





**Cast in a Different Light:
George Fullard and John Hoskin**

2013



Introduction

We follow with our eyes the development of the physical fact of a clenched hand, a crossed leg, a rising breast...until at the moment of recognition we realize that all this and more lies behind and makes up the reality of one woman or child during one second of their lives. And in this human tender sense, I would say that Fullard is one of the few genuine existentialist artists of today. He opens up for us the approach to and from the moment of awareness.

John Berger on George Fullard, 1958,

Vital and original...being a very distinct personality, he belongs to the animistic or magical trend in the now recognisable school of English sculpture.

Herbert Read on John Hoskin, 1961,

Woman with Earrings 1959
George Fullard
Pencil

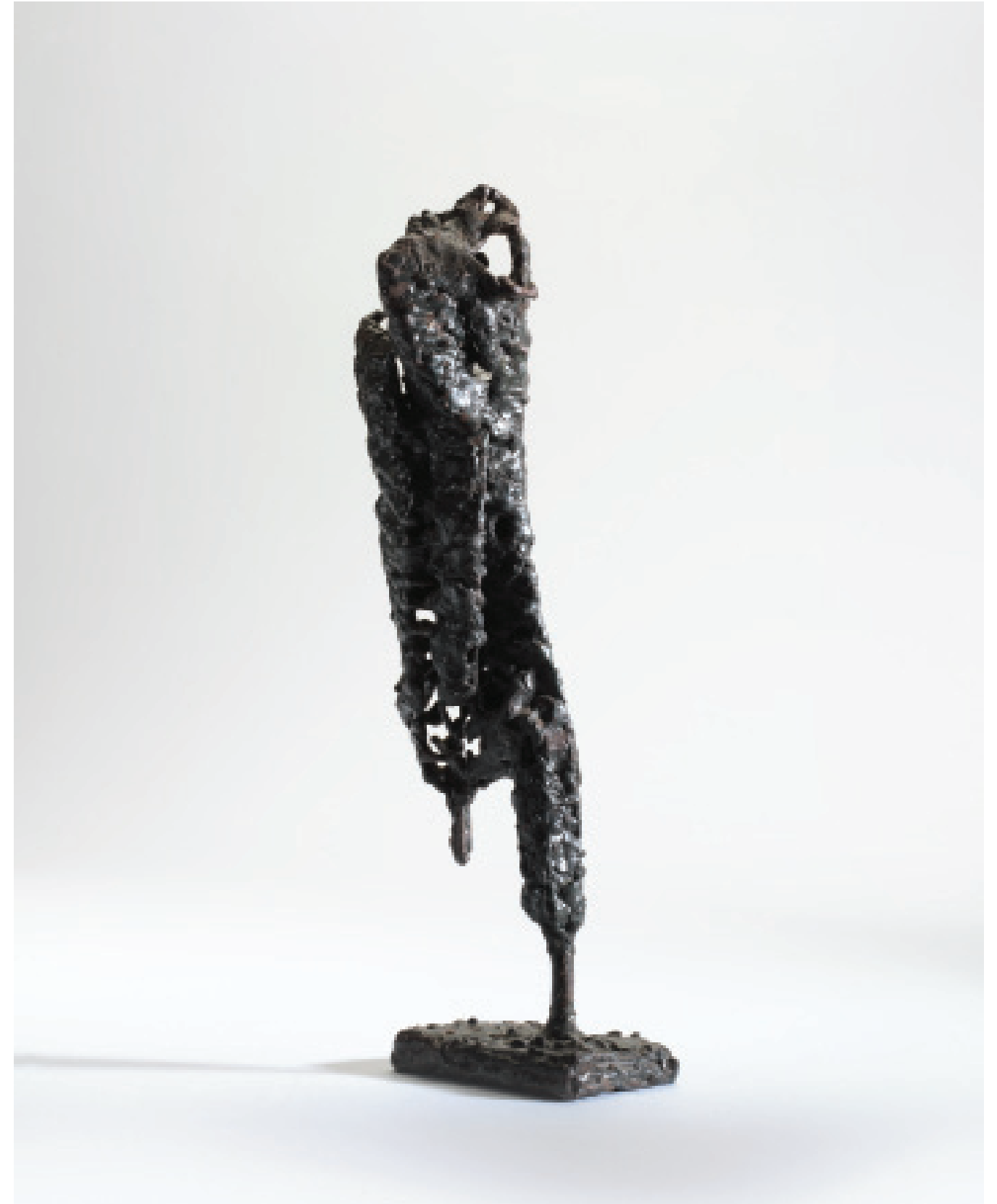
At first glance, the artists featured in *Cast in a Different Light* have a good deal in common. Born in the early 1920s, they were both on active war service (Fullard in North Africa and Italy, Hoskin in Germany) and went on to make sculpture the focus of their creative practice. During the war years and immediately after, Henry Moore's work attracted extraordinary international critical acclaim and, along with a generation of young sculptors, Fullard and Hoskin became part of what critics called the 'phenomenon' of postwar British sculpture.³

