

LISSON GALLERY

Ocula

9th November 2022

OCULA

Shanghai Lowdown: Best Exhibitions to See

By [Elaine YJ Zheng](#) | Shanghai, 9 November 2022



Wu Ziyang, *Pasig River 2030 - 6 Plus (2022)* (still) (detail). Digital video, colour, sound. 8 min, 30 sec. Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art. Courtesy the artist.

As the once-lively [Shanghai](#) prepares to welcome Art021 and West Bund Art & Design (10–13 November 2022), *Ocula Magazine* shares notable exhibitions taking place across the city's museums and galleries.



Exhibition view: Richard Deacon, *Harbour*, Lisson Gallery, Shanghai (29 October 2022–14 January 2023). © Richard Deacon. Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photo: Alessandro Wang.

Richard Deacon: *Harbour*
Lisson Gallery, 2/F, 27 Huqiu Road
29 October 2022–14 January 2023

British sculptor Richard Deacon's recent nature-inspired creations appear to have cast the fluctuations of ocean waves into mineral blocks of enticing emerald and granite shades.

Mirroring cycles of life and decay, the 1987 Turner Prize winner's ongoing experimentations with diverse materials from laminated wood to polycarbonate, vinyl, cloth, and clay, seek to express new beginnings through material change.

At Lisson Gallery, rippling surfaces coated with glaze shimmer beside three stainless-steel sculptures titled *At Sea...* (2022). Together, they draw parallels between the act of sculpture and navigating the vastness of the ocean, whereby the resulting work marks an arrival.



29 OCT 2022–14 JAN 2023

Richard Deacon

Harbour

Lisson Gallery, Shanghai

[VIEW CURRENT EXHIBITION](#)

TimeOut
23 July 2021

TimeOut



Photograph: Creative Folkestone

The UK's coolest art festival just opened – and it's only an hour from London

The Creative Folkestone Triennial features 27 site-specific works dotted around the coastal town

Written by [Rosie Hewitson](#) Friday 23 July 2021

A Kentish coastal town from which you can sometimes see [France](#) on a clear day, Folkestone is the quiet, unassuming setting for one of the UK's edgiest art festivals.

For several years now, the former seaport has been cultivating a reputation as a cultural hotspot, with a new Creative Quarter, several talked-about foodie haunts and a triennial art festival featuring new work by big-name contemporary artists.

Opening this week and running until November 2, the fifth edition of the [Creative Folkestone Triennial](#) presents 27 site-specific artworks dotted around the town. Specially commissioned for the festival, they include pieces by artists such as Richard Deacon, Rana Begum, Bob and Roberta Smith, Atta Kwami and Mariko Hori. They build on the preexisting collection of 74 pieces by the likes of Tracey Emin, Yoko Ono and Lubaina Himid.



Photograph: Courtesy Creative Folkestone Triennial

Highlights of the 2021 commissions include a series of 'skateable sculptures', designed with local skateboarders by Turner Prize-winning collective Assemble; a collection of billboards and posters by Gilbert and George; and 'Climate Emergency Services' by British artist Mike Stubbs, which is essentially a minivan decorated with yellow flames and images of forest fires that'll really put a downer on your attempts to [enjoy the current heatwave](#).

Still, if you fancy witnessing some powerful commentary on climate change before lounging uneasily on the [nearby beach](#), the festival is only an hour away from London St Pancras by train. Plus, there are some lovely new multi-coloured beach huts that are just begging to be 'grammed. Winner.

Apollo
23 July 2021

APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

ART DIARY

Folkestone Triennial

23 JULY 2021



No. 1054 *Arpeggio* (2021), Rana Begum. Photo: Thierry Bal

With sculptures you can skateboard on, jazzed-up beach huts, and snarky messages from Gilbert and George, the fifth edition of the Folkestone Triennial returns to the coast of Kent this summer. The seaside event is among the largest displays of new work in the UK; 23 commissioned pieces are on show this year, most of them in public spaces. Titled 'The Plot', the display this year has been curated by Lewis Biggs to reflect on various moments in Folkestone's history, as well as the town's urban myths. As well as Rana Begum's painted beach huts (titled *Arpeggio*) and Assemble's *Skating Situations*, highlights include work by Atta Kwami and Richard Deacon. [Find out more from the Folkestone Triennial's website.](#)



Skating Situations (2021), Assemble.



BEHAVE (2014), Gilbert and George. Photo: Thierry Bal



Benchmark 1-5 (2021), Richard Deacon. Photo: Thierry Bal

LISSON GALLERY

Artnet

22 July 2021

artnet

Nearly Two Dozen Colorful Artworks Have Enlivened a Small English Town for the 2021 Folkestone Triennial—See Images Here

The exhibition is on view throughout the coastal town through November 2.

Artnet News, July 22, 2021



Rana Begum, *No. 1054 Arpeggio*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021 in partnership with Folkestone Hythe District Council. Photo by Thierry Bal.

The Folkestone Triennial opens to the public today, July 22, in the British seaside town of the same name.

For the fifth edition of the town's triennial of public art (through November 2), organizers have commissioned 23 works by 25 artists. Curated by Lewis Biggs, who founded the Liverpool Biennial, this year's edition is titled "The Plot."

The triennial was postponed last year for logistical reasons, but Biggs said the pandemic context has made people "more willing to slow down and take notice of their physical surroundings," adding that the public is "searching for [the] color and life-affirmation" that the exhibition offers.

“Following a year of lockdowns, stress and anxiety for everyone, it feels like there is a renewed energy here in Folkestone,” said Alastair Upton, the chief executive of Creative Folkestone, which organizes the triennial. “Collectively we are ready to welcome people back to the town: a place that is proud of its independence, resilience and creativity.”



Mariko Hori, *Mellowing the Corners*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.

Among the works on view is a flaming “Climate Emergency Services” van by artist Mike Stubbs, which offers a warning that feels apt during the U.K.’s current searing heat wave, and a series of tongue-in-cheek billboards by Gilbert & George, such as a poster designating a “good behavior zone.”

Meanwhile, minimalist benches by Richard Deacon have been installed in Kingsport Gardens, Jacqui Poncelet has created surreptitious peepholes in a wall with a kaleidoscopic view onto the former site of the town’s gasworks, and the Bangladeshi artist Rana Begum has given colorful new life to a slew of beach huts on Lower Saxon Way.

See more images of the 2021 Folkestone Triennial below.



Richard Deacon, *Benchmark 1-5*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Morag Myerscough, *Flock of Seagulls Bag of Stolen Chips*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Mike Stubbs, *Climate Emergency Services*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Mariko Hori, *Mellowing the Corners*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Jyll Bradley, *Green _ Light (For M.R.)*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2014. Photo by Thierry Bal.



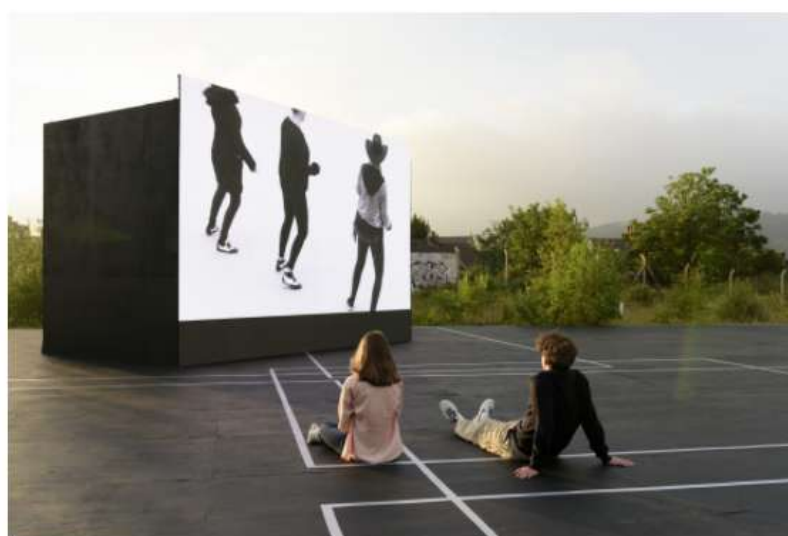
Jason Wilsher-Mills, *I Am Argonaut*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021 and produced by Shape Arts as part of the Adam Reynolds Award. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Jacqueline Poncelet, *Looking Ahead*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Jacqueline Poncelet, *Looking Ahead*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Jacqueline Donachie, *Beautiful Sunday*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.



HoyCheong Wong, Simon Davenport and Shahed Saleem, *Nūr*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Gilbert & George, *CHAIN BRAIN* (2019), exhibited at Creative Folkestone Triennial courtesy of the artists. Photo by Thierry Bal.



Assemble, *Skating Situations*. Commissioned for Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021. Photo by Thierry Bal.

Evening Standard
21 July 2021

Evening Standard

Folkestone Triennial 2021 review: the opposite of ‘plop art’

The fifth edition of the triennial public art exhibition is truly transformative



By [Ben Luke](#) | 21 July 2021

What separates the [Folkestone](#) Triennial from many similar events is the abundant evidence in the Kentish seaside town that art is truly transformative. Across the world, forlorn cities have instigated biennials supposedly as levers of [regeneration](#) (and its evil twin, [gentrification](#)). But often they’re festivals of what the British sculptor [Rachel Whiteread](#) has called “plop art”, art shipped in with no concern for context or purpose.

There’s no plopping in Folkestone, whose fifth triennial opens on Thursday. Art’s role in defining Folkestone’s identity for this century is writ large across the town. Artworks survive from the four previous triennials and are now as much a part of the landscape here as the

harbour and the boats on The Stade, its shingle beach.

This is the third triennial in a row curated by Lewis Biggs, who also founded the Liverpool Biennial. His embeddedness in Folkestone is a huge advantage because his understanding of its histories, its urban and marine landscapes, and the way these intertwine through its people, leads to the opposite of the emailed-in biennials elsewhere.

Called The Plot, the triennial offers three “ways” – effectively trails of works – through Folkestone, beginning immediately as you step off the train as a visitor, and never far from your front door if you’re a resident.



Skating Situations by Assemble / Thierry Bal

The routes – colour-coded, signposted and plotted on an essential map – are based on three distinctive aspects in Folkestone’s history and identity: first, St Eanswythe’s Way, named for the 7th-century saint whose relics remain at the church of St Mary and St Eanswythe in town. Her miracle was supposedly to have made water run uphill – a historic watercourse was named after her and it’s this that defines the route. William Harvey’s Way evokes the 17th-century physician who first described the circulation of the blood. And the Milky Way is taken from the nickname for a route where horse-drawn wagons would transport black coal from the harbour to the gasworks in the north of Folkestone and white chalk back down to the harbour for ships’ ballast.

So: miracles, watercourses, the circulation of blood and bodies, industrial and post-industrial histories – all rich territory for artists. And the overall result is an engaging, thoughtful show. Of course, it's about the art, but it's also about discovering, or re-discovering, a place – the art makes you look closer at Folkestone's built and natural environments. It helps that I saw it on a beautiful day, the Channel a vision of aquamarine splendour, the town's parks verdantly aglow.

Of course, artists aren't always attracted by the neatest parts of town, often focusing instead on liminal spaces, forgotten corners and awkward nooks that show that Folkestone remains rough at the edges, still emerging from decline. The collaborative duo Winter/Hörbelt have created a fountain in the middle of a despised gyratory road that bisects the traditional route from the north of the town to its centre, which followed St Eanswythe's Water. A white tree emerges from the ground, looking for all the world like an etiolated hand thrust into the air. It will eventually produce water flowing into a bowl proclaiming St Eanswythe's return.



Winter/Hörbelt's St Eanswythe's Return / Thierry Bal

But artists haven't ignored the politer parts of town: Richard Deacon has created granite sculptures-cum-benches in spaces earmarked for seating but left vacant in the formal Kingsnorth Gardens. Clusters of differently shaped horizontal stone, they're tough, austere beautiful things. Also in the gardens, Mariko Hori has mimicked the square topiary with a boulder made of Pulhamite, a form of fake rock that was used in the 1920s to create the steep, zig-zagging tourist walk with grottoes that takes you from the beach to the top of the town. The old Pulhamite stones are built around landfill that, as the rocks age, is slowly being exposed.

Kingsnorth Gardens was once a quarry and a landfill site, so Hori's use of Pulhamite is emblematic. Rather than use rubbish, she's asked local people for objects to fill her boulder and two others elsewhere in town – they're time capsules that may reveal their contents to future generations.

Like Hori's, Patrick Corillon's work unravels at different points across Folkestone, following St Eanswythe's Water, from Radnor Park to the Bayle Pond. Neat boxes on legs, Corillon calls them reliquaries, and they contain exquisite sculptural assemblages describing children's games and poems conjuring old rhymes and incantations; moments of enchantment informed by Corillon's historical research and discussions with local communities. They're wonderful.

Community voices are also amplified at the former gasworks site, now a vast empty wasteland surrounded by high brick walls. Morag Myerscough has created painted signs with the words of local people, attached to a scaffolding evoking the gasometers that once stood here. Nearby, Jacqueline Donachie is showing a film focusing on the vital role of social clubs and nightclubs in communities, staged on a platform with a diagram of all of Folkestone's dancefloors.



Rana Begum's No. 1054 Arpeggio / Thierry Bal

Down on the Harbour Arm, Assemble have created a new skate park which is part found sculpture, part designed amenity, and it works brilliantly. I also admired Tina Gverović's Surface Flows on the old ferry ramp: images of clothing drawn as if its floating on water, using blue road paint. I couldn't help but think of refugees' deaths at sea, and the asylum seekers demonised by Priti Patel, Nigel Farage et al, trying to find their way to the UK in the Channel.

The movement of people is also the subject of the colourful gateway on the Harbour Arm by Atta Kwami. A wooden structure painted in abstract shapes, it's a deliberately modest triumphal arch. It might be impressive on its own terms, but it's dwarfed here by the sublime power of sea and coast, and the industrial structures around it. By contrast, Kwami's benches and sculptures conjuring the street kiosks of his native Ghana work beautifully in the more domestically scaled avenues at the top of the town.

Biggs has carefully staged the triennial to exploit the full range of the Folkestone's environments – from Pilar Quinteros's huge Janus head in chalk and plaster on the cliffs overlooking the harbour, to genuinefake's critical reimagining of arcades and crazy golf in a pavilion jutting out from the now rather neglected old tourist centre, to the beautiful geometric patterns of Rana Begum's huts running for the best part of a kilometre along The Leas coastal path. To see Begum's work at its best, with the subtle colour shifts and musical movement (it's called Arpeggio), walk along the beach, close to the shoreline.



The Terrarium by Shezad Dawood / Shezad Dawood

If Begum's huts allow you to delight in momentary effects of light, Shezad Dawood's *The Terrarium*, the only indoor work commissioned for this triennial, suggests a possible, darker future. A virtual reality piece staged 300 years from now, it creates a drowned world where the Baltic extends to the Kent coast, and we, a human-cephalopod hybrid, swim in the ocean, only to be captured and confronted with different possible fates (mine: decapitation by another hybrid being).

Beyond the fantasy element, Dawood's work is based on extensive scientific research, and reminds us that, whatever Folkestone's fascinating histories, the town and the sea that it meets will be immeasurably affected by climate change. A solemn but necessary intervention in an absorbing triennial.

The Folkestone Triennial runs to November 5

The Guardian
20 July 2021

The Guardian

Folkestone Triennial

Run from the flaming van of the apocalypse! Folkestone Triennial review



▲ It doesn't pay to be subtle ... Climate Emergency Services by Mike Stubbs. Photograph: Thierry Bal

With its line-dancers, good behaviour zones and abstract skatepark, the Kent extravaganza is big on fun. So thank goodness for the incendiary installations hammering us with home truths

In seaside Folkestone on one of the hottest days of the year, the ethereal glitter of the English Channel merged with the empty azure sky. So why did an artwork by [Mike Stubbs](#) have to spoil it? That flaming van was a low blow. But there it was, parked on the quay, painted hot-rod red, yellow and black with images of blazing forests. It is called Climate Emergency Services and is even equipped with a gun, perhaps for shooting down denial.

Stubbs demonstrates that it does not always pay to be subtle. I had my appreciation of a sunny day suddenly ruined by his crudely powerful reminder that our weather is no longer natural. But Climate Emergency Services is also a challenge to much of the other art in this three-yearly festival of public art in a chaotically lovely town. Art today is at a crossroads: has it got the right to be sophisticated entertainment or should it be hammering us with home truths?

Gilbert and George are hammers yet their messages are never simple. As you come out of the railway station you see one of their omniprovocative artworks on a hoarding. "THIS HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS A GOOD BEHAVIOUR ZONE," it warns. It nicely captures our anxiety this summer about the nature of freedom and responsibility, I think as I put my mask in my pocket.



▲ Who will find them? ... Benchmark 1-5 by Richard Deacon. Photograph: Thierry Bal

But the overwhelming tone of this trail of sensitively sited contemporary artworks is contemplative to the point of irrelevance. In a remote corner of a civic park, sculptor [Richard Deacon](#) has created a row of benches by heaping polyhedral blocks on top of each other. They are very beautiful, like slabs of the Giant's Causeway turned into uncomfortable seats. But who will find them, apart from art hounds? Deacon's benches have an undoubted abstract power. But what to say about [Jacqui Poncelet's](#) peepholes in a wall, some fitted with kaleidoscopes, which give you a view over the town, or her shimmering decorations on a group of buildings that catch and reflect the sunlight? I can't think of much.

I may sound cross but I wasn't. The Folkestone Triennial is an enjoyable way of getting to know this place, warts and all, as its huge spread of locations leads you to neglected corners as well as spectacular views. This town dates back to Saxon times, as [Patrick Corillon's](#) series of gently surreal reliquary boxes commemorating its ancient patron St Eanswythe remind you. Yet it was heavily industrialised and became a car-belching ferry port in modern times. It's not so much the artworks, many of which are forgettable, as the well-researched locations that make this triennial fun. Like Folkestone itself, it makes you wonder what is picturesque and what is ugly.



▲ Glowing with idealism ... Nūr by HoyCheong Wong, Simon Davenport and Shahed Saleem. Photograph: Thierry Bal

One of the ugliest, loveliest settings is an abandoned gasworks. A colourful scaffolding tower built by [Morag Myerscough](#) in the shape of a gasometer has painted signs expressing local memories and wishes. Among the weeds is a black and white dancefloor platform by Glasgow artist [Jacqueline Donachie](#). You stand on it to watch her film of a community line dance. The participants gather in an empty white space before moving in relaxed symmetries that Donachie films from above. Against the glowing sky, this formal human artwork was impressive. But it made me think again of the struggle between beauty and meaning. Contemporary art needs to be more than formally clever. In a world so harrowing, it has to harrow louder.

Not that these artists don't think they are changing the world. Donachie's social dance glows with idealism. So does a giant mosque lantern by [HoyCheong Wong](#), Simon Davenport and Shahed Saleem. Down on the seafront, Turner prize winners [Assemble](#) have worked with local skateboarders to create an artful installation of abstract skating challenges. Suspiciously, no skateboarders were trying out the obstacles. This may be the [Corbusier Habitation Unit](#) of skating parks, a failed utopia of countercultural play. Many artists today flirt nostalgically with the utopian modernism of the early 20th century. Here that tragic history repeats itself as farce - no one gets sent to the Gulag but the kids would probably have more fun in a graffiti-covered car park.



▲ Nostalgia for utopian modernism ... Skating Situations by Assemble. Photograph: Thierry Bal

The Assemble piece is close to Folkestone's very own readymade reminder of modern decay, a fantastic JG Ballard vision that exists by accident. This is the stump of the 1970s ferry terminal, closed down by the Channel Tunnel. Hulks of stained concrete and rusting iron rise from the crystal sea. People canoe around them. On a remnant of the ramp, which leads to a sheer drop in the drink, artist [Tina Gverović](#) has added ghostly blue paintings of migrants' clothes.

Turning my head I catch another glimpse of Stubbs's flaming van of the apocalypse. This seemed such a gentle artistic stroll yet it ends in fear and dread here at the crumbling edge of England.

● [The Folkestone Triennial runs from 22 July until 2 November](#)

Sanat

Richard

Röportaj Müjde Metin

Üretimini reaktif değişime inanarak yapıyorsunuz oluyor mu? Kalıplaşmış tekniklerin dışına çıkıp, elinizde ne varsa, sonucu onarla keşfedeceğinizi organik bir maceraya atıldığınızı... 80'lerin başında 'Yeni İngiliz Heykeli' olarak adlandırılan akşamın öncülerinden Richard Deacon. İşte böyle çalışıyor. Her farklı materyal, teknikinde ve hayal gücünde yeni ufuklar açıyor; metoda dönmüş tekrarlar, Deacon'ın bol kavimli heykel sözlüğünde yerini alıyor. Halihazırda, bu isim çağdaş heykel sanatında rolü çok büyük.

