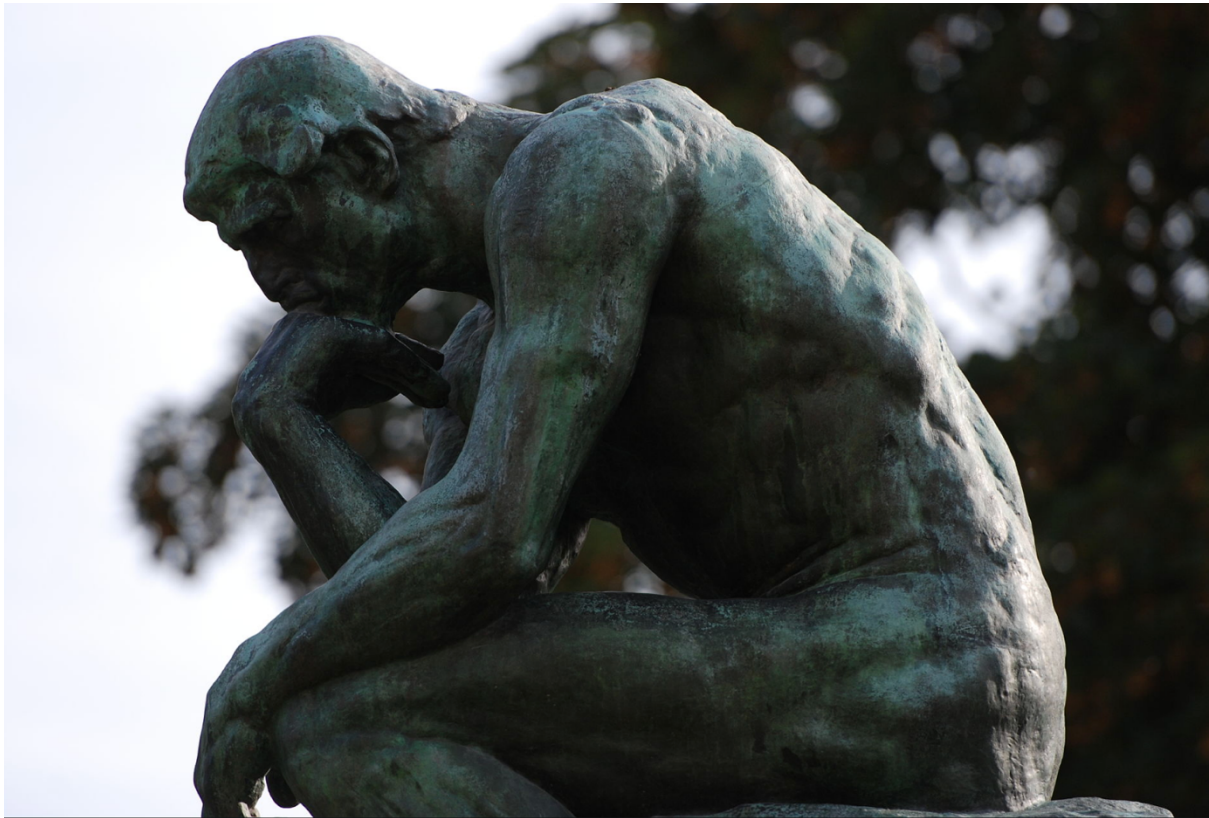
The cultural range that defines Paolozzi's practice lies at the heart of *Richard Rogers as Newton*, a work that stands not only as one of his most recognisable sculptures, but also as a powerful monument to British culture. This sculpture forms part of one of Paolozzi's most significant late projects, initiated in 1987 and later developed into the commission for the monumental Newton after William Blake installed outside the British Library.

Paolozzi regarded Newton as a pivotal figure in the development of Western thought: the scientist who brought order to the universe through the discovery of its underlying laws. The theme first

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

appeared in a plaster relief of 1987 and was subsequently reworked in a range of versions and materials. In 1988 Paolozzi transformed the composition into a three-dimensional seated figure, bent over a pair of compasses in a pose derived from William Blake's *Newton*. In the present work, that crouching figure is combined with the portrait bust of the architect Richard Rogers, whom Paolozzi had been commissioned to portray by the National Portrait Gallery in 1988.

Paolozzi then in 1990 produced this hybrid figure, which depicts Newton naked, with the facial feature of Richard Rogers. Instead of holding a pair of compasses in his left hand, the figure has two rods piercing the palm of this hand, as he appears to get ready to take some measurements. The composition also calls to mind Rodin's *Thinker* in its hunched pose and air of concentrated introspection, while the powerful modelling of the body ultimately reflects, through Blake, the influence of Michelangelo. This sculpture brings together architecture, portraiture, science, and sculpture, transforming a portrait into a meditation on modern creativity.



Auguste Rodin, *The Thinker*, 1904

For Blake, Newton represented the limitations of rational thought; for Paolozzi, he became instead a figure through whom science and imagination might be understood as interconnected rather than opposed. The figure seems suspended between the human and the engineered: straps appear fixed to the body, bolt-like forms mark joints, and the anatomy has a constructed, almost hybrid

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

figure, part-human and part-machine, as if the scientist who discovered the laws of nature were himself a machine. The result is a sculpture that combines classical figuration with machine-like articulation.

Richard Rogers as Newton is therefore a highly significant work within Paolozzi's mature oeuvre. It encapsulates many of the defining characteristics of his artistic practice and stands as a compelling example of his ability to capture the breadth and complexity of the modern world. Closely related to the monumental *Newton* installed outside the British Library, this celebrated image also carries resonance within British sculpture, recalling one of the most important public sculptural landmarks of late twentieth-century in Britain.

Literature

Collins, Judith. *Eduardo Paolozzi*. Farnham, Surrey: Lund Humphries, 2014.

The Paolozzi Foundation. "About." Accessed April 21, 2026.
<https://paolozzifoundation.org/about/>

Tate. "'Newton,' Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, 1988." Accessed April 21, 2026.
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/paolozzi-newton-t06957>