Through the 1960s, they both showed in gallery exhibitions such as the Tate's *British Sculpture in the Sixties* (1965) and their work reached new audiences in the Arts Council's iconic series of open-air sculpture exhibitions which toured public spaces and municipal parks up and down the country. With flourishing reputations as contemporary artists, Fullard and Hoskin were in high demand and both taught at various art schools throughout the UK before becoming Head of Sculpture departments: Fullard at Chelsea and Hoskin at Bath.⁴



Standing Figure 1963
John Hoskin
Welded steel
Unique
54cm high

right
Figure 1957
John Hoskin
Welded steel
Unique
19cm high



However, there the commonalities end. Indeed, Fullard and Hoskin shared very little in terms of the themes, working methods and materials of their sculpture. The work of the two artists demonstrates contrasting aesthetic allegiances and a separate set of distinct cultural roots and influences. In the 1950s and 60s, political circumstances and critical contexts shaped artistic production and informed its interpretation in particular ways and the work of the two sculptors featured in this exhibition exemplifies the polarities. In the jittery Cold War context of the 1950s, whilst Hoskin's work shared the characteristic spikiness of the sculpture Herbert Read associated with the 'geometry of fear'⁵, Fullard's figurative sculpture was described by John Berger, the Marxist critic and regular reviewer for the New Statesman, as 'humanist' and 'social realist'.⁶

At the turn of the decade, Fullard fashioned a series of expressionistic bronze heads although he was also concurrently developing a series of junk assemblages which he went on to make throughout the Sixties; in contrast, Hoskin's flat abstract forms of welded sheet-metal had far more in common with the work of Anthony Caro and the New Generation sculptors who showed at the Whitechapel in 1965.⁷ Herbert Read's comment that Hoskin was part of 'the now recognizable school of English sculpture', suggested that a kind of uniform approach had emerged. This was misleading: sculpture may well have become a cultural 'phenomenon', but the sculptural imagination was diverse through both decades.

Head 1960
George Fullard
Ink & wash



Fullard, sculpture and survival

Fullard grew up in a Northern working-class mining family with a background of left-wing politics but it was the experience of war which became a central theme in his work. In 1959, he wrote in one of his jotters that his generation was burdened with the tragedy and loss of two World Wars, noting that he felt 'caught between two fires'. Fullard's own war stories include witnessing the terrifying blitzkrieg on Sheffield in 1940; his series of drawings and sculptures around the theme of walking, falling and running figures (some of which are included in this show) allude directly to this. In 1944, Fullard narrowly escaped death when his tank was blown up in the prolonged battle for Monte Cassino, leaving him severely wounded and with permanent scars on his head and shoulder. It is notable that, between 1960 and 1961, he produced a series of lumpy 'heads' (three of which are featured in this exhibition). Inevitably, they bear a close resemblance to the totemic 'heads' made at the turn of the decade by a range of his contemporaries including Elizabeth Frink, Hubert Dalwood, Eduardo Paolozzi and William Turnbull. However, modelled in clay and textured with imprinted objects, Fullard's 'heads' have a violent feel to them. There may be a reference here to his own wounding for there is no doubt that the notion of 'survival' preoccupied him and was a crucial motif in his later series of war assemblages.

*As in life, the survivor lands without luggage. For the impact of the survivor's appearance is not in the quantity of his own possessions, but in the quality of vanished experiences that projected him. The power of the survivor is the power of presence in contradiction of what was possible.*⁸