QP: Bugünlerde materyal, bir "dünyalar" zor bir süreçten geçiyoruz; globalizasyon, internet, sosyal medya ile birlikte her şeyin altına atılıyor. Uluslararası tanınırlığı sahip, eserleri

çok çok kıltıvde sergilenmiş bir sanatçı olarak, siz enternasyonalizm hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Sizce yeni "normal" nasıl olacak?

Richard Deacon: Açıklaması beni seyahat imkanlarının hayli yararını görmüş biriyim. Eserlerimi uluslararası çapta sergileyebilme şansı yakalamış olduğum için de minnettar hissediyorum. Burada şu konuyu sadece sanat değil, diğer sanatçılarla iletişim kurmaktan; küratör, koleksiyoner ya da öğrenci olsun, farklı kişilerle tanışmaktan, yeni arkadaşlar edinmekten; onlarla çalışmak ve onlardan yeni şeyler öğrenmekten de bahsediyorum. Halihazırda tüm bu kent ve toplumlarda karşılaştığım kültür-sanat çeşitliliğinin, düşüncelerimin adına epey derin bir kaynağa dönüştüğü de var tablodaki. Fakat bu yaşam biçimi, kaçınılmaz

surette değişmeye benziyor. Ama geleceğin nasıl olacağını şimdiden öngörmek zor. Bir yandan, Covid-19 virüsü, birbirine dört bir taraftan bağlanmış bu dünya düzeni yüzünden global ölçekte yazıldı. Öte yandan, virüse karşı koyabilmek ancak uluslararası ortaklaşa çaba göstererek mümkün olacak gibi. Ülkeler arasındaki izolasyon ve tıccir, belki de çözüm yerine bariyer görevi görüyor. Küresel ticaret rotaları ve tedarik zincirleri işlemez durumda. lakin krizin akabetinde yerelleştirmenin öneminin gitgide artacağı da görülebiliyor. Yeni normalin nasıl düzenleneceğini anlamak zor; ama yeni düzende sosyal medya ve sosyal dışlanmanın rol oynayacağı gerçek. Yabancı düşmanlığı da (soosetöbi) önüne geçilmesi şart olan, mevcut bir tehlike...

Röportaj

Deacon

QP: Sanat pratiğinizde geçecek olursak, gelecekte materyal nasıl karar veriyorsunuz? Heykel yapımında yeni materyaller denemek, finisaj da dahil olmak üzere, her defasında sıfırdan başlamak gibi oluyor. Önce materyal somut konsept mi, yoksa tam tersi mi... Kısacası, bir çalışmanın temelini nasıl atıyorsunuz?

RD: Materyaller hep ilginç çekimdir – çünkü yaptığınız herhangi bir şey, başka bir şeyden yapılmıştır – ve bu bakımdan materyal bir tür kök olarak kabul edilebilir. Ben öğrenciyken, heykelin ne olduğunu çözmeye çalışırken, sarabildiğim en yakın sonuç heykelin, "birinin, bir zaman, bir yerde yaptığı" nesne olduğuydu. Bölüm başlığı gibi bakarsak bu kavram uygun düşebilir; ne var ki heykelin amacına, anlamına, kontekstine ve fikrine

değininmiyor. Ben bazen materyallere dayanarak tesadüfen yeni şeyler buldum, bazen de özellikle arayıp keşfettim – ikisinden herhangi birini seçip motor bellemek saçma geliyor. Zira kompleks fikirler üzerine kafa yotarak (veya oylanarak) çok fazla zaman geçirebilen biriyim. Bir anda, bir materyale bakarken birakam özgünlükleri ya da nitelikleri gözümde ilşiyor; arayısam ilginç olabilir diyorum; arayıncaya da, keşiflerimin hali hazardaki fikirlerimle örtüşüyor noktaları fark ediyorum. Kıscası yeni fikirlerim, bir heykel üzerinde çalışırken doğuyor, böylece ilerideki yeni eserleri besliyor. Her temelde bu döngü var.

QP: İşlerinizde pek çok katman ve bakıma çalışıyoruz; ve pek basit de gözüküyorlar...

Materyal sorgulama ilginçinden mi kaynaklanıyor bu detaylar?

RD: 1970'lerde bütünlük ideasına merak salmıştım. Bir nesne nasıl tek parça oluyor? Tam olmak neyle? Cevaplarını, o sırada ürettiğim işlere de yansıtı; bütüne odaklanmaya ya da mesela belirli sayıda materyal kullanmaya başladım, yani parçaları birleştirmekten vazgeçtim. Bu değişimin altında şu düşünce salıyordu: Sert köyler biter keskinlikten, loyuncular devamlılığla sağlayarak "bütünlük" yaratıyor. 70'lerin sonunda yaptığım heykeller ve "muhkemelen daha da önemli" çizimler, bir nevi büküm sözlüğü ortaya çıkardı. İşletimde uzan yıllardır eskisi olan bu dağarcığı zaman içerisinde hem kullandım, hem geliştirdim. Kaldı ki, doğrusal formları dahi bu sözlüğe ekledim. →

"Learning to Reason"
1960, Laminated wood
220 x 510 x 580 cm





Richard Dawkins, 2013, Fotoğraf: Bernd Jäger, Wikimedia

"Tanrı'nın Aklı"
Tommaso A. A.
Tommaso A.
2006, Çelik, alüminyum,
201 x 200 x 110 cm
Fotoğraf: Robert
Wickhamyer

Başta beni en çok, eğriyel biçimlerle çalışabileceğini yönem ve materyaller bulmak zorlamıştı. Hissettiğim dâima çok ağırdı: "Bütün bir şey yapamıyorum." Ama neyi kestiriyimi keşfetmek satıyorum o kadar açık olmadı. Düşünüyordum da, "basit tu" prensibini benimsemek çok da mantıklı değildiymiş gibi...

QP: *Yapma sanatının en sıradan fizik hangisi?*
RD: Başlamadan önceki planlama konusunda iyi değilim ama gidisim hep iyi yönetmek konusunda. Neyin etrafında ilerleyeceğimi biliyorum. Fikir bulmaya çalışmak her zaman kolay olmayabilir. Ben oyununamın da üretkenliği desteklediğine gönülden inanıyorum. Bir nebze (ya da çok fazla) endişe ve ahlaklı... Bu

Röportaj



iki çekmez sokak zemini birlikte hazırlıyor. Tabii ki önce bu sorunu cevabını da bu nedenle başlangıçta düşünmeyi biliyorum.

QP: *Başlamadan önce sınırlarınız nasıl belirleniyor?*

RD: Eğer iyi işek üzerine üretiyorsanız, sınırlarınıza dair soruların oluyor, onlara göre kararlar alıyorum. Eser güvenli olacak mı? Sağlam mı? Bakım gerektirecek mi? Yerine nasıl yerleştirilecek? Yerine sığacak mı? Böyle sorular... Sipariş edilmiş bir iş üzerinde değil, yalnızca çözümde çalışıyorsanız da, bu sorular daha spekülatif bir hal alıyor. "Acaba bunu yaparsam nasıl olurdu, bunu yaparsam nasıl olurdu? Tabii elindekilerle değerlendirerek çalışırsanız da pekala esere sınırlama getirmiş oluyorsunuz. Bu

anlamda geçirdi çalışmayı sevdiğim bir dönem olmuştur çünkü her yer kapalı olduğundan bir şeyler almak için dışarı çıkamayıp, elimdekiyle yetiniyordum. Karantınanın da o günlere benzer bir yönü var.

QP: *İşek üzerine herkele tuteceğinize, zamanla, çözülmeye nasıl başlıyorsunuz? Bu tür projeler de şu günlerde akıyor olmadı...*

RD: İşek üzerine eser üretmenin en güzel tarafı, birinin bir şey istiyor olması. En zor tarafı ise, ne istediklerini bilmeleri oluyor! Çeşitli zaman, mümkünse, eserin yer alacağı mekânı ziyaret edip model çıkararak işe koyuluyorum. Şimdilerde üzerinde çalıştığım benzer bir büyük proje vardı; asloya alındı. Zaten büyük küçük hemen hemen her proje beklemekte...

Richard Deacon

Bu süreçte çok daha zor durumda kalan kişilerin olduğunu gayet iyi bilesem ve beni açıkçası daha çok kaygılandıran olup bitenlerin uzun dönemde hissedeceğimiz sosyal-toplumsal etkisi olsa dahi, işlerin ekonomik olarak bakımında benim için de iyi güncelliğinin farkındayım. Yine de şahsen, bir bakıma bugünlerin ufuk açıcı bir yanı olduğuna da inanıyorum. Sadece, eskiden seyahat ederek ya da yürüyüşe çıkarak işlere ana verirdim ve bu molaların ne zaman biteceğini bilirdim, şimdi ise bilmiyorum! Herkes gibi elim kolum bağlı bekliyorum ve çözüm rümine hiçbir şey yapamıyorum... Ama rümler bunların psikolojik bakınca sağlıklıdır değil, "değişik" olduğuna inanarak yine de pozitif kalmaya çalışıyorum.

QT: 1920'ler ve 1930'lardaki geometrik resimlerin kompozisyonları denge üzerine kuruluydu. Köşeye bir şey ekli, diğer köşeye başka bir şeyle dengele. Estetik anlamında, siz eserlerinizdeki dengeyi nasıl tanımlarsınız? Denge eserlerinizin görünüşü adına önemli bir faktör mü sizin için?

RD: Heykele bakıp sağa sola bir şeyler eklemem ben – daha çok kesip biçip bir şeyleri elsiştiririm. Yapısal yöntem olarak da en başta bükümlü dönüşlere dikkat ettiğimi söyleyebilirim; diğer rümler öğeleri ya dönüşün etrafına yerleştiriyorum ya da kompozisyonu dönüştürüp eşyeye bükerek kuruyorum. Bu nedenle denge, o kadar da uğraştığım bir unsur değil sanırım. Nitekim üç boyutluluk, bakış açısı değiştikçe farklılaşıyor. →

"Never Mind 2"
2017, Paslanmaz çelik,
316 x 765 x 300 cm
Fotoğraf: Werner J.
Frasenappel,
Münsterheim Açık Hava
Hayatı Müzesi,
Antwerp, Belçika





"Infinity #7"
1696, Paslanmaz çelik,
86 x 128 x 22,5 cm
Fotoğraf: Dave Morgan



Röportaj

QP: Peki, simetri? Heykellerinizde simetriyi önememediğinizi de söyleyebilir miyiz?

RD: Escelinin çoğu, bilhassa eskiler, bilateral (iki yanlı) simetriye sahip. Ama bu mahsus yapılmış değil. Geometri yaptığım her şey resir ediyor ve bazı geometrik uygulamalar da beraberinde bu tür simetrisi getiriyor.

QP: Pratiğinizde bir süre performansla da ilgilendiniz. Sonunda nasıl heykelle geçtiniz?

RD: "Sonunda" demek istemem çünkü heykel yapmaya 12 yaşında başladım. 60'lar biten, 70'ler başlarken, performans, heykel yapımının bir aşığı olarak kabul ediliyordu. O yıllarda ilgilendiğim performanslarda, meğer aslında bir aralığı nasıl kullanacağımı öğretilmişim; sorduktan anladım...

QP: UHMM alanında bir CD'niz vardı, unutulmuş bir alan ezersiniz... Kelimelerle heykelleri konuşmaya fikrine nasıl kapıldınız?

RD: Teenage iken tonla mektup yazardım. Yazmayı seviyorum. Şıklılda, söylemek istediklerimi ifade edemediğimi hissettiğim ve nutkum tutulduğu halde, kelimelere önem veriyordum. Kelimelerin öncünü aslında performansla idrak ettim; performansların dokümantasyonu sayesinde, dayı döktüğün yazının da performans kadar önemli olduğunu kavrayınca... Bu işte, aldında bazı sorulara da yol açtı: Hem performansta hem de yapım faaliyetlerinde, zaman nasıl bir unsurdu? Hikaye, zamanla eşit... Aynı zamanda kelimeler ile nesnelere arasındaki ilişkiye de meraklıydım; dilin, düşüncenin ve hislerin içine nasıl da yitir

yerleştiğini çözüme çalışıyordum. UHMM böyle bir atmosferde ortaya çıktı

QP: Bir röportajınızda "çığdaş sanatın heykel yapımına çok şey borçlu olduğunu" söylediğinizi okumuştum. Neden böyle düşünüyorsunuz?

RD: Çığdaş sanatın karakteristiği, anlatım yollarına çeşitliliğinden geliyor. Ve bu çeşitliliğin kökeni heykeltıraşlara uzanıyor. 20. yüzyılın başından bu yana çalışmalarında yalnızca gerçek dünyadan topladıkları materyaller kullanılmakla kalmayıp, yollar gerçekçe yaşanan yeniliklerle, sinema, video, performans ya da enstalasyon gibi farklı yollara yönlendiren heykeltıraşlara... (Rosalind Krauss'un "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" yazısı bu tezi ayrıntılarıyla açıklar.) Ben resminin materyal →

pratikleri, 17. yüzyılın başlarından beri son derece tutukladı kaldı. Böylece dijitalizasyon ve ekran görüntüleriyle daimi iliştiğimiz, resimleri anlama kapasitemizi artıncıca, resim derinden güçlendi. Diğer taraftan, çelişkili bir biçimde, heykeltıraşların az evvel bahsettiğim açılımı yüzünden, heykel biraz da bitişik bir kelimeye dönüştü, içi nispeten tıka basa dolduruktu...

Q: *Bu hiyerarşi, kadın heykeltıraşlar için nasıl ilerledi sizce? Daha soruyoruz?*

RD: Wikipedia'da kadın heykeltıraşların bir listesi var. Hem tarihi hem çağdaş isimleri kapsayan bu listenin ilk heykeltıraş, 1749'da doğup, 1828'de öldüğü yazan İngiliz Anne Seymour Damer. Onu takiben 19. yüzyıla kadar azıcık isimler yazıldı; sonra sayı artıyor.

Bu liste bence oldukça ilginç. Çünkü etnimim ki Anne Seymour Damer heykel yapan ilk kadın değil ve cinsiyet ayırımına ilaveten, birçok kültürde yasaklama yüzünden de kariyeri çöpe atılan pek çok kadın sanatçı var. Dolayısıyla bu listeyi yeni isimler ve bilgilerle genişleten bağımsız sanat tarihçilerini, çalışmalarından dolayı hayli takdir cimci ve cesaretlendirmeliyiz. Çünkü evet, halen ayırım yapılıyor... Ve beşminin önyargıları işlemeye devam ediyor; bu önyargılardan kurtulmaya da özen göstermeliyiz.

Q: *Bazen heykeller daha çok anlatılarıyla değil üç boyutlu özellikleriyle değerlendiriliyor. Her ikisi de dikkate alınmalı mutlaka ama sizin bu "obje olma" meselesindeki düşünceğiniz ne yöndedir?*

RD: Bizzat objelere meraklı biri olarak, obje olmanın, sanat eserinin kimlikli özellikleri arasında yer aldığını düşünüyorum. Ben materyalden objeye geçiş sürecini de gayetı manidar buluyorum.

Q: *Sanı soru biraz daha kışisel. Şu sıralar finansal ya da duygusal gündemler içerisinde olan okuyuculara kuramsal olarak kurulmuşları adına ne söyletiniz?*

RD: Elbette benim de geçmişte, kaybolduğuma hissettiğim, hayatımın nereye doğru gittiğini hiç bilmediğim zamanlar oldu. Bu kasvetli dönemleri ancak ailemin ve arkadaşlarımla desteğiyle atatabildim. Ama artık olağanüstü fırsatlarla sahibiz, dünya değişti, önümüzde akıl almaz imkanlar var. Bunlara sıkı sıkıya sarılın. @



"100"
1996, Ahşap, Kumaş,
Yapıştırmacı,
150x140x90 cm
Fotoğraf: Marc Durand

The Art Newspaper
22 May 2020



THE ART NEWSPAPER

What has the Whitechapel gallery chief Iwona Blazwick been reading during lockdown?

The London-based curator has been perusing publications on science fiction, avant-garde cabarets and all things witchy

GARETH HARRIS

22nd May 2020 17:29 BST



Iwona Blazwick courtesy Whitechapel Gallery

"Working through the stacks of publications I have accumulated over the last year, the following stand out:

The Winter 2019 issue of *Spike Art Magazine* is dedicated to Magic! To cast their spell, the editors insist we read this issue cover to cover. From Erik Davis on magic and technology to poets CA Conrad and Ariana Reines' speculation on war as masculine menstrual envy to Suzanne Treister's techno tarot cards or Tony Oursler's archive of the occult, this is a gripping celebration of witchiness and art.

Theme shows are a good way of divining golden threads and making discoveries. What links Wassily Kandinsky, Arnold Schönberg, Marianne von Werefkin (new to me) and Cage? *Music and Spirituality in Art*, as beautifully charted in the eponymous catalogue (2017) for a show at Palazzo Magnani in Reggio Emilia.

Out of MuHKA's (Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp) catalogue for their 2019 retrospective of *James Lee Byars (The Perfect Kiss)* slips a facsimile of his 1970 lecture describing the genesis of his World Question Center, a clear precursor of Wikipedia. Byars is later televised phoning all the cleverest people in the world and asking them: "What questions are you asking yourself?"

As if braced for a more austere future, artists have been publishing slim volumes of subtle poesy. Georgie Hopton and Gary Hume's *Hurricanes Hardly Happen* (2020) is a delightful juxtaposition of two artists noodling with nature. Richard Deacon's *I Wanted to Talk About the Future But I Ended Up thinking About the Past* (2019) is about footprints and fossils. Each can be slipped in the pocket and carried to the park for our daily constitutional.

Into the Night: Cabarets and Clubs in Modern Art (2019): the superb book accompanying the Barbican's recent survey of the European avant-garde's love affair with absurdity and alcohol charts the pleasures we are missing through the lockdown.

Dan Byrne-Smith acts as our guide through the dystopias and utopias of science fiction in the latest *Documents of Contemporary Art* (2020). Riveting fragments by artists ranging from Laylah Ali to the Otolith Group are divided across the themes of cognitive estrangement, futures, posthumanism and ecologies. A vital tool for our post-epidemic future."

LISSON GALLERY

ItsLiquid

25 November 2019

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RICHARD DEACON: DEEP STATE

ART | NOVEMBER 25, 2019 | [f](#) [t](#) [e](#)



RICHARD DEACON: DEEP STATE

Lisson Gallery, London

November 20, 2019 – February 29, 2020

Richard Deacon presents his eleventh exhibition with **Lisson Gallery**, showing works incorporating steel, ceramics, clay, bent wood and ink on paper that evoke different senses – from memory and **touch**, to sight and movement. This new **collection** of sculptures, reliefs and drawings also inhabit different planes – from verticality to horizontality – all while shifting between two and three dimensions and passing from porosity to **solidity**, suggesting their fluid possibilities as either sites for bodily **experience** or spaces for contemplation and, as the title suggests, for deep dives into each object. Among his major recent **sculptures** are the undulating, twisted forms of *I Remember #5* (2018), *Swell* and *Under the Weather #5* (both 2019).



The complex arrangements of stainless steel housings and spiraling wooden beams in **I Remember #5** are presented horizontally, **suggesting** the viewer walk along its length while following the trajectory of its delicately sinuous wooden lines. With every steamed wooden dowel ending at a different point in a tessellating grid of metal plates, there is an **invitation** to recall where each begins its journey and follow them to their conclusion. The upright form in pale bentwood, Under the **Weather #5** (2019), represents the apotheosis of Deacon's two-decade-long mastery of the various techniques involved in wood steaming, **manipulation** and construction, with only the most unobtrusive nodes of joinery completing the object's soaring, shelter-like **structure** and revealing the techniques of its manufacture.



A series of **ceramic pieces**, another medium Deacon has long been associated with, likewise alternate between the vertical – for a number of glazed wall-based works, collectively titled **Flat** (2018-19), that resemble lustrous abstract paintings embedded directly into the wall – and the horizontal, for dark clay plinths which sit somewhere between monumental earthenware, non-functional furniture and sculptural support. Indeed, **Deacon** has previously experimented with **ceramics** on an architectural scale for his frieze of 39 polychromatic sculptures on the façade of One Eagle Place in Piccadilly with Eric Parry Architects (2013) and has recently completed another major architectural **collaboration** with Serbian artist Mrdjan Bajic, to construct From There to Here (2006-19), a 200m pedestrian bridge over Belgrade's Sava River connecting the Kalemegdan fortress with a towering **sculptural form**.



While the artist describes his own process as protean and **not fixed**: “sometimes it’s a consequence of accident and sometimes it’s a consequence of intention or past history and sometimes it’s a combination of all those things”, Deacon’s **ability** to translate between one type of material and one set of propositions to multiple others, has resulted in his own unique **sculptural language** – one that speaks **simultaneously** in different registers and communicates between industry and craft or between geometry and nature. “Changing **materials from** one work to the next is a way of beginning again each time – and thus of finishing what had gone before”. Deacon’s linguistic twists and turns extend to his titles, as seen in the large floor-based work called **Swell** (2019), which consists of ideographic waves of steel, traversing the space like an ocean-bound liner. The **exhibition** title is indeed also a play on words, between the political inference of a “Deep State” – the hidden and intersecting internal agencies that operate within governments – and his hard-won approach to revealing the internecine workings of each sculptural or **imagistic form**.

