

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

Maquette Two Sitting Figures

LYNN CHADWICK (British, 1914-2003)

Born in Barnes, London, in 1914, Lynn Russell Chadwick was one of the leading British sculptors of the post-war period. Although he showed an early interest in clay modelling and painting, and was encouraged by his art master at school, his family considered a career in the arts too uncertain and instead directed him towards architecture. Chadwick accordingly trained as a draughtsman, working for Donald Hamilton, Eugen Carl Kauffman, and later Rodney Thomas. This architectural formation proved fundamental to his later sculpture, giving him a lasting sensitivity to structure, weight, balance, and the expressive potential of line.

During the Second World War, Chadwick volunteered for the Fleet Air Arm and served as a pilot escorting Atlantic convoys. Demobilised in 1944, he returned to Rodney Thomas's office, where he designed trade fair stands. It was in this context that he began making suspended constructions from balsa wood and wire, initially as decorative elements for exhibition displays. These early mobiles attracted the attention of Charles and Peter Gimpel of Gimpel Fils, London, who offered him a solo exhibition in 1950. The success of this exhibition led to further commissions, and Chadwick soon taught himself to weld, marking the true beginning of his sculptural career.

In 1952, Chadwick was included in *New Aspects of British Sculpture* at the British Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, alongside Kenneth Armitage, William Turnbull, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Robert Adams, among others. This exhibition gave rise to Herbert Read's well-known phrase "Geometry of Fear", used to describe a group of young British sculptors whose work combined angularity, tension, and a distinctly post-war psychological intensity. Chadwick quickly emerged as one of the most important figures of this generation. In 1953, he was among the semi-finalists in the international competition for the Unknown Political Prisoner, and in 1956, he won the International Prize for Sculpture at the Venice Biennale, establishing his international reputation.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Chadwick's work was exhibited widely and collected internationally. His sculpture evolved from the precarious lightness of the early mobiles and stabiles into increasingly monumental bronzes and iron constructions, often exploring themes of human relationships through groups and couples shown standing, sitting, reclining, or walking.

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Lynn Chadwick, *Two Seated Figures*, 1973, Tel Aviv Museum, Israel

In 1958, he purchased Lypiatt Park, the Gothic house near Stroud that remained his home for the rest of his life. There, he developed his practice on an increasingly ambitious scale and, in 1971, established his own foundry on the estate, allowing him greater control over the production of his bronzes. He was appointed CBE in 1964, made Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1985, and elected a Royal Academician in 2001. Chadwick's work is held in major public collections worldwide, including Tate, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome; the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; the Moderna Museet, Stockholm; and the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Conceived in 1971, *Maquette Two Sitting Figures* is highly characteristic of Chadwick's mature sculptural language. The influence of his architectural training is apparent in the work's strong linearity, angular construction, and carefully balanced arrangement of forms. The present work also demonstrates Chadwick's subtle balance between geometry and naturalism. While both figures are reduced to sharply structured forms, the female figure retains a more rounded articulation in the torso and bust, which contrasts with the harder angularity of the male counterpart. This

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distinction accords with Chadwick's mature figural vocabulary, in which female heads often assumed pyramidal or diamond-like forms, while male heads became more assertively rectangular.



Lynn Chadwick, *Couple on Seat*, 1984, Cabot Square, Canary Wharf, London, UK

Cast in bronze with a black patina and polished faces, the contrast between the dark and the highly polished facial planes gives emphasis to the heads as points of expression, while preserving the sculpture's overall formal clarity. Chadwick adopted this device from the 1960s onward, and it became one of the hallmarks of his later bronzes. In the present sculpture, the male figure also displays the distinctive "cloak" motif that Chadwick often used to suggest drapery.

Recorded in Dennis Farr and Éva Chadwick's catalogue raisonné as catalogue number 620, Maquette Two Sitting Figures is an important example of Chadwick's mature treatment of the seated couple. Compact in scale yet monumental in feeling, the sculpture exemplifies Chadwick's distinctive ability to unite abstraction and figuration within a rigorously distinctive sculptural language.

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Literature

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