Head 4 1960
George Fullard
Bronze
Edition of 3
33cm high





Untitled 2 1960
John Hoskin
Gouache

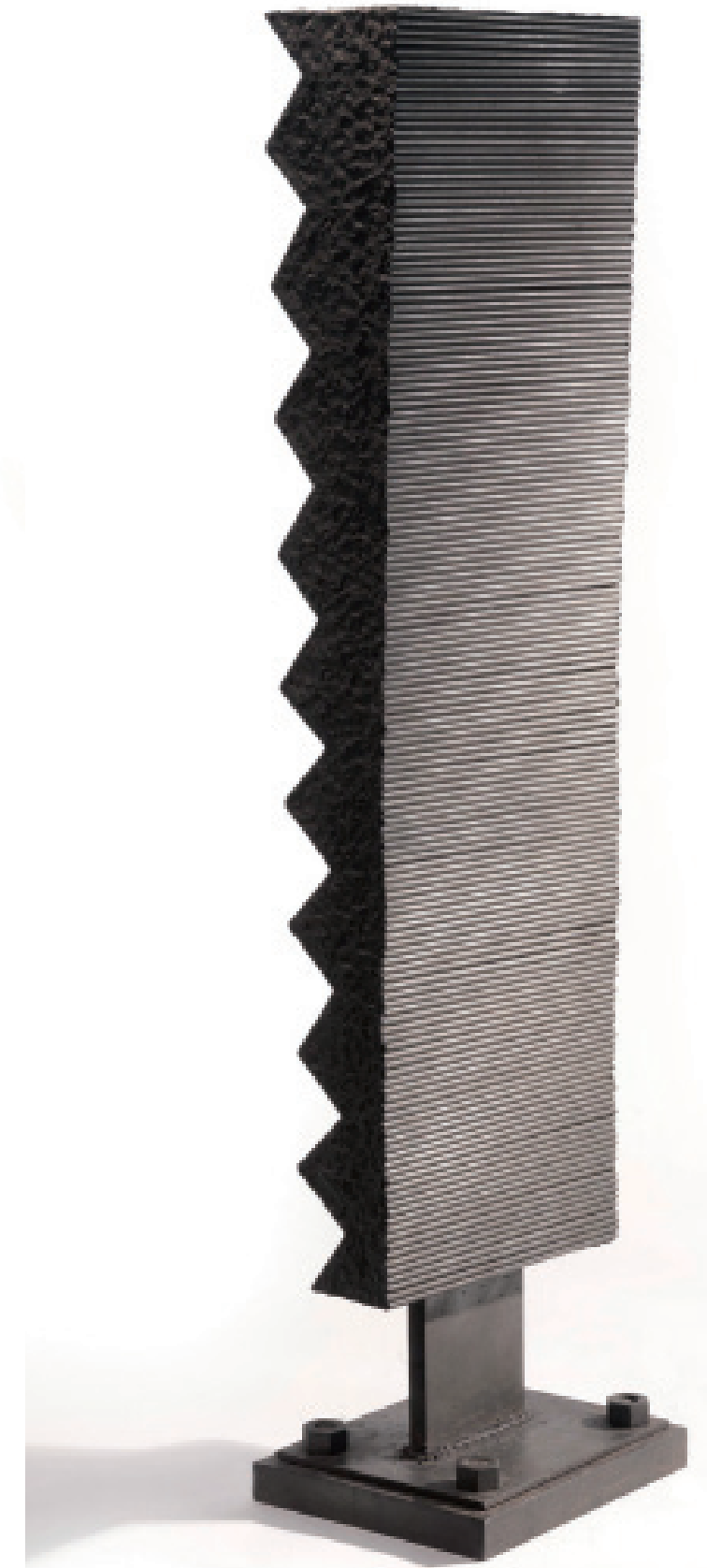
Hoskin and resurgence

Before serving in the army, Hoskin trained as an architectural draughtsman and returned to this after the war, working in the civil service from 1947 to 1950. His decision to change direction and become an artist occurred on a hitchhiking trip to St Ives. The painter Terry Frost happened to give him a lift and (so the story goes) by the time he got out of the car in Cornwall, they had discussed art to such a degree that Hoskin knew he wanted to be an artist. After a period doing various casual labouring jobs to fund his painting and sculpture, Hoskin made associations with a range of other artists including Lynn Chadwick, an artist linked with 'Britain's New Iron Age', and one of the eight British sculptors who had exhibited in the infamous 'geometry of fear' show at the Venice Biennale in 1952. Hoskin was evidently influenced by the work of Lynn Chadwick and Bernard Meadows as, from the early 1950s, he started experimenting with metals, producing spindly creatures – such as *Black Beetle* (1957) now in the Tate collection – and insect-like figures with exactly the 'linear, cursive quality' which Read had described earlier.¹⁰ Working with rough textured mild steel, sculptures such as Hoskin's *Icarus* (1957) frequently featured winged figures.

Indeed, a number of Hoskin's drawings and sculptures in *Cast in a Different Light* have indirect references to 'flight', a common theme for other artists at the time. However, in tandem with Caro's shift to working with abstract planar forms, from 1961, Hoskin turned to the construction of abstract sculpture made from flat and curved steel plates. Through a persistent 'untitling' of his sculpture, he demonstrated an attempt to resist not only autobiographical but all references in his work and his welded metalwork aspired to a kind of anonymity. That said, one of Hoskin's most well-known works from the period in question does have a title: *Resurgence* (1969) is a two-and-a-half ton mild and stainless steel 18ft abstract sculpture commissioned by the Darlington Lions Club for the public forecourt of the town's new civic centre. Although viewed as a 'controversial sculpture' at the time by critics and the public, the abstract forms have 'survived' as a marker of the town's troubled past and post-industrial present...



Concertina Royale 1964
John Hoskin
Welded Steel
Unique
90cm high



Briefly, and in their own ways, Fullard and Hoskin flourished in the 1950s and 60s. Perhaps because neither was particularly prolific in terms of output, to many, their names became dimly recognisable and their work disappeared. In bringing these artists together, this exhibition may enable productive new connections. Highlighting what Fullard wrote about in relation to 'sculpture and survival', perhaps what unites the two artists is the notion of 'resurgence' as they live again, here, through their work.

Gillian Whiteley

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Footnotes

¹ John Berger, 'George Fullard' in *New Statesman*, 6 September 1958, Vol. 56, No. 1434, p. 274.

² Herbert Read quoted in obituary on John Hoskin by Michael Milburn-Foster, *The Guardian*, 1990

³ See Charles Spencer, 'The Phenomenon of British Sculpture' in *Studio International*, March 1965

⁴ From 1978, Hoskin was Head of Sculpture at Bath Academy, Corsham and later became Professor of Fine Art at Leicester; Fullard was Head of Sculpture at Chelsea from 1963 through to his early death in 1973.