His verbal approach to **aesthetics** is further explored in a new book being published to coincide with the exhibition, entitled “I wanted to talk about the future but I ended up thinking about the past”. First delivered as a lecture, this volume provides a historical sweep of the art of **sculpture** from Paleolithic handaxes to 3D printers, all while revealing some of Deacon’s own ideas on authorship, authenticity and appropriation. Richard Deacon’s voluptuous **abstract forms** have placed him at the forefront of **British sculpture** since the 1980s and, hugely influential, his works are visible in major public commissions around the world. His voracious appetite for material has seen him move between laminated wood, **stainless steel**, corrugated iron, polycarbonate, marble, clay, **vinyl**, foam and leather. As he explains: “Changing materials from one work to the next is a way of beginning again each time (and thus of finishing what had gone before)”.

Deacon describes himself as a “**fabricator**”, emphasising the construction behind the finished object – although many of the works are indeed cast, modelled or carved by hand – and accordingly the logic of the fabrication is often exposed: sinuous **curved forms** might be bound by glue oozing between layers of wood or have screw and rivets protruding from sheets of steel, wearing their hearts on their sleeves. Such transparency **highlights** the reactive nature of the process: it is part of a two-way conversation between **artist** and material that transforms the workaday into something metaphorical. The idea of “fabrication” also denotes making something up, of fiction rather than truth, and this knack for wordplay surfaces in **Deacon’s titles**, which might establish juxtapositions or wreak new meaning from familiar sayings or clichés – see Let’s not be Stupid (1991), **No Stone U turned** (1999), Water Under the Bridge (2008) or Shiver My Timbers (2016). 1999.

more. www.lissongallery.com

LISSON GALLERY

The New Yorker
28 January, 2019

THE NEW YORKER

The new show of my favorite contemporary sculptor, the Brit Richard Deacon, is his eighth at the Marian Goodman gallery. He has enjoyed substantial worldwide success since winning the Turner Prize, in 1987. But his fame (by measures that are not limited to blank looks from generally knowledgeable friends when I mention him) resides somewhere south of modest. I understand this. Deacon is a creator—or fabricator, to use his favored term for himself—of disconcerting objects of variable size (from small to monumental) and unpredictable design (airily looping, glumly massy) made of materials that have included, by turn or in combination, wood, steel, iron, ceramic, plastic, linoleum, and leather. Many of his pieces are held together by excessive amounts of glue or multitudinous screws, as if to withstand an earthquake or a nuclear war—a funny effect, faintly evoking the embarrassment experienced upon finding oneself overdressed at a party.



Gallery view of works by Deacon. Left to right: "Mire" (2017), "Under the Weather #2" (2016), "Wave" (2018), and "Neuss" (2015).

Courtesy the artist and the Marian Goodman gallery

Deacon's show adds inkjet-printed digital photography to his list of mediums—big, sumptuous color pictures that he took of landscapes, still-lives, insects, animals, and whatnot on world travels and around his home, in London. (The show is titled “House & Garden.”) One shot that suggests a starry sky has actually captured flash reflections in the eyes of tiny, swarming fish. In another, tourists crowd along the top rail of an immense cruise ship. Each photograph is mounted and framed on a panel that leans back against another, forming what looks like a peaked roof, and they sit on a finely carpentered wooden table that is about the size of kindergarten furniture. The paired pictures share subtleties of form: homologies. The fish eyes are mated with a closeup of gleaming chain-link fence, the cruise ship with a row of construction barriers. Eggs in a bird's nest accompany a toad held in a hand. A cactus flower rhymes with a moth.

Interspersed with those works are small, black-topped tables that bear flat, glazed, multicolored ceramic slabs cut in sinuously contoured shapes and often inset with irregular polygons of similar or contrasting patterns. Other pieces include “Under the Weather #2” (2016), a wooden tower of bent and twisting forms that stands more than eleven feet tall; “Wave” (2018), a massive work of smoothly painted steel, about the size of a grand piano, with an undulating footprint and a scalloped top; and “Mire” (2017), a low-lying network of devilishly intricate wooden structures covered by stainless-steel plates that are attached with a great many screws. Centered on a wall facing these sculptures is a photograph of a violently red slice of watermelon.



Installation view of “Home and Away” and “Flat,” by Deacon, from 2018.

Courtesy the artist and the Marian Goodman gallery

Whew? Whew. When arriving at the show, I had a moment of dismay, which I should be used to in my first encounters with Deacon's works. A sinking feeling tells me that I am going to have to do some hard thinking about something stubbornly unfamiliar before I can decide to like it—as, in the end, I always do, albeit gingerly. Though reliably handsome and spectacularly well crafted, the works aren't especially expressive or, God knows, conceivably functional. But each seems possessed of a mind of its own and doggedly intent on solving some problem that it has posed to itself: "What am I?," for starters, and "What am I doing?," for indefinite speculation, with "Why?" incipient but endlessly postponed. You pretty well must smile so as not to take as tragic the recognition that those questions are chronically your very own, concerning yourself. ♦

This article appears in the print edition of the January 28, 2019, issue, with the headline "Enigma Variations."



*Peter Schjeldahl has been a staff writer at *The New Yorker* since 1998 and is the magazine's art critic. He is the author of "Let's See: Writings on Art from *The New Yorker*." [Read more »](#)*



RA LIFE

Behind the scenes at the Royal Academy



Above left and right: Richard Deacon RA and the display he has curated in the Sackler Sculpture Gallery

Richard Deacon RA brings the Academy's sculptures out to play

When The Sackler Wing of Galleries opened in 1991, as part of Norman Foster RA's transformation of Burlington House, sculptor Richard Deacon RA marvelled at the result. 'I found it fabulous riding up in the glass lift into the light,' he says, 'and I was struck by how physically interesting the space was.' With typical audacity, Foster created an entirely new reception area outside the new galleries, filling the space with light. But Foster also realised that the parapet of the 19th-century Main Galleries, which juts into that space, could be used as a long stone shelf for displays of sculpture from the Academy's art collection.

The sculptures previously displayed – a selection of statues by John Gibson RA, the famous Michelangelo Tondo, a Hellenistic Greek sculpture and casts after the Antique – had 'a wonderful clarity'. Now, with the Tondo on loan to the National Gallery, ahead of its return to a new location at the RA in 2018, Deacon has selected a new range of sculptures.

The result is fascinating, and the surprises begin when you go up in the lift. Looking out of its window, visitors now see a mischievous little cat by Robert Clatworthy RA perched on a precipitous ledge. The bronze animal, says Deacon, 'seems to be reacting' to Joe Tilson RA's four ladders, installed on the opposite side. It soon becomes clear, as Deacon guides me through this highly enjoyable display, that he has opted for contrasting works.

'It was fun choosing them,' he says, pointing at Lynn Chadwick RA's *Teddy Boy and Girl* (2002, after 1955 version). The teddy boy's hands are thrust up because he's dancing,

or maybe he's just pleased to see the girl! In terms of style, Chadwick could hardly be further removed from John Gibson RA. His virtuosic plaster relief *Phaeton Driving the Chariot of the Sun* (1846-48) has a similar subject, 'a boy racer, who is joy-riding in a chariot he stole from his Dad', yet is depicted with androgynous face and feminine hair-style. Next to this Maurice Lambert RA's lyrical *Carving in Paros Marble* (c.1937) shows 'a river goddess, so she's half water, and her hair flows into a fish. It's an extraordinary piece of carving.'

One of the largest exhibits is Lord Leighton PRA's *The Sluggard* (1885), who flexes his muscles in a very self-satisfied way. 'He may be lazy,' says Deacon, 'but he's pretty worked-out and Leighton liked his pose a lot! There are many naked men in this show, as versions of masculinity are a big part of the history of sculpture.' Wildlife – including doves, goats and dolphins – can also be found, and Bill Woodrow RA's glowing *Fingerswarm* (2000) celebrates bees and honey with great affection.

There is John Flaxman RA's Covent Garden Theatre frieze and Alfred Gilbert RA's sketch for the famous *Eros in Piccadilly*, Anthony Caro RA's cascading steel abstraction and Rebecca Warren RA's tall and bulbous hand-painted bronze. 'I wanted a mix of figurative and abstract,' Deacon explains, 'and as great a range of materials as I could find. I wanted it to celebrate sculpture. Painting dominates the RA's history, so I wanted to put sculptors right up here, at the very top of the Academy's building.' *Richard Cork is author of Face to Face: Interviews with Artists*

Richard Deacon RA Selects The Dame Jillian Sackler Sculpture Gallery, free access year-round. Visitors can hear Deacon discuss each artwork using Smartify, a free app available to download for Apple and Android.

LISSON GALLERY

Art Review
1 October 2017

Richard Deacon *Some Time*

Middelheim Museum, Antwerp 27 May – 24 September

When Sara Weyns returned from Tate Britain's Richard Deacon exhibition in 2014, she felt frustrated. Recently appointed director at Antwerp's Middelheim Museum, she knew her new home had an important Deacon sculpture in storage. But it was in horrifically bad shape. The wood was cracked and rotting, the whole object wrapped in plastic like a corpse washed up on the shore. She determined then and there (as she told me when I visited) to contact the artist and set about restoring *Never Mind*, the great polished beech lozenge that had been acquired by the museum in the year it was made, 1993. Three years later, a reinvigorated *Never Mind* is the peroration – and the largest work by some stretch – in a solo show by the venerable British artist that focuses fittingly on sculptural representations of process, transformation and temporal extension.

Some Time spreads 31 of Deacon's works throughout almost the entire expanse of the museum's 30-hectare park. A path that crosses the property leads past Henry Moore's *King and Queen* (1952–3), newly crowned with birdshit, and Erwin Wurm's *Mixentztable* (2010), a weirdly

plastic yacht, dangling precariously over the grand country house's moat in an image of pathetic masculinity, before reaching the first of several works in the show from Deacon's *Infinity* series (2001–06). Such series are an important part of the sculptor's work, and they seem to represent less the safe bet of repeating a hit, more something like the way American minimalist composer Tom Johnson writes musical notes: eking out every possible combination through a mathematical process of combinatorics. These cream cracker-like forms in stainless steel, blown up to the size of family dining tables, tease at a quasi-painterly flatness, extending through sequences of interconnected cogs in a machine without end or purpose.

Means of production are drawn into the aesthetics of Deacon's sculptures, with works like *Body of Thought #2* (1988), a knot of twisted ventilation shafts, and *Morning Assembly* (2008), an Escher-like form in mottled green ceramic and steel, leaving their rivets and seams proudly on display as testament to their processes of construction. But temporal passage comes into other works in more metaphorical ways. *I Remember (1)*

(2012) and *I Remember (3)* (2013) consist of long wooden struts that seem to bend and twist impossibly, against the inclinations of the material, but for Deacon, as the title suggests, the way the configuration of beams alters from one end to the other represents the passage of memory, rearranging the same elements with time (to me, they are evocative of flight paths or, more prosaically, a fistful of undercooked linguine).

At the end of the park, the freshly minted *Never Mind* looks justly proud, gleaming in the sunlight. No longer wood-beamed like the hull of a ship, its new aluminium form gives it the air of a UFO – a retrofuturist gesture that would have been almost unthinkable in 1993 but seems perfectly germane to the mid-2010s. But what's nicest about *Some Time* as a show is the way it brings into its purview, through a film on display in one of the garden's pavilions, a detailed book and other accompanying texts, what had previously been the dirty secret of sculpture parks the world over: the very fact that works do decay and need repairing, the reality of time passing – even for the supposedly 'permanent' world of sculpture. Robert Berry



Never Mind, 1993–2017, wood, stainless steel, epoxy.
330 × 765 × 300 cm. Courtesy the artist and Middelheim Museum, Antwerp

LISSON GALLERY

The Week
31 May 2017

THE WEEK PORTFOLIO



GEMMA
BILLINGTON
MAY 31, 2017
CULTURE

The Turner Prize-winning artist and 'master of abstract sculpture' unveils his first solo outdoor exhibition at the historic sculpture park



Description : Richard Deacon, (left) 2001, Infinity #13 and (right) 2006, Infinity #31

In 1993, Antwerp was named European Capital of Culture. In response, the Middelheim Museum, a sculpture park on the outskirts of the city, embarked on a new creative direction by purchasing ten contemporary artworks for a permanent exhibition it called simply New Sculptures. Among them was a newly commissioned piece by British artist Richard Deacon called *Never Mind*, a large blimp-shaped object made from birchwood.

'The construction of *Never Mind* came at a period when I stopped making things in one way and was trying to find different ways of working with wood,' explains Deacon at a gathering at Middelheim Museum a few days before the opening of his new solo exhibition. 'One of the ways I thought was to use it in the same way you might build a barrel or boat, by planking, and I guess I thought that *Never Mind* could work outside in the same way as wooden boats worked in the sea. I was mistaken in that thought.'

Shortly after it was installed, it transpired that *Never Mind* could not withstand outdoor conditions. Sunlight caused the wooden planks to expand and crack, which in turn led water to seep in, creating an oven-like environment – complete with steam – as Deacon recalls. It meant that just over a year later, following a couple of restoration attempts, *Never Mind* was reluctantly put into storage at Middelheim. Twenty-four years on, it was time for another go.



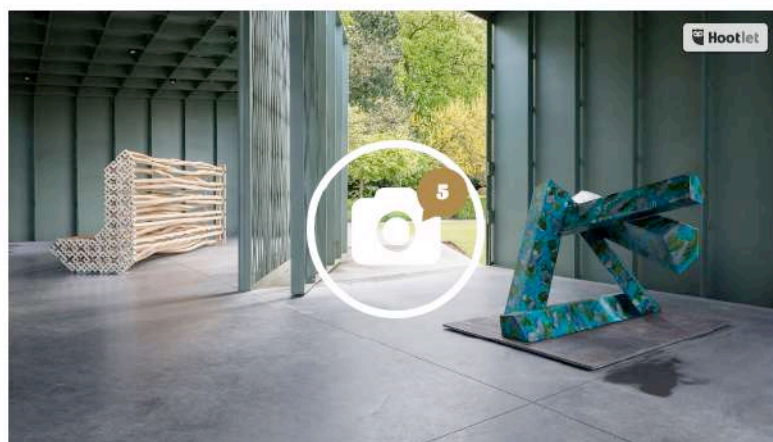
Credits : Courtesy Richard Deacon and Middelheim Museum

Description : Richard Deacon, 1993-2017, Never Mind

'This new exhibition is the first time I've made a big show of outdoor work anywhere,' says Deacon. 'The motivation for it is catapulted by the determination to reintroduce Never Mind back into the Middelheim collection. The invitation from Sara [Weyns, Director of Middelheim Museum] was along the lines of: "If we're going to do this reconstruction, which requires resources, energy, expertise and enthusiasm, then we should also do a bigger show to give it some context"'.

Never Mind has now been reproduced in hardy stainless steel. It's a smooth, alien-like creation that appears heavy and solid, yet at the same time light and balloon-like. It encompasses a distinct weightless quality that exists in many of Deacon's works.

Joining Never Mind are 30 other artworks chosen by Deacon and the Middelheim curators. These are carefully positioned around the museum's extensive grounds and pavilions. The artist and the museum's 25-year working relationship is clearly a close one and the process of 'refabricating' the artwork was a labour of love on both sides.



Description : Richard Deacon, (left) 2013, I Remember (3) and (right) 2008, Morning Assembly

The underlying theme of the exhibition, which is called *Some Time*, is that of refabrication and variation, ideas which have been common throughout Deacon's 40-year career. The title alludes to how sculpture encapsulates time 'because it takes times to make and it also lasts for a period of time'. Deacon also explains that 'resolving the problems of *Never Mind* did take time', 'so that's the simplest connection.' he adds.

The artworks chosen for *Some Time* reflect various stages and phases in Deacon's career, from one of his earliest pieces, *When The Land Masses First Appeared* (1986), to a collection of surprisingly colourful ceramics and his most recent piece, the stainless steel and drip-paint *Big Time* (2016). Other highlights include the whittled wood and steel duo *I Remember* (2012/2013), which take on a new ethereal quality in their location in the Middelheim's semi-open pavilion. Then there's the jaggedy *Infinity* series (2001-06) dotted near *Never Mind*, which playfully capture and reflect the light. These particular pieces were originally intended to be floor sculptures, explains Deacon, with the curved nodes slotting and moving together like a jigsaw. In the end, they were welded together as fixed sculptures and took on a completely new character.



Credits : Courtesy of Richard Deacon and Middelheim Museum

Description : Richard Deacon, 2016, *Big Time*

'Failures can project you along different exploratory paths, which success doesn't necessarily do,' he muses. 'Mistakes are made, but I do think you learn from them.'

And so it is with *Never Mind*, a work which for a long period of time could have been written off as a failure, but now makes a triumphant return. 'Some time' may be an understatement of how long it took to get to this point, but the end-result signals a new achievement in a truly remarkable career.

LISSON GALLERY

Art Daily

4 September 2016

http://artdaily.com/index.asp?int_sec=11&int_new=88724#.V9K7GpPhAlg

artdaily.org

The work of British sculptor Richard Deacon on view at the Langen Foundation



Other Assembly, 2008. Glazed ceramic, 160 x 220 x 190 cm. Photo: Werner J. Hannappel.

NEUSS.- The Langen Foundation is presenting the work of British sculptor Richard Deacon, one of the leading representatives of contemporary sculpture. The oeuvre of this Turner Prize recipient (1987), which spans more than four decades, is distinguished by dynamic abstract forms and an astounding variety of materials. The exhibition *On The Other Side*, developed in cooperation with the Kunstmuseum Winterthur, offers a comprehensive overview of Deacon's artwork from the last decade. With around 45 sculptures made of wood, metal, and ceramics, the exhibition highlights Deacon's multifaceted language of form and the experimental treatment of materials so characteristic of the artist's work.

Since the 1980s, Richard Deacon has been utilising a wide variety of materials in making his sculptures, such as wood, stainless steel, clay, paper, and diverse kinds of plastic. Still today he always takes the respective qualities of a given material into account when arriving at his forms by exploring the possibilities – and limitations – presented by the material. For example, in the sculpture *Orinoco* (2007) he used steam to help bend wood in such a way that the rigid material appears flexible and flowing, or in his series of works called *Assemblies* (2008) he has built complex constructions out of ceramics. Deacon's *Infinities* (2008) – reliefs of polished stainless steel – are composed of organically shaped elements, while his most recent ceramic sculptures, the *Flats* (2014), place emphasis on painterly glazing.

Deacon's sculptures arise through the work process itself, leading to results that correlate with his exhibition title *On The Other Side*, thus eluding the predictable and the conventional. As such, the artist – who likes to call himself the “fabricator” – employs both artisan and industrial techniques, while also consulting with specialists for wood, metal, and ceramics. “I like working with other people,” says Deacon about his working method, which is distinguished by close, long-term cooperative relationships and an interest in dialogue and collaborative work. Considering the strong meaning that questions of collaboration currently hold in art discourse, Richards Deacon's work makes a significant contribution in this respect as well.

Richard Deacon (b. 1949 in Bangor, Wales) lives and works in London. From 1969 to 1977 he studied at Saint Martin's School of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. Important solo exhibitions include: Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Winterthur (2015); Tate Britain, London (2014); Sprengel Museum, Hannover (2011); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008); PS1, New York (2001); MACCSI, Caracas (1996); Museum Haus Lange and Haus Esters, Krefeld (1991); Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1989); MoCA, Los Angeles (1988); and Tate Gallery, London (1985). Deacon exhibited at the Skulptur Projekte Münster in 1987 and 1997 and at documenta 9 in 1992; he represented Wales at the Venice Biennale in 2007. From 2009 to 2016 Deacon was a professor at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf.

A German/English catalogue published by Richter Verlag will accompany the exhibition, featuring texts by Dieter Schwarz and Jon Wood and an interview with Richard Deacon by Christiane Maria Schneider, 136 pages 101 illustrations, 39 euros.

LISSON GALLERY

Widewalls

10 March 2016

<http://www.widewalls.ch/richard-deacon-exhibition-lisson-gallery-milan/>

WIDEWALLS

RICHARD DEACON FOR THE FIRST TIME AT LISSON GALLERY IN MILAN

Art Exhibitions • Angie Kordic



The swirling, organic sculptures are the ones that perhaps highlight the artistic oeuvre of **Richard Deacon**, a legendary artist who has dominated the British art scene for almost four decades. It would also seem that, for him, there are no limits in materials: he has worked with everything from wood, to stainless steel, corrugated iron, polycarbonate, marble, clay, vinyl, foam and leather. Always with a story to tell, Richard Deacon's pieces are highly engaging, sophisticated and poetic, inviting the viewer to delve into their making. A selection of his recent ceramic and wooden works will now come together for his first ever exhibition at Lisson Gallery in Milan, where it will all be about *Flat Earth* and standing trees.