⁵ Herbert Read coined this oft-quoted phrase in 'New Aspects of British Sculpture' in *British Council XXVI Venice Biennale, British Pavilion*, London: Westminster Press, 1952. The eight artists in the British pavilion were Robert Adams, Kenneth Armitage, Reg Butler, Geoffrey Clarke, Lynn Chadwick, Bernard Meadows, Eduardo Paolozzi and William Turnbull.

⁶ John Berger, 'Social Realism and the Young' in *New Statesman and Nation*, 30 July 1955, Vol. 50, No. 1273. Pp. 133-134

⁷ I. Dunlop and Brian Robertson, *The New Generation: 1965* (exh cat) Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1965.

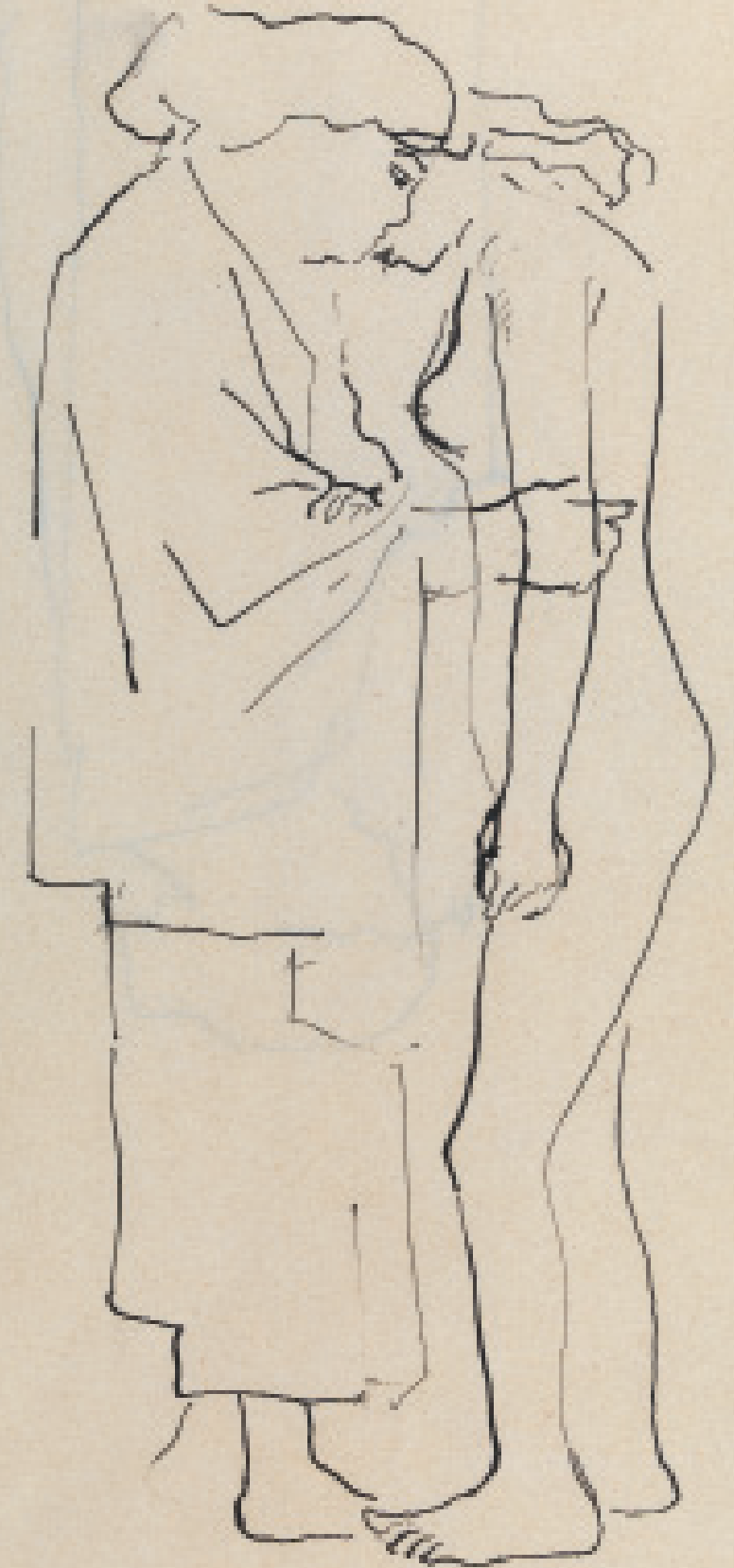
⁸ George Fullard, 'Sculpture and Survival' in *The Painter and Sculptor*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 1959

⁹ See Alloway, L. 'Britain's New Iron Age', *Artnews*, Summer 1953, Vol. 52, pp. 19-20, 68-70.

¹⁰ See Note ⁵

¹¹ See the entry for Resurgence in the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, National Recording Project at www.pmsa.org.uk

The Embrace 1949
George Fullard
Ink



George Fullard

1923 Born Sheffield
1942-44 Armed services
1945-47 Royal College of Art, London and Ambleside
1957 Looking at People, South London and Pushkin, Moscow
1958 Solo show, Woodstock Gallery, London
1958 Exhibition of Graphic Work chosen by John Berger, London
1960-1963 Contemporary British Sculpture (open-air), London and touring shows
1961 Solo show, Gallery One, London
1964 Solo show, Marlborough Gallery, London
1964 Painting and Sculpture of a Decade 54-64, Tate Gallery, London
1964/1967 Pittsburgh International, Carnegie Institute
1965 British Sculpture in the Sixties, Tate Gallery, London
1974 Memorial exhibition, Serpentine Gallery, London
1997 George Fullard: a fastidious primitive, Yorkshire Sculpture Park
1998 Playing with Paradox, Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield and Kettle's Yard, Cambridge
2001 Vitalism, Gallery Pangolin, Chalford, Glos.
2008 Revitalism, Gallery Pangolin, Chalford, Glos.
2012 Exorcising the Fear, Pangolin London, London

Public commissions: Fullard had no public commissions in his lifetime but a number of his works have been publicly sited posthumously including Walking Man (1957), sited in Sheffield city centre in 1983 (a related drawing is shown in Cast in a Different Light)

Collections include: V&A; Tate; Arts Council; Sheffield Galleries; Southampton City Art Gallery; Leeds Museums and Galleries; National Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Archives held in Tate Archive and Henry Moore Institute, Leeds

Woman and Dog
Date unknown
Pencil



John Hoskin

1921 Born Cheltenham
1942-47 Armed services
1947-50 Worked as architectural draughtsman
1957 Solo show, Lord's Gallery, London
1957 Open-air sculpture show, Holland Park, London
1957 and 1959 Middleheim Park, Antwerp
1958 Artists of Fame and Promise, Leicester Galleries, London
1960 and 1961 Contemporary British Sculpture (open-air), London and touring shows
1961 Solo show, Matthieson Gallery, London
1964 Solo show, Grosvenor Gallery, London
1964 Painting and Sculpture of a Decade 54-64, Tate Gallery, London
1965 Solo show, Rotterdamsche KunstKring
1965 British Sculpture in the Sixties, Tate Gallery, London
1975 Retrospective, Serpentine Gallery, London
1994 Memorial exhibition, Storey Gallery, Lancaster
2008 Revitalism, Gallery Pangolin, Chalford, Glos.
2012 Exorcising the Fear, Pangolin London, London

Public commissions include: Exalted Christ, Southmead Church, Bristol 1959; Nuffield College Chapel, Oxford 1961; London County Council, Stepney 1962; Resurgence, Darlington 1969

Collections include: Gulbenkian Foundation; V&A; Tate; British Council; Arts Council; Leeds Museums and Galleries; Art Gallery of New South Wales; National Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Archive held in Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.



Untitled 7 1960
John Hoskin
Gouache

Useful References

Alloway, L. 'Britain's New Iron Age', *Artnews*, Summer 1953, Vol. 52, pp. 19-20, 68-70

Collischan, J. *Welded Sculpture of the Twentieth Century*, Lund Humphries, London, 2000

Curtis, P (ed) *Vol I Sculpture in 20th-century Britain/Vol II A Guide to Sculptors in the Leeds Collections*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2003

Nairne, S and Serota, N (eds) *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century*, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1981

Read, H. 'Introduction', John Hoskin, exhibition catalogue, Matthiesson Gallery, London, 1961

Read, H. *Modern Sculpture*, [first published as *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture*, 1964], Thames and Hudson, London, 1994

Whiteley, G. *Playing with Paradox : George Fullard 1923-1973*, exhibition catalogue, Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield, 1998

Whiteley, G. *George Fullard – A Fastidious Primitive*, exhibition catalogue, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 1998

Whiteley, G. *Assembling the Absurd : the Sculpture of George Fullard 1923-1973*, Henry Moore Foundation/Lund Humphries, 1998



Head 1960
George Fullard
Bronze
Edition of 2
26cm high

A detailed ink and wash drawing of a walking man, showing the head and upper torso. The drawing is executed with fine lines and washes, capturing the essence of the figure's movement and form. The man is walking towards the right, with his head slightly tilted back and his arms swinging. The drawing is a detail from a larger work, as indicated by the text.

GEORGE FULLARD

1923 - 1974

Walking Man 1957 *detail*
George Fullard
Ink & wash

Tempting Fate

A personal recollection by Steve Hurst - writer, bronze founder and colleague of the artist

We carry in our culture the culture of those who have gone before us
Sally Vickers Novelist

1963 was the year in which George Fullard first received public recognition. His large sculpture, *War Ghost*, was shown in the Battersea Park biennial exhibition and he was appointed Head of Sculpture at Chelsea School of Art. Prior to that Fullard was well known to his peers and within the London art world, as a committed artist and a lively and argumentative character. He was less well-known to the powerful figures loosely known as the Art Establishment. 1964 was equally important because a large collection of his current work was shown at Marlborough New London Gallery in Bond Street. Coincidentally 1964 was also the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War, a subject in which Fullard took a keen interest.