Richard Deacon – Flat 14, 2015. Glazed white clay, 8 x 72 x 47 cm. © Richard Deacon, Courtesy of Lisson Gallery

Flat Earth

On view in the *Flat Earth* show, there will be curious, and flat, ceramic sculptures, positioned horizontally on the ground. They represent the artist's new approach towards this medium, that has become a part of his practice in the mid-1990s. It appears that they came to be quite casually, as the works were initially gonna serve as a support for a sculpture on top. But the artist saw them as individual pieces, ready to become artworks of their own, and their flatness was simply too inviting. And so, Richard Deacon covered it with powder and paint, creating intriguing formations that evoke shifting topographies, constellations and biological formations; as if an abstract painting was made on a ceramic support and was meant to look upon from high above, recalling aerial views of the earth, like a map made of mineral-rich colors.



Richard Deacon – Flat 5, 2014. Glazed dark clay, 15 x 82 x 82 cm. © Richard Deacon, Courtesy of Lisson Gallery. Photography: Mareike Tocha

Standing Trees

In contrast, or perhaps complementing [the ceramics](#), are Richard Deacon's new wooden works. For their creation, the artist conducts an intricate process where the wood, in form of a bundle of twenty-five wooden sticks, is first steamed and twisted; then, the elements of the bundle are removed by selection and the remainder fixed together. As per tradition when it comes to Richard Deacon's art, the artworks represent a soothing combo of both simplicity and complexity, engaging our attention and provoking our thoughts. These sculptures are described as "*totemic*", modestly scaled to resemble standing trees.



Richard Deacon. © Richard Deacon, Courtesy of Lisson Gallery. Photography: Niels Dietrich

Richard Deacon at Lisson Gallery Milan

Richard Deacon describes himself as the "fabricator" of his art; the construction part of his artworks is of great importance to him. Very often the traces of creations are visible in his pieces, such as glue or screws, as if to give testament to how they came to life. They represent a form in space and time, derived from the artist's intimate conversation with his materials, which also often reflects in the titles of his sculptures. *Flat Earth*, an exhibition of works by Richard Deacon, will be on view at [Lisson Gallery](#) in Milan, Italy, from March 17th to April 29th, 2016.

All images courtesy Lisson Gallery Milan.

LISSON GALLERY

Art Media Agency
January 2016



RICHARD DEACON : SCULPTURE, POLITIQUE ET COULEUR

On ne présente plus Richard Deacon, sculpteur britannique lauréat du Turner Prize en 1987 et à qui la Tate Britain a consacré une rétrospective en 2014. Actuellement, ce géant de la sculpture expose aux côtés de Sui Jianguo et Henk Visch à la Fondation Maeght à Saint-Paul-de-Vence (« Trois hommes dans un bateau » jusqu'au 13 mars 2016).

Photo Roland Michaud
Courtoisie Fondation Maeght
© Richard Deacon



INTERVIEW • RICHARD DEACON

Le thème de la fondation Maeght pour l'année 2015 était : « Qu'est-ce qu'un artiste aujourd'hui ? ». En exposant trois sculpteurs, elle pose en filigrane la question : « Qu'est-ce qu'un sculpteur aujourd'hui ? »

Je n'ai jamais pensé devenir peintre. Travailler avec la matière a toujours été une part essentielle de mon travail, quelque chose d'assez naturel. Pourtant, je pense que je n'ai jamais été intéressé par la simple idée de créer des choses en trois dimensions. Mon activité n'en aurait que moins de sens. La sculpture est complexe à regarder, à percevoir et interpréter, c'est plus qu'une chose en trois dimensions.

La sculpture a une place singulière aujourd'hui. Par exemple, mes étudiants tendent plutôt à se considérer comme des artistes que comme des sculpteurs (Richard Deacon est professeur à l'École Supérieure des Beaux Arts de Paris (ENSBA), NDLR), et je pense que cette conception est partagée par de nombreux artistes dans le monde de l'art.

Quelle est la différence entre un artiste et un sculpteur ?

Les peintres se considèrent comme des peintres, ils n'ont pas de problème avec cela. Cette certitude quant au médium est moins prégnante chez les sculpteurs. Si l'on se définit comme artiste, sans donner de modalité à sa pratique, c'est différent que de se construire en tant qu'object-maker. Et je me considère comme un constructeur d'objet.



Richard Deacon

Courtoisie Fondation Maeght

Vous dites fréquemment que vous êtes un « fabricant ».

Oui, c'est la manière à laquelle je considère mon travail d'artiste. Je ne suis pas démagogue ni idéologue, mais je pense que nous perdriions quelque chose si nous, artistes, arrêtions de créer des objets, de les fabriquer.

Pourriez-vous revenir sur l'origine de cette exposition ? Quelle est votre relation avec Henk Visch et Sui Jianguo ?

J'ai rencontré Henk Visch en 1984 lors d'une exposition de mes sculptures à Londres. Cette rencontre a donné naissance à une amitié féconde. Nous avons gardé contact et nous nous sommes retrouvés la même année dans le cadre d'une résidence aux ateliers internationaux de l'Abbaye de Fontevraud (Maine et Loire). Finalement, nous avons organisé une exposition ensemble en 2002 (« Between the two of us » au Stedelijk Museum).

J'ai rencontré Sui Jianguo en 1999. Il faisait partie d'un comité de trois individus qui recherchaient des commissions pour la Chine. Il a découvert mon travail à la Tate. Grâce à lui, j'ai eu la chance d'exposer en Chine. Dès 2000, nous nous sommes retrouvés professeurs aux Beaux Arts de Paris (Sui Jianguo a été professeur six mois à l'ENSBA, NDLR). À différentes occasions, nous avons échangé ensemble, sur les enjeux pédagogiques de l'enseignement artistique, sur la transition entre l'académisme et les pratiques sculpturales contemporaines, sur le lien entre ces pratiques contemporaines et leur enracinement historique, etc.

In the grass I (2014)
Richard Deacon

Photo Roland Michaud
Courtoisie Fondation Maeght
© Richard Deacon



INTERVIEW • RICHARD DEACON

Tous les trois, nous nous sommes souvent retrouvés. Nous avons exposé ensemble, notamment dans le cadre de « Blickachsen 9 » en 2013 (biennale de la sculpture à Bad Homburg et Francfort-sur-le-Main) et « Habiter le monde » à la Biennale de Busan en 2014 sous le commissariat d'Olivier Kaepelin. Nous avons également beaucoup écrit les uns sur les autres.

Assez rapidement, nous avons évoqué l'idée de créer une exposition tous les trois. Nos rapports sont plus profonds qu'une simple amitié. Ils s'enracinent dans des pratiques artistiques et intellectuelles communes et se nourrissent d'un grand respect mutuel.

Le titre de l'exposition « Trois hommes dans un bateau » possède une dimension politique, que vous revendiquez – notamment enracinée dans la crise des réfugiés. Vous avez accepté en 1992 une commande du Lam (*Between fiction and fact*) du fait d'une déclaration de Margaret Thatcher. Votre travail possède-t-il une teneur politique ?

Oui. Même si je n'ai pas de message particulier à transmettre, mon travail est l'œuvre d'un artiste intégré au monde.

Au Lam, j'ai accepté la commande de l'État français, car j'étais vraiment en colère suite à une déclaration de Margaret Thatcher, qui stipulait que la « glorieuse » révolution anglaise avait été antérieure et plus radicale que la Révolution française. Je trouvais cela ridicule et insultant. J'en ai fait une affaire personnelle ! La commande de *Between fiction and fact* au Lam était organisée dans le cadre de célébrations pour le bicentenaire de la Révolution française.



Something like happenings (2013)
Richard Deacon
Photo Roland Michard
Courtoisie Fondation Maeght
© Richard Deacon

De la même manière, à la Tate Liverpool, mon exposition « New World Order » (1999) était une réponse à une déclaration de Bill Clinton.

Politiquement, il est étonnant de voir la manière à laquelle les choses évoluent. Sans avoir de message à passer, les artistes demeurent des êtres politiques. « Trois hommes dans un bateau » s'inscrit donc dans le contexte de la crise des réfugiés, de la refonte des frontières – un concept largement partagé avec la sculpture et particulièrement dans mon travail. Nos problématiques ne sont pas uniquement formelles ; elles s'inscrivent dans le monde et son évolution.

Pouvez-vous revenir sur la question de frontière ?

Ces derniers temps, j'ai beaucoup réfléchi à la manière dont l'art abolit les frontières, notamment dans ses derniers développements – avec l'« immersivité » de l'art, sa dématérialisation, etc. De plus en plus, l'art s'affranchit des questions de frontières.

Je pense que le fait de créer des œuvres indépendantes de l'individu devient une pratique minoritaire. Nous perdons peut-être la capacité à apprécier les choses de l'extérieur, à extraire du sens de ce qui est indépendant de nous, extérieur à nous.



Vue de l'exposition
Photo Roland Michard
Courtoisie Fondation Maeght
© Richard Deacon



Small Time #3 (2015)
Richard Deacon

Photo Roland Michaud
Courtoisie Fondation Maeght
© Richard Deacon

INTERVIEW • RICHARD DEACON

Sans cette capacité, nous limitons pourtant sévèrement notre capacité à comprendre la condition humaine, et celle des autres. Nous projetons nos propres incompréhensions sur ce que nous percevons. Je travaille actuellement dans ce sens : je cherche à formaliser cette réflexion.

Dans un monde où tout doit être intelligible rapidement, quel est le rôle de l'art ?

L'ambiguïté a une place très importante dans l'art. Cultiver l'ambiguïté, ce n'est pas s'échapper de ses responsabilités, ou refuser de donner du sens à son travail. Au contraire, l'ambiguïté favorise la construction du sens, beaucoup plus que la certitude ou la clarté. Un message clair n'a que peu d'intérêt selon moi.

It's like a Rock (2015)
Richard Deacon

Vue de l'exposition

Photo Roland Michaud
Courtoisie Fondation Maeght
© Richard Deacon

Votre travail est sériel et repose sur des thèmes transversaux : la théorie du chaos, ou l'idée d'émergence par exemple. Vous intéressez-vous actuellement à une nouvelle problématique ?

Ce sont les petites choses, beaucoup plus que les grandes, qui vous font changer. Personnellement, ces trois dernières années, j'ai vraiment pris conscience du potentiel qu'avait la couleur en tant que matière. Dans le passé, je ne considérais la couleur que comme une caractéristique de la matière, une propriété. Aujourd'hui, et c'est peut-être parce que je me suis intéressée à la céramique, je considère presque la couleur comme un matériau en trois dimensions, comme une substance, un phénomène. ♦



The Guardian

15 November 2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/nov/15/richard-deacon-interview-i-wouldnt-like-to-feel-itd-be-a-failure-to-stop>

theguardian

Richard Deacon
Seven ages of an artist

Richard Deacon, 66: 'I wouldn't like to feel it'd be a failure to stop'

The master of abstract sculpture has learned to ride the ups and downs of his own career - but reserves the right to retire

Interview by **Kate Kellaway**

Sunday 15 November 2015
09.00 GMT



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Richard Deacon photographed in his studio in south London: 'I have crashed from time to time.' Photograph: Antonio Olmos for the Observer



The seven ages of an artist

Read more

I was starting out as an artist in the 70s when the art market barely existed for contemporary art. There was virtually no commercial activity. The idea of a career didn't really come into it. I'm not particularly practical, I'm slightly clumsy and inept, but tools and materials and the relationship of action to things I was always interested in. At primary school in Plymouth, I built a replica bronze-age hut out of pebbles and mud. My father was trained as an aircraft fitter and was very precise in his engineering skills. I don't have that kind of mind. I can't make things work but always liked the way materials led to things being built. I also liked sewing and knitting. My mother taught me to knit - I knitted a scarf for my teddy bear. Later, I sewed my own clothes. At the same time, there was always some disgust involved in the relationship to materials: I didn't like the feeling of rust or the smell of grease.

“

There was a connection between what was happening there and the kind of messing about I liked

”

My parents were very good at not imposing expectations. I wasn't sure I'd be an artist but knew it was an essential activity in my life. My parents thought I would become a biologist because I was interested in natural history.

I grew up in various places: Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Plymouth, Sri Lanka. And we had a house in Dorset. It was pretty grim in England in the early 50s and so when we went to Sri Lanka, it seemed a tropical paradise. When I went to secondary school in Plymouth, the art master ran an after-school class where there was plaster, scrim, pieces of wood you could carve and there was a lightbulb moment when I realised there was a connection between what was happening there and the kinds of messing about I liked. The first thing I made was a carving of a pig's head. I saw a piece of wood that looked like a pig's head and amplified that, which was what I thought you did.



After 1998, installed at Tate Britain in 2014 as part of Richard Deacon's retrospective there. Photograph: Carl Court/AFP/Getty Images



After I left the Royal College in 1978, I spent a whole year looking for a studio with showing space. I wanted to do things on my own initiative before I approached any commercial gallery. I needed autonomy and security so my future was not in the hands of someone else. There are all sorts of difficulties for young artists - property prices in London, finding a studio...

What advice would I give my younger self? The big worry is money. If you do things to make money, it's a mistake. I guess the lesson is: integrity is hard won but easily lost and it is really hard to get back. So don't do things you feel bad about. That does not imply you need to be snotty or exclusive or elitist or whatever. It doesn't mean you think you are better than anyone else. That is really not the issue.

When I started out, I was very brash and full of confidence. I have crashed from time to time. So the other lesson is: don't worry, you'll get over it. I have been very depressed and had real crises. At the age of 20, I was full of assurance. At the age of 23, I was very, very depressed and doubtful about my own abilities. It was just after my mother had died of motor neurone disease and I had left art school. I had the feeling she had died seeing me as a failure really, someone who wasn't going anywhere and did not know where to go. I would love to have been able to share some of my success with her although we did have an extraordinarily rich relationship while she was ill.

There was another period in the 90s when things were tricky. I have had 15 very good years but it will happen again. There will be a point where I suddenly don't know what to do. I don't know why it happens. If I did, I would take steps to avoid it. People assume artists don't retire. I think an artist should be able to retire. People assume it a wonderful gift that you would continuously want to explore, and indeed it is, but I also think it shouldn't be a problem to stop. One should maintain the freedom to say: OK, I am going to stop now, I am going to retire. I don't know when that time will come but I wouldn't like to feel that it'd be a failure to stop. Sports people have to know when to stop and it isn't an issue for them. Yet there are few artists that stop.

- [Rachel Jones, 24: 'Trying to second-guess what other people want is a recipe for disaster'](#)
- [Laure Prouvost, 37: 'I feel I have lived many lives'](#)
- [George Shaw, 49: 'Every second, every ounce of time has to be accounted for'](#)
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Plinth

5 November 2015

<http://plinth.uk.com/blogs/in-the-studio-with/65146947-richard-deacon>

Plinth

In the Studio with Richard Deacon

05.11.15

Plinth writer and curator Chloe Grimshaw caught up with British sculptor Richard Deacon during a rare moment back in the UK, following his recent trips to India, China and Switzerland to work on new shows and exhibitions.

Walking to his Herne Hill studio reveals a panoramic view of the new skyscrapers that have emerged in the City of London, from the Gherkin to the Cheesegrater. Having lived and worked in South London for over forty years, Deacon shares his views on how London and the art scene has changed during this time.



Models for some of Richard Deacon's monumental sculptures.

- CG What was the art scene like in London when you were starting out in the 1970s?
- RD In the Seventies, the gallery scene in London was kind of dead, it was all happening outside galleries. There's a very good Acme film about the first 10 years of Acme which gives you a feeling of what London was like in the 70s, with buildings patched together with corrugated iron and desolate streets, but it was artists initially that got things going, rather than gallery initiatives.
- CG How does it compare to the current gallery scene in London and New York?
- RD I'm in the process of preparing a talk for China about it, called 'London Calling' because I think the last fifteen years here in London have been just amazing. London in the last fifteen years is not unlike Paris at the turn of the century in the 1900s, or New York in the Fifties. The ambition and the opportunities that have appeared here are really, really incredible and I think it's fantastic to have been around for it.



Maquettes for Richard Deacon's work.

London in the last fifteen years is not unlike Paris at the turn of the century in the 1900s or New York in the Fifties. The ambition and the opportunities that have appeared here are really, really incredible and I think it's fantastic to have been around for it.

Richard Deacon

CG Can you outline a typical day in the studio?

RD Because I travel quite a lot, it's hard to have a typical day. I try to get here for 6 o'clock. Then I can have 2 or 3 hours working here at the computer or at the table over there. I wouldn't really start physically making stuff until later in the day. In a way I wish I had an office that was separate from the studio because there is a compulsion to come here and deal with all of the emails and to get that out the way before you can start working. When you're travelling a lot, that backlog of activities tends to build up a lot.

CG Can you describe your new edition 'Icon'?

RD Matthew Perry, who works on the wooden sculptures with me, was trying to work out some quite complicated structures and twisting a smaller piece of wood, which began a whole lot of other things. We'd done a couple of tests and then Matthew came back with those shorter and longer samples with a 180 degree twist along a length of wood, left-handed and right-handed.

I thought when he gave them to me that they were such great objects that it would be good to do something with them in themselves. When Jonathan Watkins (Director of Ikon Gallery) and Paul Franklyn (Curator of Plinth) contacted me about the edition, it felt like I had something already. These twisted wooden pieces are stored in my studio, so I've been looking at them very often as I pass by them.



'Icon', by Richard Deacon, Plinth Ikon 50 Edition, 2015.

CG Describe your interest in exploring new materials?

RD The first idea for 'Icon' was as a 3D scan but we quickly realised it wasn't going to work out. Kit Grover, who produced the edition, suggested making it in cast concrete, on the basis of a sample that he had in his office. He made the test and it introduced another language, for example in the way that concrete is used on the South Bank, that brutalist use of shuttering, which is something I'd always liked, so that became a sort of subtext.

CG How important is it for you to be seen as a fabricator?

RD I think you can overdo it and I quite like the way that overdoing it undermines the structure and stops it being too literal, although there's definitely decisions about where you put your rivets in and they do form a decorative element within the structure.



Part of Richard Deacon's collection of minerals, stones and rocks.

- CG Within the studio are a huge collection of objects, from ancient rocks to Play Mobil figures – when did you start collecting and how has this influenced your work?
- RD I think this is motivated as much by curiosity as anything else, although there are things on these shelves I've had since I was four or five years old! A lot of them are found, some are bought and they're not necessarily easy to distinguish between. There's a bit of memory, a bit of autism and a few samples of work.
- I've always been impressed by architects offices which have material libraries and some things in my collection are bits of inspiration, or sources for ideas about how you might begin to put things together. On the shelves, there's obviously a division between domestic and wild and also marine and land-based, with minerals on the right and organic stuff on the left and on the far right it's much more ethnographic, with heavier ones on the bottom.
- It's not systematic; although I did used to collect stamps when I was a boy. The problem with collections' is that once you start, you eventually want to finish them off; you want to get them collected. I feel for collectors because they really can't control their world. I think the reason for collecting is having a bit of the world that you can control.
- CG When your children were born, this seemed to revive your interest in toys and collecting – can you describe this process?
- RD When my children were small, I got rather upset by the poverty of a lot of current toys like Play Mobil horses and elephants and how non-specific they were. I travel quite a lot and used to go to toyshops all over the world and I began accumulating plastic toys to bring back for them. When they grew out of them, I reappropriated the collection and continued adding to it. Those are also my mother's zoo animals in there somewhere. It was a bit do with wanting to have things that were specific.
- CG When you travel, do you have a specific goal in mind – perhaps caves carved into the rockface in India, or carved Buddhas in Sri Lanka – or do you just find things to collect on the way to a new show opening or exhibition?
- RD This studio table is where I experiment with materials and I'm starting to accumulate quite a lot of stone, which is an indicator of my developing interest. I went to the Himalayas and I came back with a suitcase full of rocks that was incredibly heavy, it was a ridiculous thing.
- I do tend to come back with things and also with seeds. Some of the plants over there are grown from seeds that I've brought back. This big tall one was a seed that came back with me and then you take on a responsibility for it. There's a whole big packet of things that I was going to throw away and then I decided that I'd give them a go – I don't know what this plant is going to be but it's really quite exciting.

'Icon', by Richard Deacon, is available to pre-order now, for purchase from 11th of February 2016.

Richard Deacon will be in conversation with Dr. Gilda Williams at the Plinth Gallery on the 3rd of March. Book tickets [here](#).

I think this is motivated as much by curiosity as anything else, although there are things on these shelves I've had since I was four or five years old! A lot of them are found, some are bought and they're not necessarily easy to distinguish between. There's a bit of memory, a bit of autism and a few samples of work.

Richard Deacon

Richard Deacon: 'This Is Where Ideas Come From'

20 July 2015 1



Dr Meredith Hale, Speelman Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge talks about their new show.

One does not expect to find tables covered with models from the studio of one of the world's most celebrated contemporary sculptors in the Combination Room of a Cambridge college. More likely would be academics reading newspapers or chatting over coffee after lunch. Yet Wolfson has never been a traditional Cambridge college. Founded in 1965 as a graduate college, Wolfson embraced its modernity from its earliest days, eschewing customs such as 'high table' and separate combination rooms for fellows and students. Instead, it sought to create traditions more in keeping with its egalitarian ethos. The focus from the start has been on fostering intellectual achievement, regardless of gender, race or rank. It is entirely appropriate, then, that Wolfson celebrates the 50th anniversary of its foundation with an exhibition that foregrounds the process of bringing ideas into being. *Richard Deacon: 'This Is Where Ideas Come From'* presents maquettes by the Turner-prize winning sculptor, revealing the complex processes with which he conceptualises and produces abstract sculpture.



1. Installation view, Richard Deacon: 'This Is Where Ideas Come From', Old Combination Room, Wolfson College, Cambridge 2015 (photo: courtesy of Phillip Lindley).

The Old Combination Room at Wolfson is home, until 30 September 2015, to a selection of sixteen of Deacon's models for large-scale sculptures (figs.1&2), ranging from early commissions such as *Let's Not Be Stupid* (1991) to recent works such as *Footfall* (2013). As discussed in the accompanying catalogue, they range in function from early explorations of form and engineering exercises to presentation models. The materials from which they are made are as varied as those Deacon employs for his finished sculptures—an

abbreviated list includes softwood and MDF, ceramic, plywood, steel sheets and tubes, polyurethane foam, bamboo sticks, styrene, card and the bulldog clips that Deacon added during the installation at Wolfson.

The OCR is transformed by the presence of these materials, which have been bent, folded, moulded, welded, fired, and painted. The sculptor's hand is in evidence throughout. Numbers, letters and notations written on the surfaces of many of the models alongside the bolts, tape and plastic ties that hold various elements in place, reveal their functional role in the process of fabrication. This is the first time that any of these models has ever been exhibited and their arrival at Wolfson

from the semi-industrial space of the sculptor's studio, where I first saw many of them, has been revelatory not only in terms of understanding Deacon's work but also in witnessing first-hand certain qualities that are key to his artistic process, foremost among them his embracing of collaboration and contingency and his powerful ability to manipulate space.



2. Installation view, Richard Deacon: 'This Is Where Ideas Come From', OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge 2015 (photo: courtesy of Phillip Lindley).

The exhibition was conceived during a conversation between the sculptor, the curator of the exhibition, Phillip Lindley, and me, the college curator, in summer 2014. I first met Richard in February of that year at the private view of his retrospective at Tate Britain. Phillip, an art-historian specialising in medieval and early modern sculpture, had worked with Richard on their co-curated show *Image and Idol: Medieval Sculpture* in 2001-2, a collaboration intended to forge a new paradigm for exhibition display by combining historical materials with contemporary installation. Phillip is still regularly asked to speak about the show and had been in contact with Richard when writing a retrospective account of its background (for a book co-edited by Wolfgang Brueckle, *Mittelalterliche Kunst in Ausstellungen*, which will appear later this year). We visited Richard's studio in the early summer of 2014 to discuss Wolfson's fiftieth anniversary and the possibility that he might loan some of his graphic works to the college for a small show. Richard was very interested in the other exhibition I am organizing for Wolfson, together with Sebastiano Barassi of the Henry Moore Foundation, *Henry Moore and Photography*, which explores Moore's use of photography in conjunction with maquettes for the production of his large-scale sculptures. After coffee and a discussion of the show for Wolfson, Richard paused and said 'what about models?' Phillip and I had seen the models for *Another Mountain* (2007) and *Congregate* (2011) on the floor in front of the shelves displaying Richard's many miniature collections, photos of which sometimes feature in the back of exhibition catalogues. Around the corner from Richard's desk and hidden from view, were shelving units filled with models for some of his best-known earlier works such as *Struck Dumb* (1989) and *Nobody Here But Us* (1991). The models had never been exhibited before. This was not an offer to be turned down.



3. Richard Deacon and Phillip Lindley installing the presentation model for an unexecuted commission (1995) for the Irish Museum of Modern Art (photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale).

I had first been introduced to Deacon's work when preparing for a graduate seminar with Simon Schama at Columbia University, where I received my PhD, and have ever since been interested in questions associated with the siting of large-scale sculpture, particularly in relationship to the natural environment. Both this exhibition and *Henry Moore and Photography* have allowed me to return to this subject and *Richard Deacon: 'This Is Where Ideas Come From'* is revelatory in this regard. Given that Deacon's work is

most often associated with urban settings, industrial materials and 'man-made' forms, it is remarkable that one of the maquettes displayed at Wolfson shows how carefully he planned to integrate his sculpture into the landscape. The presentation model for IMMA – an unexecuted commission in 1995 for a wooded setting at the Irish Museum of Modern Art – shows every tree and bush on the selected site (fig.3). Deacon spent three days mapping the space, photographing and recording each tree and the work, comprised of three ovoid components joined together by a ring, carefully accommodates them all in the model. IMMA is just one of a number of examples of Deacon's careful consideration of the spaces in which his large-scale works are positioned and the Old Combination Room, in which this exhibition appears, is no exception.

For me, as the college curator, the primary challenge was the absence of a dedicated gallery space. Given our status as a graduate college, students are in residence throughout the year and the majority of our spaces are, therefore, heavily used, and for a variety of purposes. We first proposed as a venue the (new) Combination Room, a large well-lit first-floor room facing the front of the College in which our first and third exhibitions of the anniversary year, *The Royal Academy at Wolfson* (31 January-19 December 2015), curated by Anthony Green RA, now hangs and where *Henry Moore and Photography* (9 October 2015-28 February 2016) will be exhibited. The room, purpose built in the mid-1970s, is entirely appropriate for the display of graphic works and it can also comfortably house some small sculptures in two exhibition cases. An exhibition of larger three-dimensional works on bases or stands, however, would not be safe in a space that frequently hosts seminars, lectures and dinners.

The Old Combination Room, the former dining room in Bredon House, which was built in 1914 and taken on by the College in 1965, was proposed as an alternative. It poses a range of severe challenges for the display of contemporary art. The room is lit on one side by lead-paned windows and the walls are covered in dark oak paneling. A fireplace is at one end of the room; photographs of former fellows and donors line the walls; and 'gothicising' light fixtures from the 1960s hang from the ceiling. It couldn't be further from the white cube gallery spaces in which contemporary art is most often exhibited and could easily be seen as a space that is antagonistic to the display of works of art. To our initial surprise, Richard embraced the challenges posed by this room, but having worked with him at Tate Britain, Phillip had complete confidence that Deacon would master this rather eccentric space. Richard's entirely positive and collaborative approach, an important grant towards exhibition costs from the Henry Moore Foundation, and matching-funding from the College via the Bursar Christopher Lawrence, as well as some creative problem-solving on the part of other colleagues, such as the Secretary of the Fine Arts Committee, Margaret Greeves, and the Clerk of Works, Neil Newman, meant that the room was ready to receive the exhibition on 23 June, with display tables made 'in house' and a new security system installed. The enthusiastic support of Wolfson's president, Sir Richard Evans, and his wife, Dr Christine Corton, has also been essential to the staging of this world-class exhibition in such a surprising location.

Richard Deacon had not seen the Old Combination Room until he arrived at Wolfson for the installation of the models. We had given him several photos of the space, a video taken on Phillip's mobile, and ground plans provided by the clerk of works. After various discussions, sixteen models were selected, spanning much of Deacon's long and distinguished career and illustrating many different parts of the process of fabrication. (The models are arranged formally as opposed to chronologically in the show and are identified by numbers on the tables that



4. Richard Deacon's plans for the placement of exhibits in the OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge
(photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale).

correspond to the analyses in the catalogue). Once he had settled on the space, Richard drew a scale model and devised a strategy for the installation. Like *It's a Small World* (2007), the models would be shown together on exhibition tables, built to Richard's requirements. He specified three large tables, each having a dimension on top of 140 × 260 cm, with two of them butted to give an overall top dimension of 140 × 520 cm, and one small table, 75 × 75 cm, to house the ceramic model for *Mountain* (2005). All were to be 90 cm in height. One is placed horizontally in front of the fireplace; the two joined tables run the length of the room; and the small table sits at the end of the room to one side at the foot of the T shape. Richard had mapped out the placement of each work in advance in the studio. He brought the 'footprint' plan with him, placed it at the end of one of the tables and had each model uncrated and put directly in place according to the plan.



5. Richard Deacon setting up the maquette for *Let's Not Be Stupid* in the OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge
(photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale).

A testament to Richard's creative adaptability was his response when he arrived in the Old Combination Room. Apart from thinking it was slightly narrower than he had expected — which was remedied as soon as we removed the row of chairs against the wall — it was exactly as he anticipated it. My main concern throughout the process was to do justice to the works and when I had asked Richard if he would like any changes made to the room — perhaps the removal of the photographic portraits — he had responded that he

wouldn't in any way want to alter the space and that, as a general rule, spaces should be changed as little as possible. This was an important point for me to consider moving forward and contemplating future exhibitions at Wolfson — to let the space and the works find a way to relate to one another as opposed to forcing one, unnaturally, to accommodate the other.

The installation process was fascinating, particularly watching Richard react to the light in the room and the inevitable shifts in the space as each model was uncrated and placed. In silence and with quick meditative movements — not unlike those of a conductor — Richard adjusted the positioning of the models during the course of the day and the space began to organize itself around the sculptures. The arrangement of works on the first table changed very little. IMMA, with its large contoured base reflecting the landscape and individually numbered trees, occupies, as seen in Richard's scale plan, a third of the table close to the window. The rest of this table is dedicated to three works indicated to scale by their footprints: the long thin studio model in MDF and card for *Let's Not Be Stupid* (figs.5 & 6); the wood and MDF model supplied to the fabricators of *Not Out of the Woods Yet* (2003) built in aluminum; and one of the steel models for the multi-coloured ceramic *Assembly* series of 2008. The model for *Let's Not Be Stupid* was placed, as planned, on the left-hand side of IMMA. *Assembly*, 8, and *Not Out of the Woods Yet* changed places. Other subtle changes were made: Richard rotated the scale figure in front of *Not Out Of The Woods Yet* from a side view to facing the work and he added bull dog clips to secure parts of the fragile card and MDF model for *Let's Not Be Stupid*.



6. Phillip Lindley & Richard Deacon installing the maquette for *Let's Not Be Stupid* in the OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge (photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale).



7. Richard Deacon and Phillip Lindley installing the maquettes in the OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge; *Mountain* and *Island* in the foreground (photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale).

such as *Footfall* (2013), *Ebbsfleet* (2008), and *Struck Dumb* (1988) moved around as their formal relationships to one another shifted.

The arrangement of the models on the two tables running the length of the room changed more dramatically during the course of the installation. A number of key works stayed where they were initially placed — the models for *Island* (1989) and *Mountain* (2008) remained on the end of the table opposite one another (fig.7); *Moor* (1990) stayed on the side of the table closest to the window; and *Nobody Here But Us* (1990, fig.8) remained in the centre of the table, on the far side from the windows. Others,

The most significant change was to the height of *Moor*. It was first raised on three plinths (fig.9), reflecting the final work's placement atop viaduct piers, but due to the single light source from the windows, it dominated the display and so Richard brought it down to table level (fig.10). The small table for the ceramic model for *Mountain* (2005) was moved, with the heavy model on it, diagonally across the room, where it now pulls the viewer round the main table. At the end, what I feared was a space antagonistic to contemporary art had, in Richard's hands, become an astonishing synergy of old and new.



8. Richard Deacon installing the maquette for *Nobody Here But Us*, OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge (photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale)



9. Installation view, Richard Deacon: *This Is Where Ideas Come From*, OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge with maquette for *Moor* raised on plinths (photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale).

of the Woods Yet — while others, such as the pieces of tape bearing large question marks on the ceramic model for *Mountain*, indicate a dialogue in progress. Abstract sculpture is most often considered in conceptual and intellectual terms — this show foregrounds facture. The maquettes encourage the viewer to contemplate the processes involved in making sculpture.

Organizing this exhibition has been a revelation in visual, conceptual and intellectual terms. It is hard to remain neutral about these objects, which through the complex numbering systems, notations and accidental paint smears, powerfully evidence the sculptor's hand. These marks often constitute a dialogue between Deacon and the fabricators of his sculptures. Some are clear directions — 'small A to large A' written on the pieces of tape appended to *Not Out*

While *Richard Deacon: This Is Where Ideas Come From* may at first seem an eccentric exhibition, the Combination Room of a modern Cambridge college is the perfect setting for works whose primary function is the exploration, contemplation and resolution of various formal, conceptual and intellectual questions. Indeed, the development of Wolfson College parallels that of Deacon as an artist. In 1965, the year the College was founded, the 16 year-old Deacon was spending his evenings and Sunday afternoons in the art room at school, working with whatever materials were to hand including pottery and lithography (though on copper plates as no one yet knew how to use the new litho press). It is perhaps fitting that our lunch on the day of the installation, eaten alongside students and fellows on long tables in the College's dining hall, reminded him of school and of his artistic origins: for the exhibition itself is about beginnings.



10. Installation view, *Richard Deacon: 'This Is Where Ideas Come From'*, OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge with maquette for *Moor* at table level (photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale)

Main image: Richard Deacon installing the maquette for *Congregate*, OCR, Wolfson College, Cambridge (photo: courtesy of Meredith Hale)

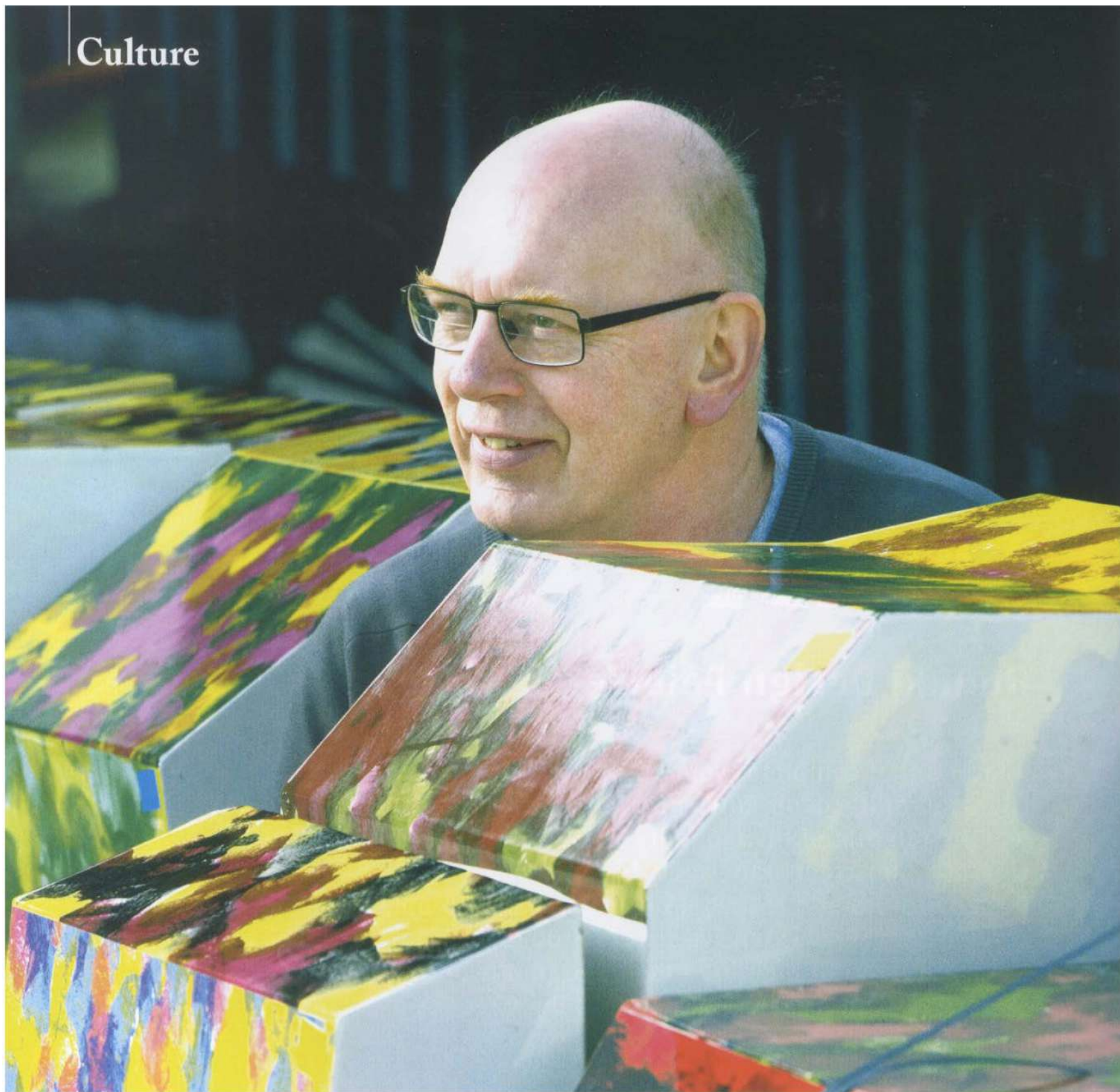
Richard Deacon: 'This Is Where Ideas Come From', the Old Combination Room, Wolfson College, Cambridge CB3 9BB.

7 July – 30 September 2015, Tuesday – Sunday inclusive, 12:00 to 16:00.

Exhibition catalogue available from Dr Hale: mmh43@cam.ac.uk



Culture



INTEGRATED ARTWORK

Artist *Richard Deacon* writes about his collaborations with architect Eric Parry, including a design for the Millennium Bridge and the colourful ceramic facade on London's Piccadilly



Architects and artists are different but can have similar concerns about craftsmanship, materials and visual weight; and both architecture and art exist in the real world. There is no reason why we should get along, although it's nice when we do – successful collaborations between the two disciplines are rather wonderful, but too often artists are invited along as decorators. I happen to think that people started making highly sophisticated sculpture long before they began making sophisticated buildings, and that the terms of the relationship between building and sculpture are changeable. If a building is an object, the contained or juxtaposed sculpture is its subject. What would it be like if it were the other way round? – the Statue of Liberty is perhaps a case in point. What is more interesting in the relationship, especially if the artwork is incorporated into the fabric of the building itself, is the sense that the combination has to work as a whole; the architectural elements and the artwork have to come together so that one could not exist without the other.

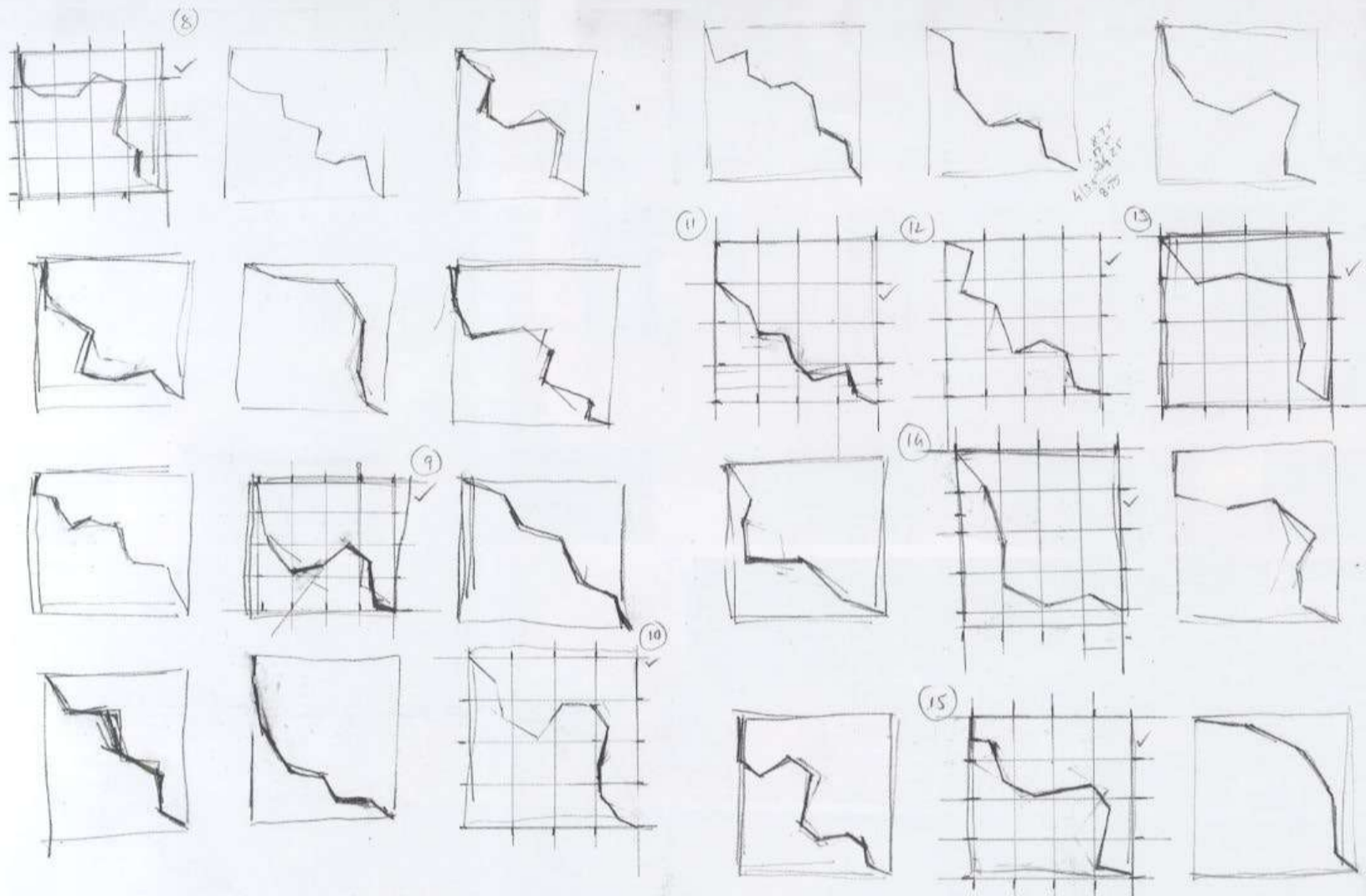
My collaboration with Eric Parry started in 1996, when we were put together as a team for the Millennium Bridge commission. Neither of us can remember who

Opposite Richard Deacon among the ceramic blocks used for the facade at One Eagle Place
Above The blocks in place at One Eagle Place, and in a dry lay prior to installation

DISCUSSION
 3-2=1: *Bridge, Bangle & Cornice*, a conversation between Richard Deacon and Eric Parry, chaired by Alex de Rijke, dean of the School of Architecture, Royal College of Art, 16 December 2014, Lecture Theatre 1, Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore, London SW7

paired us up (it was a requirement that architects teamed up with artists in preparing their submissions). However it happened, it was an inspired choice and, as demonstrated by the bridge model at our recent exhibition, *Bridge, Bangle & Cornice*, we had a very good idea! In fact Eric and I had both been at the Royal College of Art in the mid-'70s – he in Environmental Design and myself in Environmental Media, on the seventh floor of the Darwin Building, to the right and left of the elevator banks, so it is highly likely that at some time or other we shared the same lift. There is considerable symbiosis between Eric's interests and my own – including structure, materials and methods, but also history and context. In our proposal for the Millennium Bridge it was this shared interest in structure that drove the project forward.