In her monograph on Fullard, Art Historian Gillian Whiteley writes:

Fullard's work in the 1950s was perceived by Berger as that of someone who was, in a very broad sense, a 'social realist' a 'humanist' and an artist of conviction and commitment

I cannot remember which came first, seeing *War Ghost* or reading the article by John Berger. Having seen *War Ghost* I made a point of going to Bond Street to see Fullard's assemblages. At this point I did not know that his work had gone through a major revolution. As a student at the RCA at Windermere at the end of the Second World War, Fullard was most influenced by Rodin. Early work was modelled in clay, or worked direct in plaster. I did not get to know his early work until after his death when Irena Fullard asked me to cast two of his early sculptures: one an assemblage of plaster pieces, the other carved out of leather-hard clay and later cast in plaster.



Falling Woman I 1961
George Fullard
Bronze
Unique
19cm high

It was only when I saw the variety of his early works that I fully appreciated George's empathy with and control over clay. The early modelled portraits and standing figures are superb in their own right, yet he also experimented with the nature and behaviour of clay, cutting, compressing or distorting it while still in its bag. At the time of his death this whole aspect was unknown in this country although some of his early work had been exhibited in the Soviet Union. ² There was a reason for this oversight: many of his early pieces were made of impermanent materials and relatively few were cast in bronze until later. ³

Sometime in the early sixties Fullard had begun to experiment with clay pressings, pouring either wax or plaster into open clay moulds. He assembled the plaster pieces using wire, scrim and more plaster. These early experiments led to larger assemblages using wood from bombsites or picked up from skips collecting old furniture. By the time of his one-man show at the Marlborough Gallery, Fullard had made the major change from modelling to assemblage. At a time when steel was the orthodox material amongst young sculptors Fullard's lack of interest in welded sculpture was noticeable and *War Ghost* was unusual in being made of steel and welded. I remember the Marlborough show in Bond Street in 1964 very clearly because to me it was a revelation of what sculpture could be. I returned several times; I also read all I could find written by John Berger. There is no doubt that it was Berger who brought Fullard's sculpture into the public eye. ⁴

Head 1960
George Fullard
Bronze
Edition of 3
37cm high



To see one of Fullard's sculptures typical of this period one must travel to a most unlikely setting, to the museum of the Tank Corps in Bovington, Dorset. Inside the Museum stands a tall glass case containing *The Cross of St George*. A plaque ascribes the work to "Trooper George Fullard. 17th/21st Lancers 1942-1944"

It is impossible to exaggerate the effect of the two world wars on Fullard and his generation. Trooper Fullard never forgot either the trauma of war or its comradeship and excitement. The subject of war intruded time and again upon his sculpture and drawings. We should not however, forget his earlier life, his childhood in the South Yorkshire coal-fields. When I met him, his home was in Chelsea and had been for more than a decade. He spoke of Chelsea as 'my manor' and yet he never escaped his background, nor did he want to. George was intensely proud of his Yorkshire roots, the small terraced houses and the songs, customs and mythology of the streets of the working class suburb, close to the coal-fields. His Father was a miner who fought in the Great War and later became a union organiser. Heavy industry, coal and steel, Northern working-class culture and tradition, and the comradeship of the war inspired and invigorated George's work. His roots were his sustenance and he did not betray them for an easy success in the Capital. They gave him his strength and his certainty. They also gave him that rage and intolerance of middle-class mores that occasionally burst out in spite of his normally courteous and considerate manner.

Children and Pushchair 1956
George Fullard
Ink & wash



Somewhere amongst my important papers I have a handwritten letter from George welcoming me onto the staff of the Sculpture School. This was typical of the consideration and courtesy of the man. In theory all his staff were equal, from the Principal Lecturer and the technicians, to the grumpy old soldier who fed modelling clay into the pug-mill. There was no bureaucracy and there were no meetings. To be on the staff was not just a teaching job for which one got paid, it was membership of an elite club. To teach at Chelsea was a way of life and for this George Fullard was sometimes strongly disliked.

In 1944 George had been seriously wounded at the battle of Monte Cassino and was brought back to England on a stretcher. There are at least two versions of the story. George told me of the ambush in which his tank was destroyed, or 'brewed up', in the slang of the time. He told me the story more than once but his account was confusing and carried a few differences. No one should be surprised at that when one considers the severity of his wounds and the degree of shock from the violence of the shelling. The version included in Gillian Whiteley's biography is likely to be more accurate because she heard it from a friend of George's, Trooper Waites, who saw the shell hit the Sherman as George was dismounting. Wounded in the shoulder, arm and chest he also suffered injuries to his head and was not expected to live, though he survived retaining all his mental faculties. He spent many months in hospital until discharged from the army with a disability pension. He later described his injury:

A slight case of anti-tank shell altered my left arm to something resembling a corkscrew which however useful for opening bottles is useless for weight-lifting and any that is necessary in the course of my work. ₅

Storm 1957
George Fullard
Bronze
Edition of 3
49.5cm high



Two Women 1959
George Fullard
Pencil



George Fullard, as I knew him through the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, was an unusual mixture of unorthodox communist and paternalist landed aristocrat. The one figure with whom one could not confuse him was the complacent bourgeois. His department at Chelsea was a democracy in which every member of staff had a voice, whatever his status. This however, did not apply to students, who George regarded as 'Birds of Passage'. At the helm of the Chelsea Sculpture School democracy stood a benevolent autocrat: George. He ruled his department and there was not the slightest doubt about that.

Towards the end of his life Fullard spoke and wrote about the debasement and commercialisation of English sculpture; how art was concerned with money and was not about inspiration or personal experience. It seems to me now, with the dubious wisdom of hindsight, that George was as much worried about the direction of his own art as he was concerned at the shift towards a cynical market-force-based society. Maybe his position as Head of Department in a prestigious London school and the inevitability of his becoming part of the art establishment, had robbed him of something that was vital to the health and virility of his art. His sculpture of the late 'sixties and early 'seventies puzzled critics and admirers alike. Art critic Nigel Gosling dismissed it as lightweight. The completion dates of the late works recorded in Gillian Whiteley's biography and catalogue are accurate in the sense that they are taken from George's notes, but in another way they could be misleading. During the period when I worked in his department he modified many of the brightly painted works and this was true in particular for those included in the last show during his lifetime, at the RA in 1972. 6

Glancing Woman 1956
George Fullard
Bronze
Unique
33cm high



An important factor to consider in looking at Fullard's later work is the role of the art school in the construction and finishing of his sculpture. At Chelsea, the sculpture department boasted some of the most competent and skilled technicians in the London art world, who were also blessed with abundant common sense. In the completion and modification of his last works George took full advantage of their advice and skilled craftsmanship. The sculpture shown in 'British Sculptors' at the RA was as much a product of Chelsea School of Art as that of its creator. The rawness, despair and violence of his earlier work had been replaced by a smooth, Kings Road chic. George was not alone in this: Chelsea refined, polished and debilitated us all. This, I believe now, was the trouble with George Fullard's later work. He had lost his connection with South Yorkshire heavy industry and with the intense emotion of the war and the fire had gone out of it. George Fullard remarked many times that art grows out of the artist's life experience. Younger sculptors, he said, valued no experience except that of the art schools and the London art world. Towards the end of his life I feel that same disease infected his own work.

Woman and Child 1959
George Fullard
Pencil



There is no doubt George Fullard's eccentricities and his autocratic manner caused antagonism and no doubt his detractors found many faults in the way the sculpture school was organised. Personally, I did not see it like that. To me, catching the number 22 bus on Putney Bridge and travelling up the King's Road to Manresa Road seemed like a dream. I was afraid that I might wake up to grim reality. And of course that grim reality was waiting for all of us in the shape of Margaret Thatcher, the Education Minister. Many people remarked during the decade after George's death that he could not have survived in the art world of the eighties as art schools became sanitised, regulated and respectable. As part of this process they became more academic, more concerned with concepts and less and less interested in painting or object-making. What George called 'poetry' had died. We stood by, helpless, as the art education system that each of us in his own way had helped to create, suffered a reorganisation that had only one purpose – centralised control. When I witnessed what Patrick Heron named 'the Murder of the Art Schools',⁷ I wondered whether George's death did not come at the right moment. He could not have tolerated the bureaucratic institutions that our art schools became in the eighties.

Fullard lived through a Golden Age of art education, when English art schools were the envy of the world. He was a major figure at a crucial time in the arts. In an obituary for a fellow artist of the same generation he said 'He lived the life'. We can say the same about George. He has a heroic reputation both as an artist and a teacher and he earned it.

The making process in art is important only as a paradox – it is necessary in order to bring about the fleeting essence. For that reason the actual making process is again paradoxically all the more complex.

George Fullard
Notes for a lecture found after his death, date unknown



St Francis 1960
George Fullard
Bronze on wooden frame
Unique
34.5cm high

Footnotes

¹ Gillian Whiteley p 43. *Assembling the Absurd; the Sculpture of George Fullard*

² Curated by John Berger

³ Fullard exhibited nine bronzes as well as wooden assemblages at *Gallery One* in 1961. Relatively few bronzes were cast in his lifetime. See Whiteley, chapter 3, Fn 11.

⁴ See Gillian Whiteley, chapter 'Assemblage' pp 64-71, Note 21 in which she quotes from Berger's article in the *New Statesman* 'Sculptural Vacuum' Vol 47. 17th April 1954

⁵ Gillian Whiteley. Note 16 at the back of chapter 2, p24 It was rare for George to show bitterness about his wounds. I remember one occasion when I mentioned conscripts returning from Vietnam: 'I feel sorry for the poor bastards. They go out, conned into thinking they are heroes and they come back and girls spit on them in the street.' George responded angrily 'It's always like that. Do you think anyone gave a damn about the wounded when we came back in 1944?'