Despite not winning that commission, there was a sense of unfinished business, that there could be a project we could do together. In 2000 Eric invited me to contribute to the office building he was designing at 30 Finsbury Square. What fired my imagination was his radical persistence in making a modern building in stone. He also paid me the compliment of having engineered a ▶



suitable location for the artwork on the facade. Although the building was built, the sculptural intervention did not happen. Nevertheless, that sense of there being a possibility of working together had been reinforced.

A joint project was finally realised at One Eagle Place, the office and retail building on London's Piccadilly (AJ 04.07.13). The main attraction for me was the use of faience for one of the facades, with the implication that it would be practical to consider ceramic in building – and not just surfacing – the 39 blocks forming the cornice. I began a steep learning curve in the production and installation of architectural ceramics, and the strengths of being associated with a multidisciplinary practice became apparent. The work of the artist follows different dynamics than that of the architect. Artists have the luxury of time to fiddle around with what interests them

Artists have the luxury of time to fiddle around with what interests them

Above One Eagle Place, cornice sectional sketch study by Richard Deacon

Opposite left, top and middle Model of Eric Parry and Richard Deacon's design for the Millennium Bridge

Opposite top right Sketch of 30 Finsbury Square by Eric Parry

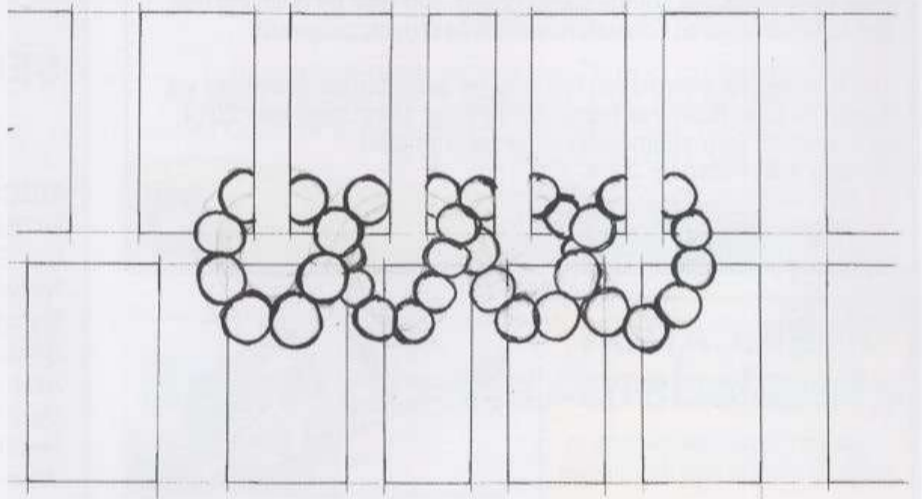
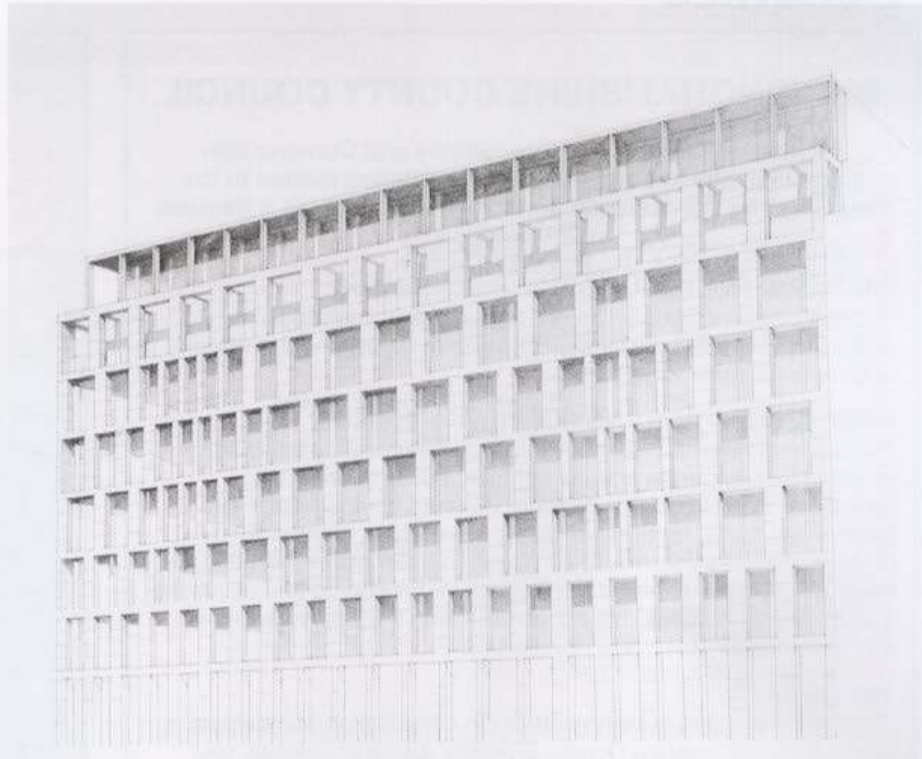
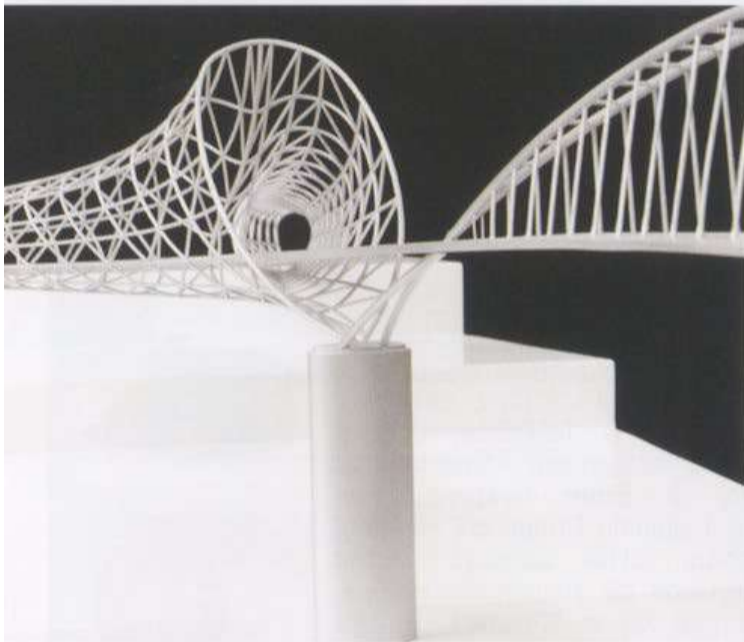
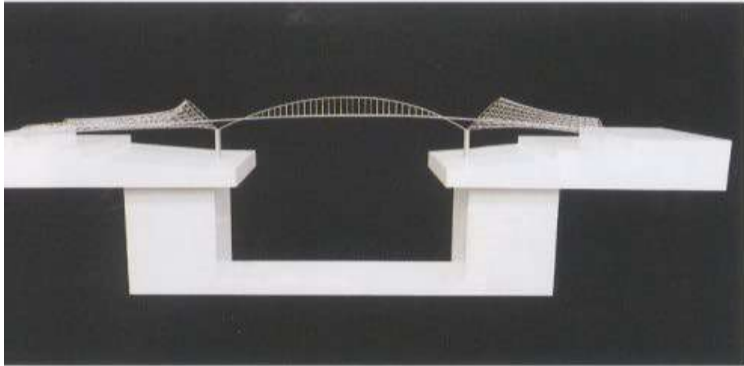
Opposite below right 30 Finsbury Square, ceramic 'bangle' facade installation, drawing study by Richard Deacon

Opposite bottom One Eagle Place viewed from Piccadilly

and don't have clients in the same way architects do. In fact, I almost never work to a brief. However, some of the challenges of working with an architect – being part of a team, ability to meet deadlines and willingness to take on board others' opinions – are challenges (and opportunities) artists also face.

The facade at One Eagle Place is on one of the busiest and most prominent thoroughfares in the country – looking across from Eros you see the building. It is really important that not just that particular facade but the whole development respects that context and adds to it. The architect paid attention to making sure the line of the cornice ran through the entire block, raising the level on the adjacent, retained, facade. This gave my contribution a key role in knitting that line together. There is also something a bit syncopated about the way in which the variety of profiles is seen as you go down Piccadilly from either direction. Approaching the building, colour and pattern on the fronts of the blocks become more visible, the complexity of their combinations across the angled surfaces is a muted reference to the cacophony of signs and colours at Piccadilly Circus itself – also reflected in the gloss faience of the facade.

I suspect that there are overlaps in the way both



architects and artists start to think about something. A critical difference is the absence of a brief for the artist. In the studio it's broadly true to say that I make most of my decisions during the process, working with the material and at 1:1. The thing I make is (mostly) off-site. An architectural and building process is very different. Many, many decisions are made, and multiple different elements and procedures are brought together at the site. There are trials to make sure things work, but ultimately it all comes to bear at one place. This level of complexity doesn't exist for me, and I have enormous respect for the architect's ability to retain and project clear ideas in the light of this.

In general, when I am working, my ideas become clearer as I go along, and I foster a level of fuzziness in order to be able to take the thing in a different direction. Working with an architect involves adapting these two approaches. The very positive side is that I get to meet and exchange ideas with people who have very different ranges of expertise from me. Hopefully that somehow feeds back into the fuzziness. You would have to ask an architect whether the reverse is true. ■

Richard Deacon and Eric Parry discuss their collaboration at a talk at the Royal College of Art on 16 December

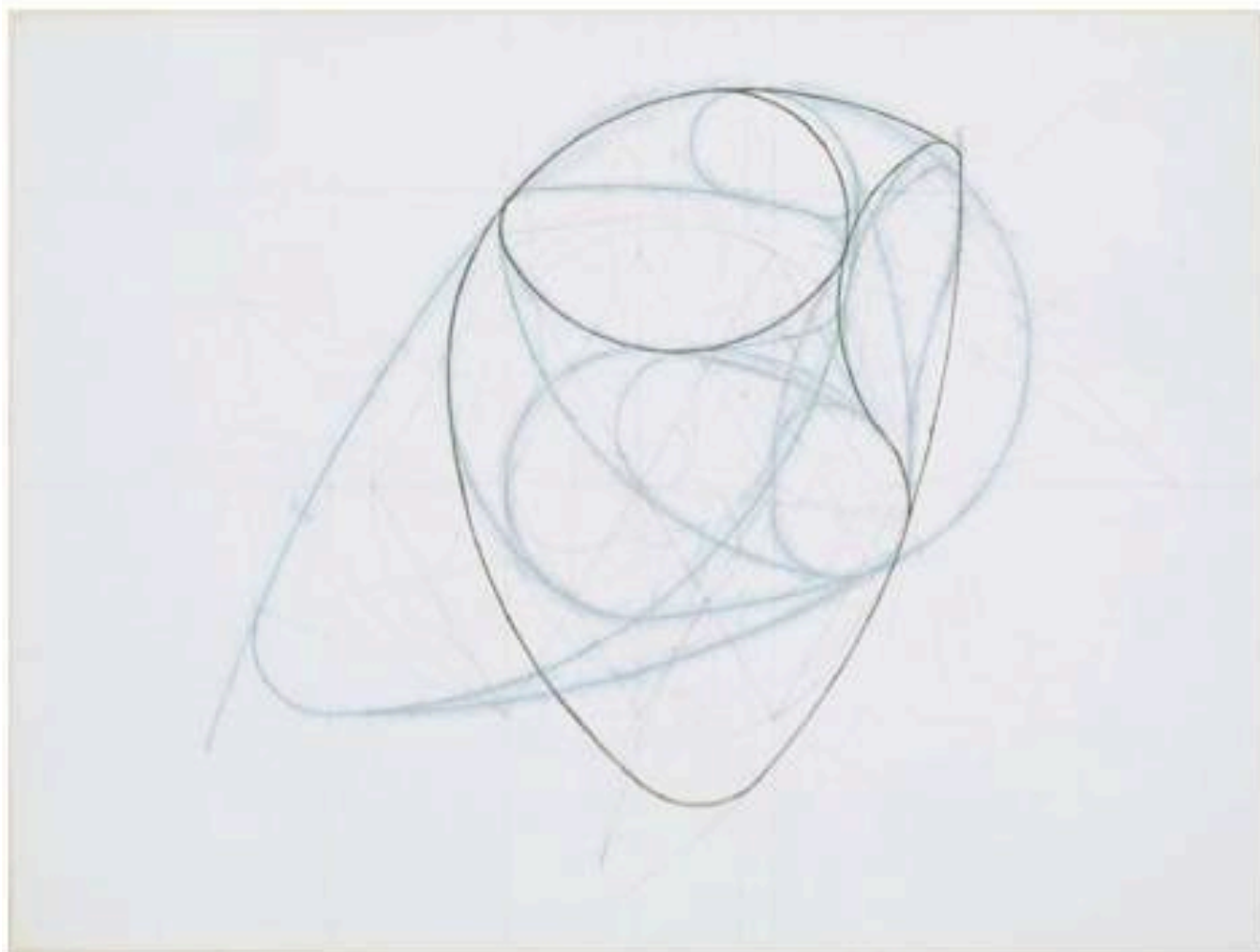


Time to draw the line

A sculptor writes beautifully about others' work

By Deanna Petherbridge. From [Art Basel Hong Kong daily edition](#)

Published online: 14 May 2014



Richard Deacon's *It's Orpheus When There's Singing #7*, 1978-9. Photo: Richard Deacon/Tate

Richard Deacon is very much the artist of the moment, after a recent impressive exhibition of cool, elegant—and complex—sculptures at London's Tate Britain, whose material experimentations serve to enhance the cohesion of a deeply serious and focused practice. The exhibition included a suite of the British sculptor's drawings "It's Orpheus When There's Singing", 1978-79, undertaken during a stay in New York and responding to the poems of Rainer Maria Rilke. They lay out a principled methodology that appears to guide the ideological commitment that inflected his selection of works for the "Abstract Drawing" exhibition at the Drawing Room, London, earlier this year.

In the lead catalogue essay, Deacon (Lisson Gallery, Thaddeus Ropac, Marian Goodman) does not attempt to unpick his understanding of "abstraction" beyond an initial statement "all drawing—at the level of mark-making—is, in some sense, abstract". This is partially echoed in the two supporting essays, although Anna Lovatt's focuses closely and informatively on the theoretical construction of some of the more formalist works.

Deacon's commitment to non-objective drawings that have "no direct or apparent external reference" ranges from the early 20th century to a fine Richard Wright work of 2006 and encompasses a wide spectrum from free gestural drawing, mark-making and automatist responses to systems-related works. It extends from sparse, open-ended sheets to heavily worked finished drawings that are densely embedded in the paper, such as those by Emma McNally and Sam Messenger. The strict monochromy of the abstract understatements of Bob Law from 1999 to 2000 sit side-by-side with the evocative pigments, physicality and textual engagement of Anish Kapoor's papier mâché works and John Golding's wax-and-pastel sgraffiti of the 1980s.

Deacon does not attempt to justify this personal and eclectic selection by any grand generalities (apart from a loose taxonomic framework suggesting that drawers are either "transmitters" or "receivers"). Instead, he writes beautifully about single drawings as entities and elucidates how the works are made; the "why" is not addressed. Although he tells us that his selection is concerned with ideas (strictly defined as "what is, or where to locate, the real") it is left to his co-authors to supply historical and theoretical context—a very traditional cohabitation of artist and art historians.

In an interview with Penelope Curtis, the director of Tate Britain, he admits, "Meaning was a problem for me in the mid-70s and may still be a problem." The things that are of concern to Deacon the maker enliven his descriptions of others' drawings. He writes lyrically about layering and transparency and use of paper, as in Dorothea Rockburne's juxtaposition of a light pencil outline and an actual sheet of carbon paper. He is responsive to the delicate pinpricks of Anni Albers's teaching studies that rhythmically perforate the sheet, or the "muscular edge" of Gordon Matta-Clark's *Untitled*, 1976-77, where a pile of sheets has been excavated to receive a formal image. This drawing is clearly related, although Deacon does not mention it, to Matta-Clark's *Conical Intersect*, 1975, where he tunnelled a circular window through semi-demolished houses in Les Halles pulled down for the construction of the Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Curiously for a sculptor, Deacon does not deal with issues of scale or spatial matters, present in Victoria Haven's intended wall-works "Double Sided 'L' Series", 2004, which stretch and curve in extendable space just as the obstinately figurative Eva Hesse coloured outline drawings of 1965 animate their paper supports into vibrating spatiality. Dawn Ades gently picks up this omission in her essay where she discusses the three-dimensional illusionism of works by El Lissitzky and devotes time to a slightly miserable little Malevich pencil composition.

Ades introduces the issue of history that Deacon has muffled, but to discuss the contemporary abstractions of Tomma Abts as being of the same order and intention as the works of the founding fathers of 20th-century abstraction is curious. It is as if the indefinable and slippery portmanteau term "abstraction" at the centre of this book and exhibition is timelessly utopian, universally valid and out of history—a very problematic view for today. Although every single drawing in the world has its own autonomy and life, abstract drawings belong to a linear continuity of serial connections. Whereas a painting or finished drawing can set out an entire manifesto in one work, a small anonymous sketch by Hilma af Klint or one of her anonymous "The Five" group guided by spirits, or a computer drawing by Darrell Viner are segments of a larger idea, practice and process. Time, history and seriality are a condition of linearity.

Abstract Drawing: Curated by Richard Deacon, Dawn Ades, Richard Deacon and Anna Lovatt, Ridinghouse in association with Drawing Room, 128pp, £17.95, \$32 (pb)

There lies a sleeping giant

They were once at the cutting edge of British sculpture. Thirty years on, how do [Richard Deacon](#) and Bill Woodrow measure up in two rare retrospectives?



Waldemar Januszczak

The Fates have got themselves involved in our understanding of British art again, arranging for [Richard Deacon](#) to have a show at Tate Britain at the same time as Bill Woodrow has a show at the Royal Academy. Yes, the overlap of the two shows lasts little more than a week, but seeing these two former giants of British sculpture displaying their wares simultaneously remains a rare opportunity to compare, contrast, evaluate and decide.

When I write “former giants”, I do not mean it as a slight. Both are significant sculptors; both can honestly be said to have changed the course of British art. But that was 30 years ago. In terms of their contemporary pertinence, the harsh truth is that both have slipped down the back of the sofa.

So jump aboard my Tardis, reader, set the dial for 1984, and travel back with me to their finest moment. We'll arrive at the last years of the Henry Moore era, awful art days when every piazza in front of every new office block seemed to have one of Moore's lumpy bronze turds dumped in it. British sculpture had grown corporate and stodgy; portentous and grandiloquent; bovine and bronze. Then, just as the tedium was becoming unbearable, who should ride onto the front line of British art and save us with their wit and their colour, their nimbleness and their invention, but Deacon, Woodrow, Cragg and Kapoor

— the four Messkateers.

Where the Mooreists made art inspired by things you might find in a Yorkshire rock formation, the Messkateers were inspired by things you might find in a skip. A typical Henry Moore looked as if it revealed the hidden essence of a natural shape; a typical [Richard Deacon](#) looked like it was made by someone who had spent his youth playing with a Meccano set. Where Moore carved, smoothed and moulded, Deacon and Woodrow assembled, drilled and riveted. Their effort prompted many changes in British art, the most important of which was to turn sculpture away from the landscape and towards the city. Thus they paved the way for Brit Art.

That was then. What about now? The [Richard Deacon](#) retrospective is long overdue, but, alas, is not the show it might have been. One problem is the scale of the galleries to which it has been sent. The basement rooms at Tate Britain are functional but characterless: they lack the height and grandeur that sculpture generally prefers. By concentrating on his bigger works, the exhibition remains low as well in the number of pieces it actually includes.

While the catalogue describes a dizzy number of approaches, the show itself contains only a few of them, and errs on the side of samey.

None of which is to say that Deacon himself is entirely faultless. He isn't. When he started out, his art was so buoyant and witty. A room devoted to the series of small works from the mid-1980s he called *Art for Other People* shows him off at his best. Small enough to fit on top of a school desk, these gorgeous little sculptures feature such inventive combinations of shapes and materials. All are strongly abstract. None reminds you of anything else. It's the juxtapositions that count: lino with marble; suede with brass; leather with stone. Here, you feel, is a sensibility that finds sculptural inspiration in sights the rest of us walk past, and spots beauty in materials the rest of us discard.

All this is also in evidence at the start of the show, in the three big pieces from the late 1970s that kick us off. One is made of wood; another of glass and

polyester; the third from galvanised steel. All three achieve a shape that is impossible to describe accurately. The galvanised steel is like a giant dunce's hat with the ends cut off. The wooden piece is a kind of cubey-triangle, with something of the workbench about it. The glass and polyester looks as if it might eventually form a sphere when combined with all the missing pieces in the puzzle.

In all these early sculptures, the hoped-for minimalism seems roughed-up and cut-price. Whereas Carl Andre's pristine steel slabs look as if they have been bought from an industrial wholesaler, Deacon, you feel, scavenged for his metals at the council dump. If I had to find an art-historical term for the fine sculpture he was making in this period, I think I'd call it dirty minimalism.

As long as his work maintains an emotional link with the scrapyards, all is well in Deacon's art. It begins to go wrong when the sculptures start losing their roughshod quality and take on a perfectly riveted smoothness. Deacon, you sense, has moved from maker to designer: scale has lost contact with effort. In particular, the huge, sprawling sculptures made of laminated timbers, in which the ribbons of wood draw snake shapes in space, become repetitive and uninteresting.

Perhaps because of the lowness of the galleries, the final half of the show is dominated by horizontal art with a ground-hugging presence. The excitement provided earlier by strikingly vertical pieces such as *Tall Tree in the Ear*, from 1984, made of galvanised steel interlocking outrageously with blue canvas, seeps out of the display. It may be an illusion, but for me the moods here begin to resemble the reclining, corporate, piazza moods of those dull Henry Moores they once overthrew.

So that's **Richard Deacon**: an exciting sculptor made dull by circumstances. Over at the Royal Academy, **Bill Woodrow**, of exactly the same generation, has also been given a retrospective, and remains a messier and more energetic presence. The first half of the show is conspicuously impressive.

Like Deacon, Woodrow studied at Saint Martin's School of Art in the 1970s and went on to source his materials in the skips of south London. But where Deacon was always a purist, interested primarily in textures and shapes, Woodrow was also a cheeky storyteller who used unglamorous materials to create witty sculptural narratives.

In his signature works from the 1980s, he would cut up various bits of domestic furniture – a washing machine, a filing cabinet – and twist the unravelled metals into unlikely new shapes: a lizard, a stag beetle, a monkey. It was the approach pioneered by Picasso when he turned a bicycle seat and some handlebars into the head of a bull. But where Picasso was merely being impish and brilliant, Woodrow's English variation on hey-presto art had something

scruffy and socialist about it: as if he were making a point about ecological despoilment and the textures of poverty.

The huge room filled here with examples is as exciting a room of British sculpture as I have seen in a long while. Unfortunately, the second half of Woodrow's career saw the delicate meanings implicit in his early work made much too explicit in the effortful allegorical bronzes that followed. It all gets preachy and clunky. But that's the second half of the show. The first half remains sensationally good. And you only have a week left to see it. 📍

Richard Deacon, Tate Britain, London SW1, until April 27; Bill Woodrow, Royal Academy, London W1, until next Sunday



Snake on a plane
Richard Deacon's
After (1998)

The Observer

The nuts and bolts of make-believe

Richard Deacon's grand, fantastical creations come replete with a pleasing sense of the workshop

Rachel
Cooke



Richard Deacon

Tate Britain, London SW1; until 27 April

The Turner prize-winning sculptor Richard Deacon likes to describe himself as a “fabricator”, his work often involving both a great many technical feats, not to mention the help of other artists and craftsmen; in 1988, for instance, he made a sculpture called *Struck Dumb* – a strange, bulbous pod that has a kind of rust-red kiss attached to one side – with the aid of steelworkers from the Govan shipyards. But, as he has pointed out, the word has a double meaning. “I quite like the idea that a fabrication can be something made up rather than truth,” he says. “When you fabricate something it has a straightforward sense of making, but it also has a sense of invention or make-believe.”

Walk through the retrospective of his work at Tate Britain – it spans 40 years and includes sculpture made of wood, metal, glass, terracotta, leather,

marble, brass and even linoleum – and you’ll grasp what he’s on about. Close up, Deacon’s most successful pieces come replete with a pleasing sense of the workshop, their nuts and bolts proudly on display, the work of a soldering iron visible like a ridged scar where sheets of metal have been joined; he brings out the Meccano-loving child in you, or perhaps (though not in my case) the DIY-loving adult. But they are also – step back a little – beautiful and extremely suggestive, calling irresistibly to mind all manner of ideas and objects. At the Tate, a paradox is in play. The airless Linbury galleries feel even more than usually spartan; Deacon’s work requires a certain amount of space to breathe, with the result that there isn’t a vast amount to see (just 25 sculptures and five drawings). And yet it’s impossible to complete a full tour in much less than an hour. Talk about ways of seeing! For my part, *Untitled #1* (1976), a grey reinforced glass and polyester scroll, looks just like an elephant’s ear, and *Fold* (2012), a towering 12-ton screen of seaweed-green glazed ceramic, resembles nothing so much as a depiction of Oz and its Emerald City. In this sense the visitor, too, becomes one of his collaborators. As his sometimes painfully contrived titles suggest, Deacon has a problem with “meaning”. It’s the process of sculpture that intrigues him, and it’s for others to make of the result what they will.

The exhibition begins with five drawings based on Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* from the period (1978-79) when Deacon was leaving behind performance-based work (his focus at St Martin's School of Art) and moving towards object-making (he began with ceramic coiled pots). Curvilinear forms made by attaching graphite to a string that was itself attached to a fixed point, these images are a statement of intent – two-dimensional plans for a three-dimensional future – and the only element of the show that will not draw

your eye for long. Move on quickly, then, to the sculpture, for it's this that quickens the pulse. In the second room are three pieces constructed from laminated wood, a favourite material of Deacon's. *Untitled* (1981) is a remarkable and lovely thing: half treble clef and half bentwood rocking chair, it seems so finely balanced, you worry a passing sneeze will tip it over. *Tall Tree in the Ear* (1984), in which laminated wood is joined by galvanised steel and blue canvas, suggests the shapes thrown by rhythmic acrobats as they prance across the competition mat – an analogy that is, perhaps, less fanciful than it sounds. Deacon was slightly anorexic as a teenager, finding weight "a bit disgusting". Heaviness doesn't interest him, which is perhaps why he has never been inclined to carve or model.

He fell for laminated wood for the way it combines "flexibility and fixed form". But it also has warmth, a domestic feeling you rarely find in work on this scale – and an idea he pursued again later in his career when he produced *Art for Other People*, a smaller series intended to sit in people's homes alongside their furniture. The Tate exhibition's curator, Clarrie Wallis, talks of these pieces as providing a "grammar of forms" for larger works, but to me they seem only to be in dialogue with each other, gathered as they are on a low plinth like some weird museum collection (photographs of Deacon's

south London studio reveal him to be a great collector, animal skulls and children's farm animals piled beside massed rows of ammonites, shells and lumps of quartz). *Art For Other People #6* (1983) consists of a suede bladder attached to three brass hooks to suggest what might be a highly dysfunctional set of bellows. *Art for Other People #12* (1984) uses marble and leather to form something I can describe only as half orchid, half ovary (the marble looks like a gynaecological drawing, the leather like the thick petals of some monstrous botanical rarity). *Art for Other People #32* (1996) is a toppling pile of cardboard and epoxy cubes; the colour of toffee, they're a baking experiment gone badly wrong.

The most exciting pieces are in the final two rooms. This is Deacon at his best: not wild, exactly, but untrammelled in a technical sense, and working on a grand, even fantastical scale. *After* (1998) is an enormous articulated wooden worm that may or may not have been inspired by Poussin's *Landscape With a Man Killed By a Snake*, a painting about which Deacon wrote a student essay (the webbed metal fence that runs through its interior is certainly suggestive of the kind of broadsword that might be required to kill such beast). *Out of Order* (2003) is a sprawling Scalextric set of a sculpture made (in collaboration with the artist Matthew Perry) of steamed oak. What amazing ribbons of wood! I thought immediately of another painting: *The Floor Scrapers* by Gustave Caillebotte, from 1875. Both works invite you to put your head on one side and lose yourself in their interiors, their tunnels and hollows being as crucial to their composition as (in the case of *After*) their basket-like carapaces and (in *Out of Order*) their floating thoroughfares. Every angle provides a fresh vista, every twist and turn a crazy new prospect.

Laura Cumming is away



His work is beautiful and extremely suggestive, calling to mind all manner of ideas and objects



'Untrammelled':
After (1998),
above, suggests
'an enormous
articulated wooden
worm'. Below left,
Inset: Struck Dumb
(1988), made
with the help of
steelworkers
from the Govan
shipyards.
Main photograph:
Carl Court/AFP/
Getty Images; Tate

FINANCIAL TIMES

Richard Deacon retrospective, Tate Britain

By Jackie Wullschlager



‘After’ (1998) by Richard Deacon

What happens to a sculptor who, as Richard Deacon admits, always “found weight a little bit disgusting”? For millennia, sculpture meant weight: marble, bronze, stone, carved into figures standing on plinths that were heavy with the pressure of history.

That changed in the mid-20th century but innovators such as David Smith and Anthony Caro still worked in iron and steel. Reacting against them came a British generation with a tread so light that they did not seem like sculptors at all. In the late 1980s – the era of British heavy industry’s terminal decline – four of these won the Turner Prize in consecutive years: the “living sculptures” Gilbert and George; Richard Long, the land artist who recorded going for walks; Tony Cragg, then famous for his wall-mounted junk-plastic map “Britain Seen from the North”, commenting on economic hardship; and, least known and still hardest to pin down, Richard Deacon.

Even more than Gilbert and George and Long, who both incorporate text into their works, Deacon uses language: as inspiration for his abstracted sculptures, and as their subject. His new retrospective at [Tate Britain](#), his first major show for 25 years, begins with a group of drawings built up from ruled lines, arcs, circles and spirals into a mesh of fine graphite marks at once geometric and free-flowing. Made in 1979 and titled “It’s Orpheus When There’s Singing”, after sonnets by Rilke, these curvilinear forms, turning on the tension between inside/outside, suggest open orifices. They became the basis for the wooden sculptures, willowy and rhythmic as drawings in space, such as “Blind Deaf and Dumb”, with which Deacon established his name in the 1980s.

Large-scale but delicate, these airy, enigmatic works – constructed from thin strips of laminated wood into complex linear forms, sometimes interlocking like jigsaw puzzles – are variations on what Deacon called a “hollow enclosure with an opening that seemed to be able to stand for either a mouth or an ear”. Sensuous organic curves contrast with precisely engineered construction: oozes of glue, protruding screws and bolts emphasise the works’ manufactured status, with physicality grounded in humdrum materials set against lyrical titles – transposing the ordinary.

The three-metre “Tall Tree in the Ear”, for example, consists of concentric wooden loops partly covered in a creased blue canvas sleeve, suggesting rippling sky, flowing water. The title comes from some Rilke lines in “Orpheus” and Deacon likens his constructions to Rilke’s poetry, which “didn’t have a poetic language but was assembled from something everyday, and it was just the way of putting it together that created meaning.”



‘Struck Dumb’ (1988)

From the domestic-scaled abstract series “Art For Other People” – begun in 1983 in mixed media and evoking trumpets, horns, ears, lips – to “Fold” (2012), a green ceramic sculpture of glazed polygonal bricklike units stacked into clustered towers that resemble freestanding folding screens, Deacon’s hybrid forms are democratic, inclusive, non-hierarchical. No part of any sculpture draws attention more than any other, and the experience of each work changes as you walk around or examine it. Thus the irregularly arranged slabs in “Fold”, which weighs 12 tons, appear to shift and dissolve when you circle it. “Struck Dumb” (1988), an unusual venture into steel, is a squat, black, bulbous form with a rust-red opening; it looks like solid steel but when you peer inside, it is hollow – a lament for the loss of Britain’s industrial base.

Solid/void, in/out, organic/geometric, soft/hard: Deacon’s sculptural vocabulary is based on contradictions. The most successful pieces turn on a paradox by which the laborious working processes of steaming, stretching, bending wood are laid bare but the result is light, graceful, flexible. Rising off the ground as if with pent-up energy, “Out of Order” (2003) is a seven-metre voluptuous spiral of giant wood shavings, curling like ribbons, their surfaces darkened to a mottled black caused by tannin coming out of the oak when it is heated.

“After” (1998), the exhibition’s showstopper, is yet more complex. Coils of bent wood, glued and screwed into interlocking curves, the hollow tubes changing angles from one section to the next, writhe or hurtle or stretch for nine metres along the floor, suggesting by turns the open ribs of a snake, the skeleton of a rollercoaster, an undulating landscape. A rigid stainless steel strap forms a spine running through the centre, its taut line opposing the lively, open wooden forms, and allowing shifting plays of light on wood and metal.

Transformation may be the theme of this sprawling, menacing creation, which laconically challenges the equilibrium of the rest of the show, just as the serpent wrapped around the inert body of a man in the corner of Poussin’s “Man Killed by a Snake”, one of Deacon’s sources, turns a classical landscape into a study of fear.

But circularity is another motif: especially in the monumental works here, such as the repeated baroque motifs in “After” and “Fold”, Deacon’s structures insistently lead you back to where you started.

Deacon’s entire oeuvre is like this: although the works look open, they belong to a closed system of allusions to poetry, of self-references to their own making, which is difficult, hermetic. The political/social agenda of

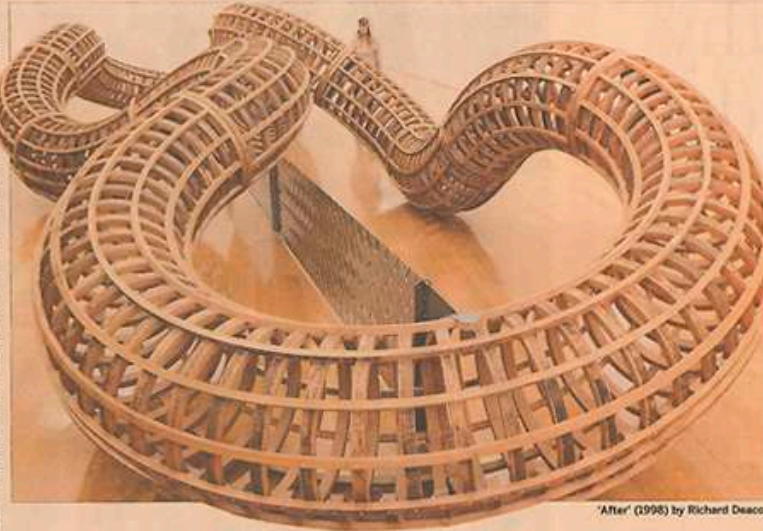
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Deacon's entire oeuvre is like this: although the works look open, they belong to a closed system of allusions to poetry, of self-references to their own making, which is difficult, hermetic. The political/social agenda of Gilbert and George, Richard Long's version of British pastoral, are easily accessible in comparison. What, in the end, are Deacon's works about?

Ultimately, I suppose, the unstable nature of perception and communication. Deacon calls himself a fabricator – but even that modesty is ambiguous because, as he says and as these strange, elusive works proclaim, "I quite like the idea that a fabrication can be something made up rather than truth."

Richard Deacon, *Tate Britain, London* to April 27. tate.org.uk

Lightness of being

Richard Deacon's first major show for 25 years gives Jackie Wullschlager a chance to reassess the sculptor's 'strange, elusive' works



'Struck Dumb' (1988)

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The Daily Telegraph

Forms given space to flourish

Tate's Richard Deacon retrospective is a lively romp through the abstract sculptor's long career



Alastair Sooke

EXHIBITION

RICHARD DEACON

TATE BRITAIN

One of the pleasures of visiting a gallery is encountering works of art by artists at the top of their game. *After* (1998), by the British sculptor Richard Deacon, who won the Turner Prize in 1987, is a good example of what I mean.

Included in his new retrospective of 40ish works at Tate Britain, it consists of a large wooden tube that seems to writhe around like an enormous python slowly uncoiling itself on the floor. Since this structure is a lattice of wooden struts, it is possible to see through the hollow space inside, on to a long sliver of shiny stainless steel that bisects the sculpture in a straight line.

Connected to the undulating wood at either end, this taut metal spine, which appears woven like a basket, tethers the rearing energy of the rest of the sculpture. The tension between this vicious slice of metal, sharp as a whiplash, and the freewheeling wooden chute that orbits it, swerving like a model rollercoaster, animates the whole piece.

After is typical of Deacon's mature work. It is neither carved nor modelled in the manner of traditional

sculpture, but instead methodically built up from many parts, like a sophisticated set of Meccano, by an artist who describes himself as a "fabricator". It is a complex form, marshalled with precision – the sculptural equivalent of a skilled actor delivering his lines in close-up, controlling every blink and twitching muscle of his face.

But it is also hard to express why it works so effectively, because it is abstract. *After* has no narrative. It is not a sculpture that obviously represents something in the real world. It exists on its own terms, a closed system forever looping round and round.

Thankfully, the retrospective at Tate Britain gives Deacon's complicated sculptures the space they need to flourish. *After*, for instance, dominates a long gallery, accompanied only by two smaller sculptures – a sensuous, squidgy-looking lump of lipstick-red terracotta called *Waiting for the Rain* (2002), and *Lotus* (2002), a mysterious green polygon that reminded me of a heap of sliced-up okra.

The show documents the origins, development and flowering of Deacon's career so far. Born in Bangor, north Wales, in 1949, he studied at St Martins and the Royal College of Art in the Seventies, before finding fame in the early Eighties as part of the "New British Sculpture" generation that also included Antony Gormley and Anish Kapoor.

His early work included an untitled cone of galvanised steel, like some remnant of a defeated dreadnought's hull, which was made in 1980 and

is shown in the first gallery. By enclosing a void within a simple curling sheet of metal, Deacon was able to imbue something invisible with the illusion of mass.

He was also happy to leave behind traces of the object's manufacture: its visible rivets anticipate the welded-and-bolted joins of a steel form called *Struck Dumb*, which Deacon produced at the Govan shipyard in Glasgow in 1988. Squat and sturdy, *Struck Dumb* curls in on itself defensively like a gigantic threatened woodlouse.

During the Eighties, Deacon's preoccupation with lyrical, linear forms looping about in space announced itself, as did his penchant for working with laminated wood, starting in 1980. *Tall Tree in the Ear* (1984) consists of a swoosh of this material sheathed in rumpled blue canvas, erupting out of a tripartite steel structure that calls to mind a large pear.

Blind, Deaf and Dumb A, exhibited at the Serpentine Gallery in 1985, offers two tracks of strips of laminated wood glued together to create a layered effect like a cheesecake. These tracks hurtle up, down and around, describing a large form that is scrolling and symmetrical, like the wings of an angel inscribed in snow. When you inspect the sculpture up close, though, you notice Deacon deliberately left all the thick globs of glue that oozed out when he compressed the bands of wood. Reminiscent of unwanted bodily fluids, these imbue the sculpture with an unsettling quality that chimes with the suggestive,

sexual imagery of other works.

By now he was on his way towards the elaborate, almost baroque large forms of the Nineties, such as *Laocoon*, which is not shown at the Tate, as well as *After. Out of Order* (2003), in the exhibition, is a jamboree of ribbons of steamed oak arranged so they cavort, twist and corkscrew on the floor with the crazed energy of a fish thrashing on the seashore. At the same time, the braces of stainless steel that connect the different pieces of oak appear to restrain their jumping energy.

This sculpture is a reminder that Deacon often incorporates playful, witty notes: the red flash of paint on *Struck Dumb* that resembles a bow tie, for instance, or even the shape of *Blind, Deaf and Dumb A*, which looks like a twitching Dalí moustache.

I wish that some of this liveliness found an echo in the leaden book accompanying the exhibition, crammed full of dense, pseudo-philosophical art-speak, such as the following sentence: "But in short, these polyvalent forms refuse reductive readings or phenomenological analysis, reaching beyond to a poetry of Being-as-such." Henri Matisse once said: "A painter's best spokesman is his work." I suspect that this is true for sculptors, too. *From Feb 5 until April 27*
Information: 020 7887 8888

Ⓣ RATING ★★★★★

The Telegraph



From *Magnolia* to *The Master*, **Tim Robey** picks out the 10 film moments that made Philip Seymour Hoffman great. Visit telegraph.co.uk/culture



Is that a bow tie? The sculptor and 'Struck Dumb' (1998)



Controlled energy: 'Out of Order' (2003) is made of ribbons of steamed oak that cavort, twist and corkscrew on the floor with the crazed energy of a fish thrashing on the seashore

LISSON GALLERY

Apollo

February 2014

<http://www.apollo-magazine.com/richard-deacon-february-apollo/>

APOLLO
THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE



Restless (2005), Richard Deacon. Tate © Richard Deacon

Richard Deacon: February Apollo ZOE PILGER

From Zoe Pilger's interview with Richard Deacon in **this month's Apollo**:

Richard Deacon's gift is to combine the philosophical with the everyday. 'I was interested at one point in how vinyl flooring can have [the image of] tiling but be flexible, so there was a contradiction between its substance and its appearance. And I thought that had a strong link to bits of

Christian ideology about the relationship between substance and appearance.’ He describes his fascination with the holes in Swiss cheese, ‘particularly the relationship between the hole and the material surrounding the hole, wondering what it would be like if the holes were so big that there wasn’t any cheese. A number of those wooden works in the ’90s actually came from standing in the supermarket and looking at cheese.’



After (1998), Richard Deacon © Tate

After is comprised of holes. ‘Light passes through the steel bit because it’s got holes in it, and it also reflects light. Whereas the wooden bit is a hollow tube, so light passes through it, but it has shadow and more complexity.’ The idea of enfolding is also important in Deacon’s work. ‘One of the reasons why the works have been hollow or transparent or have spaces in them is in part to invite you to either mentally or even physically to enter them and to be kind of enclosed within them.’ [...]



Lock (1990), Richard Deacon © Richard Deacon

I ask Deacon what personal event has most impacted upon his art. ‘Apart from being born?’ He thinks for a moment. ‘While I was on Foundation, my mother became ill with motor neurone disease. It’s a horrible disease. It robs you of everything except your intelligence. She got a typewriter that she could drive with a cursor on the screen by nodding her head and selecting a letter and then nodding twice to make it type. In the first year at Saint Martins, I couldn’t communicate with her. I couldn’t truly understand what she said because she couldn’t really control her voice.’ He pauses. ‘So if I was in prison, she was in prison. I think there was some connection between those two different kinds of experiences. Hers, obviously much more traumatic. In the second term of my second year at Saint Martins, I suddenly got a letter from her. It was only three lines long, but it was the first communication I’d had. It was like she’d come back. I think that had a big impact on the way I thought about language, and the relationship between language and personality, and the idea of the human.’ [...]

Richard Deacon was interviewed by Zoe Pilger in *Apollo*’s February issue. The exhibition, ‘Richard Deacon’ is at [Tate Britain](#), London, until 27 April.

The Guardian

31 January 2014

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/jan/31/sculptor-richard-deacon-tate-britain>

theguardian

Sculpture

Sculptor Richard Deacon: why one pair of hands is never enough

Ahead of his retrospective at Tate Britain, the renowned sculptor tells Nicholas Wroe how he has realised that it doesn't matter 'who actually puts the screw in'

Nicholas Wroe

Friday 31 January 2014
14.00 GMT



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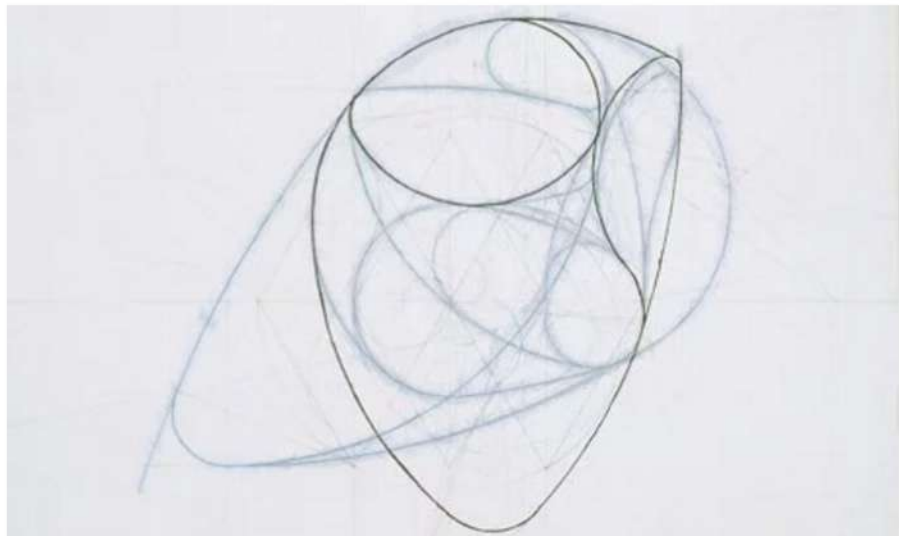
Richard Deacon's *Another Ribbon Bow* (2004). Courtesy of the Lisson Gallery and Richard Deacon

[Richard Deacon](#) is the only name on the poster for his new retrospective show at Tate Britain, but, as exhibition curator Clarrie Wallis notes in her catalogue essay, throughout his career he has "acknowledged the limitations of a single pair of hands". In his large south London studio on an industrial estate, where he chooses to work alone, Deacon mulls over the 30-odd pieces of work to be displayed. They were made over nearly 40 years, using wood, steel, ceramics, rubber, suede, marble and foam. "I'd say over half have been made with other people," he says. "Depending how you define the word collaboration, maybe as much as 75%."

Of course, artists' workshops from the Renaissance to the present day have been populated by assistants doing the bidding of the master. "But this is different," he says. "I'm not just telling them exactly what to do. They are not just copying. It is more about finding people who are better at doing something than I am."

Deacon has always preferred to describe himself as a "fabricator" rather than a sculptor. "I've been quite good at working with other people in that I don't feel that my creativity is particularly threatened by it," he explains. As a student and young artist, he made performance work in collaboration, going so far as to swap identities with another student. He has gone on to work directly with other artists, most notably the sculptor [Bill Woodrow](#); he has curated shows "which felt like an intellectual collaboration"; made stage sets; worked extensively with people who have different technical skills; "and I've even tried to write a joint text with someone".

It has proved a fruitful strategy. Deacon, who is 65 this year, [won the Turner prize in 1987](#). He is a Royal Academician, a former trustee of the Tate, a CBE, a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and his distinctive work features in public and private collections all over the world.



Richard Deacon's *It's Orpheus When There's Singing #7* (1978-79). Courtesy of Richard Deacon

An early indication of the abstract, structurally coherent and satisfying curves, twists and folds to which he would subject his various materials can be found in his series of late-70s drawings, inspired by [Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*](#), and to be shown in the first room of the new show. "Maybe they are at one end of the collaboration continuum," he says. "You take somebody else's work as a source - in this case something that had already been translated - and then use it as the basis for producing something of your own. Of course, you are always the inheritor of your language and so on, and there are always points of reference, but, in principle, you don't always have to sit down with someone to collaborate; you can deal with their product."

It was in the mid-80s that Deacon began to properly clarify his thoughts on collaboration when he first worked with steel fabricator Gary Chapman. "I'd always been interested in working with other people, but felt I should make most things myself." When he first approached a factory, he tried to provide detailed drawings and instructions for manufacture, "which entailed me having to describe every part of the process and pretending I knew what was going on, which I didn't. But then, with Gary, who brings a very confident set of practical skills, it didn't really matter if I didn't describe something precisely because that would allow him to propose a route to a particular place, which may or may not be the best one, but at least we'd have something to discuss. Essentially, I realised it really doesn't matter who actually puts the screw in."



Richard Deacon's *Struck Dumb* (1998). Photograph: Richard Deacon

Later, Deacon worked with Glasgow shipbuilders on steel work - such as [Struck Dumb](#) (1988) - which proved to be pivotal to his work in three-dimensional curves. "I was experiencing a certain amount of frustration in my practice, but these guys had been to Japan to learn new techniques, and they thought in three dimensions in the same way that I might think of a sheet of paper and could produce spherical objects out of a flat."

Deacon likes the analogy of commissioning an architect, and talks about a recent and extensive remodelling of his own home. "I had a very strong general idea as to what I wanted. But you also have to allow the architect to bring something to the party, and when they understand what you want, they may have another way of looking at things, which in turn you can respond to, and you begin to build a dialogue that can go somewhere."

Deacon's dialogue with fellow artist Matthew Perry began 30 years ago when they had neighbouring studios and Perry provided technical help on Deacon's early laminated and sheet-metal works. As Perry's innovative expertise with materials, wood in particular, has developed, their working relationship has deepened.

It was Perry's technical solutions - steam bending and other methods - to the problem of wood cracking as it was twisted and bent that allowed Deacon to work with new shapes. "If you can turn a bend into a spiral then the repertoire of forms you can create becomes incredibly diverse," he explains. "But we tended not to define too closely what we intended to do with new shapes, apart from making more of them and seeing where it could go. *Out of Order* (2004), which is in the show, is a combination of twisted lines and spiral curves, but it only very slowly came together to form one line. Originally, it was going to be four pieces, but at some point I realised you could connect the pieces together to some advantage. That's how the wooden works often develop, and there is less pre-planning as Matt and I understand each other so well."



▣ Richard Deacon's *Out of Order* (2003). Courtesy of Richard Deacon

Perry says that while he creates the shapes, they form part of a "vocabulary" that he and Deacon have "discovered" over the years. "[When]Richard introduces ideas, things can be turned on their head very rapidly to make the piece work. There is a point where you have to put in that last emphasis and he says, 'It has to be there'. At the beginning you don't know how these things will end. It's very different from having computer-generated models to work from. And, after 20 years, you have such a shared history of knowledge that the actual work in the studio becomes very important."

Deacon's ceramic works - a significant element of the Tate show - came via another collaboration, this time with a studio in Germany, where he has worked with Anna Zimmerman since 1999. Early in their relationship, Deacon would make hundreds of small models by "bending and twisting and pinching" clay, and would then discuss with Zimmerman what might be best made into full-scale pieces. "But she didn't exactly copy them," he explains. "If she didn't understand what procedure the form had gone through to make it do what it did, then she didn't make it. Yes, the model was the source, but it was as if she had to know the piece from the inside, as opposed to just copying it from the outside." And as he got to know her better, he wanted to explore different ways of working.

"I'm interested in pot-throwing as a way of working with material, so, instead of Anna working off the basis of a model, I got her to make forms, a whole set of pots, which I then put together to form various works."

Deacon is aware that these ways of working raise interesting questions about ownership and authorship and he has entered into a variety of contractual arrangements that include splitting sales, cost and risks, paying one-off fees for services and sharing percentages of intellectual property rights. He is also aware that his interest in collaboration might leave him open to accusations of not knowing what he wants to do.

"That's not the case. I'm just interested in how other people behave and how they think about things. I can be very clear as to what I want, but once that has been communicated to someone who is equally open-minded and enthusiastic, they can come back with suggestions to which I can say yes or no. If you are working with someone who knows what they are doing, they get as excited as you do when you ask if they can do something in a certain way."

Another long-term collaborative project that has been important to Deacon's thinking and practice has been with Bill Woodrow, a fellow student at St Martins in the late 60s. In the late 80s they were asked to donate work for a charity auction raising funds for Aids research. Neither had work they were able to give, but both wanted to participate. "We wanted to create a little bit more excitement than just giving something away," says Deacon. Their solution involved a trip round Homebase where they bought a selection of plugs and sockets before going their separate ways to each make a piece of art that would be later joined together.

"Of course, we misunderstood what the market wanted," recalls Deacon. "Auctions are usually more interested in characteristic works than anomalies, so a work that was neither Bill's nor mine was actually of less value than it would have been if by either one of us. But some people did get what we had tried to do and we were invited to do a show."

For the show they made works that they then exchanged. "There was a certain reticence in working on another artist's piece," recalls Woodrow. "Your first feeling is that to change something is to destroy it, so we had to alter the way we thought, because we weren't destroying it, we were making an addition, and also giving the other person something new to think about. This was the start of work going to places where we wouldn't have gone as individuals."



Richard Deacon's *Art for Other People #12* (1984). Photograph: Courtesy of Richard Deacon

Their next project was a series of small bronzes on which they worked together for the first time. "By now we were beginning to realise that the work had its own unique character, and it was as if there was this third person making it," says Woodrow. "So we agreed not to say which bits had been made by which person. People were very adamant that they knew, but, by and large, they were wrong. Richard is predominantly an artist who works in the abstract. My work is generally figurative in some form or other, and what has been interesting is the way that the figurative and abstract, without saying who does what, have come together and produced this sort of third area. And as an exercise it does influence and come back into your own work. Working in a team expands your vocabulary and so now you have extra things you can use. And we're still talking to each other, so, all in all, it's been a success."

Woodrow and Deacon have most recently worked together in the medium of glass. It is "a perfect collaborative activity", says Deacon, "as you just can't do it by yourself. Glassblowers can be great prima donnas, but they are also wonderful collaborators as you need a very close working relationship because decisions have to be made so quickly."

But the results of these projects are not shown in either men's solo shows (Woodrow's own retrospective at the Royal Academy runs until 16 February). "There is an etiquette issue," says Deacon. "One solution was in a show in San Diego where there was Bill's work, my work and our work. But to have it in my show would be like claiming ownership in a way that I wouldn't want to do. They feel like works from this other artist, Woodrow Deacon, who has a biography, three catalogues and a set of shows to his credit."

So if "Woodrow Deacon" feels like a distinct artist, does the work Deacon makes in collaboration feel different from the work he makes on his own? "The answer is no. I recognise all the work as belonging together. I work with a lot of materials - I collaborate with the earth," he laughs, "and I can be as interested in weaving cloth as I am in metal. But I am also clumsy and I break things. So the relationship between my clumsiness and my interest in the qualities of materials has found a solution in partnerships or collaborations. It enables me to do the things I want to do."

● Richard Deacon is [in conversation with Bill Woodrow at the Royal Academy](#), London W1, on 14 February.

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The Daily Telegraph

Twisting chaos into shape

As a retrospective opens at Tate Britain, Richard Deacon tells Martin Gayford what drives him to make his enigmatic sculptures

It is a fairly fundamental thing in human beings to make sense of chaotic impressions," says Richard Deacon, "to put things into shape." But the shapes of the sculptures he creates are themselves extremely hard to compute. They often look as if they have been made, with great skill, for some purpose – but it is impossible to put one's finger on exactly what that is.

He has related in the past how he once overheard two passers-by discussing one of his pieces. "What's that, then?" asked the first. "Is it ducting?" "Nah," the second answered, "it's art. Look at the way it's put together."

The big retrospective exhibition of his work that opens at Tate Britain next month is likely to look both rich and strange. There is no such thing as a typical Deacon work. One notable piece, *What Could Make Me Feel This Way A* (1993) reminded me of a gigantic wooden white-knuckle ride designed by Leonardo da Vinci. Another suggested the veined and marbled egg of a sea-creature the size of a cow, and a third – *For Those Who Have Ears #2*, 1983 (Deacon's titles are wonderfully oblique and somehow evocative) – suggested a monstrous, misshapen egg-whisk. His art merges abstract theory, psychology and DIY.

Deacon, who was born in Bangor in 1949, belongs to a bumper generation of British sculptors. Among his contemporaries are Anish Kapoor, [Tony Cragg](#), Antony Gormley, Richard Long and Bill Woodrow. In different ways, these men reinvented sculpture in a manner both radical and traditional.

As Deacon remembers, he arrived at St Martin's School of Art

in an era in which the sculptural object had threatened to evaporate into such insubstantial items as performances and actions. "We're talking about 1970, the period of the dematerialisation of the object, and also an anti-capitalist stance in a lot of the ideology," he says. "Having something to sell was dodgy – not that there was anyone to buy it anyway. So making objects was problematic."

None the less, after a period in which he did a lot of performances – which generally involved him working with stuff such as plaster and bits of board in front of an audience like an avant-garde Bob the Builder – he ended up emerging as one of the most acclaimed sculptors of the past 30 years. There is, however, a lingering suggestion of the eccentric handyman about Deacon's aesthetic.

He grew up, he recalls, in a family with a practical bent. "Both my father and my brother were very mechanically capable – could fix cars and things. I don't like the smell of grease or petrol on my hands, and I can't make things work. So I didn't grow up being the person in the house who was handy. I grew up being the person who was clumsy and inept – though curious about the world."

Deacon's father was a pilot in the Air Force, flying high-speed, hi-tech machines (some of his son's works resemble aircraft parts – piping, say, or the skeletal structure of a fuselage – reconfigured by a whimsical imagination). Because his father's posting changed every two years or so, the family moved about while Deacon was growing up – to Plymouth, Dorset and Sri Lanka. It was in that last place, when he was

six or seven, that he had his first powerful experience of sculpture, during a visit to the 12th-century rock-cut Buddhas at Polonnaruwa.

"I remember looking at them and being aware that they were made of the same stuff as the rock, but I couldn't really work out what kind of agency would transform the cliff to the Buddhas; I didn't understand how you could do that."

At school, he was drawn to the art club, where he "realised that there was a home for the way that I messed around with materials". Later he never wanted to do anything at art school except study sculpture. "I'm not a very good painter, and I'm not a good designer either – that's not how my brain works. But there is something about the transformation of material that does work in my mind."

Deacon won the Turner Prize as long ago as 1987, and represented Wales at the Venice Biennale of 2007. But he is not such a public figure as, say, the eloquent and publicity-friendly Kapoor and Gormley. This became clear when I went to visit him at his studio on a south London industrial estate, which he occupies alone.

When Deacon has had a team working beside him here, he says, "I find myself a little displaced in my own studio." As a result, he prefers to go to specialist fabricators – he likes the word "subcontractors" – where he supervises and also labours, hands-on, making the pieces. The wooden sculptures are made in one workshop, the metal ones in another, the ceramic pieces in Germany.

It is characteristic of sculptors, historically, to have strong

preferences about the materials they work with. Michelangelo had a love affair with marble. Deacon has complicated feelings about “stuff” – materials – pro and con, which he lists. He likes wood, plaster, plastic, clay and shiny metals. “I have worked in resin but I don’t really like stickiness as a quality. It’s like eating breakfast and getting marmalade on your face. For me, that’s a very unpleasant sensation.

“I don’t like heavy things, I find them a bit disgusting, they seem to be in your way.” Whereas some modern sculpture – by the American Richard Serra for example – is all about weight, Deacon’s works sometimes seem almost weightless. *Let’s Not Be Stupid* (1991), for example, looks like two loose loops of metal with a wobbly ladder between them: a 3D doodle in the air, which looks as if it might float away.

Some of the most impressive of Deacon’s works are made of bent wood, such as the Tate’s magnificent *After* (1998), which resembles a huge serpent of timber hoops and staves, undulating over a barrier of aluminium, again almost airborne. His ceramic pieces, on the other hand, often have the lustrous glazes of Chinese porcelain. Or they look like plants, or sea-anemones or...

It’s very hard to approach Deacon’s work without reaching for a metaphor, and he says he is “OK with that”, so long as we don’t imagine that he is making pictures of things.

He is interested, he tells me, in “how things are shaped, the desire

to have a slightly chaotic form and to let shapes or configuration emerge from that”. He asks himself the question, “Why?” and a long silence follows – so long that I start another question – but he interrupts my interruption, “I was almost getting there, the silences generally mean I’m getting there.” And after another pause comes the answer, a deep and philosophical one.

He confesses to an anxiety about “the tendency for things to fall apart, for flux to overwhelm us”, then adds: “I don’t really think that shape belongs to things in themselves. We impose shape on them – we feel happy when things fall into shape.”

● Richard Deacon is at Tate Britain, London SW1 (020 7887 8888; tate.org.uk), from February 5



Working alone: Deacon in his studio