⁶ *British Sculptors '72*, Royal Academy of Arts, Jan to March 1972

⁷ Patrick Heron's article in *The Guardian*, 12th October 1971: 'Patrick Heron, the distinguished British painter attacks the Government scheme to merge art schools and polytechnics.' Less than a week later (18th October '71) *The Guardian* carried a second article headed '21 resign from art panel over colleges'. The entire Summerson Committee quit in protest against Government hostility towards the arts. Twenty years later Heron wrote a second article on the same theme, again published by *The Guardian* on 7th November 1991. 'How blind bureaucracy is destroying Britain's art schools. The visual arts under attack.' Heron would be the first to admit that his second article came too late. The damage was done.

Walking Man 1957
George Fullard
Ink & wash





JOHN HOSKIN

1921 - 1990

Flat Flat 1963 *detail*
John Hoskin
Welded Steel
Unique
66cm high

John Hoskin

A personal recollection by Ken Cook - *bronze founder and colleague and friend of the artist.*

Welding is like knitting with fire

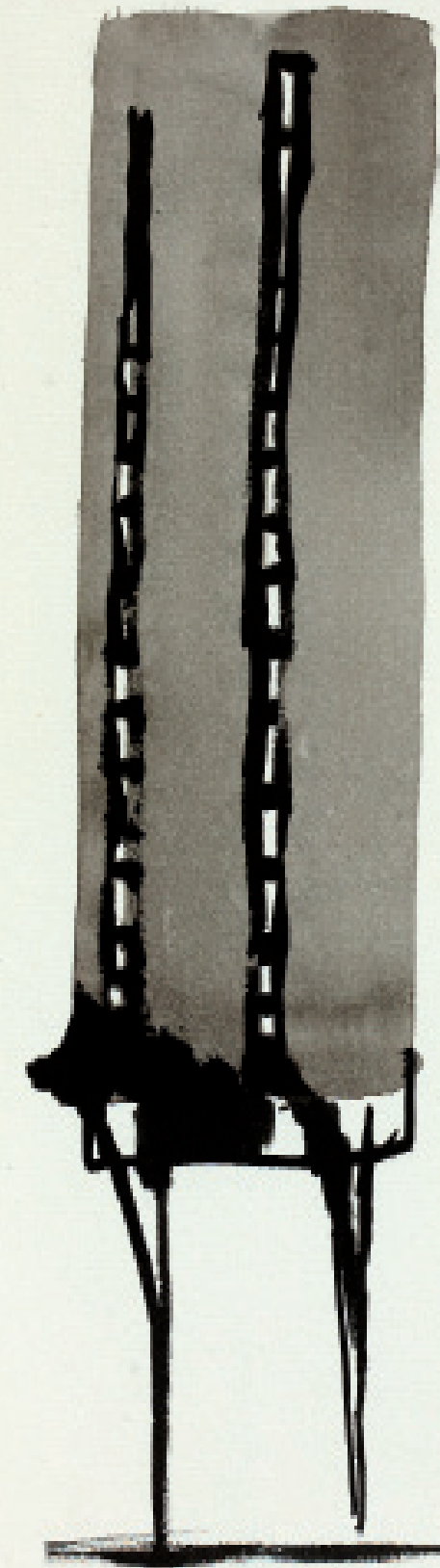
John Hoskin

Having survived the Second World War, John Hoskin returned home to Cheltenham to continue working as a draughtsman in an architectural practice. In growing uncertainty and frustration with his life, he decided to leave this job and to give himself some time to reflect and consider his future.

He decided to hitch-hike to Cornwall.

Coincidentally and fortuitously for John, who had no previous close contact with art and artists, it was Terry Frost who stopped to give him a lift. Terry had begun painting as a Second World War prisoner in Germany and then attended Camberwell School of Art. He was renowned for his enthusiasm for the practice of making art and being an artist and by the time they arrived in Cornwall, John had become convinced that his life should change and that he would somehow become an artist himself.

Untitled
Date unknown
John Hoskin
Ink & wash





Maquette for
Standing Figure 1964
John Hoskin
Welded Steel
Unique
35cm high

right
Standing Figure 1960
John Hoskin
Welded Steel
Unique
51.5cm high



I first 'met' John Hoskin in a seminal book 'A Concise History of Modern Sculpture' by Herbert Read. This book was a sort of bible for young sculpture students like me back in the 1960s. Soon after discovering this book and John Hoskin, he was invited as a visiting tutor to the West of England College of Art in Bristol where he ran a week-long sculpture course. We students were each given an identical piece of sheet metal and told to cut it up and produce a sculpture using all the pieces. Unlike the establishment teaching at the college, which would suggest ways to approach a drawing, carving or modeling from life, this was for us a totally different experience, away from the academia of life-drawing, letter-cutting and stone-carving.

John was relaxed and would ease us into the process with little hints and tips, never wanting us to produce a version of his work but instead, a work of our own. His was an intense yet informal way of teaching, often encouraging the student to take the lead.



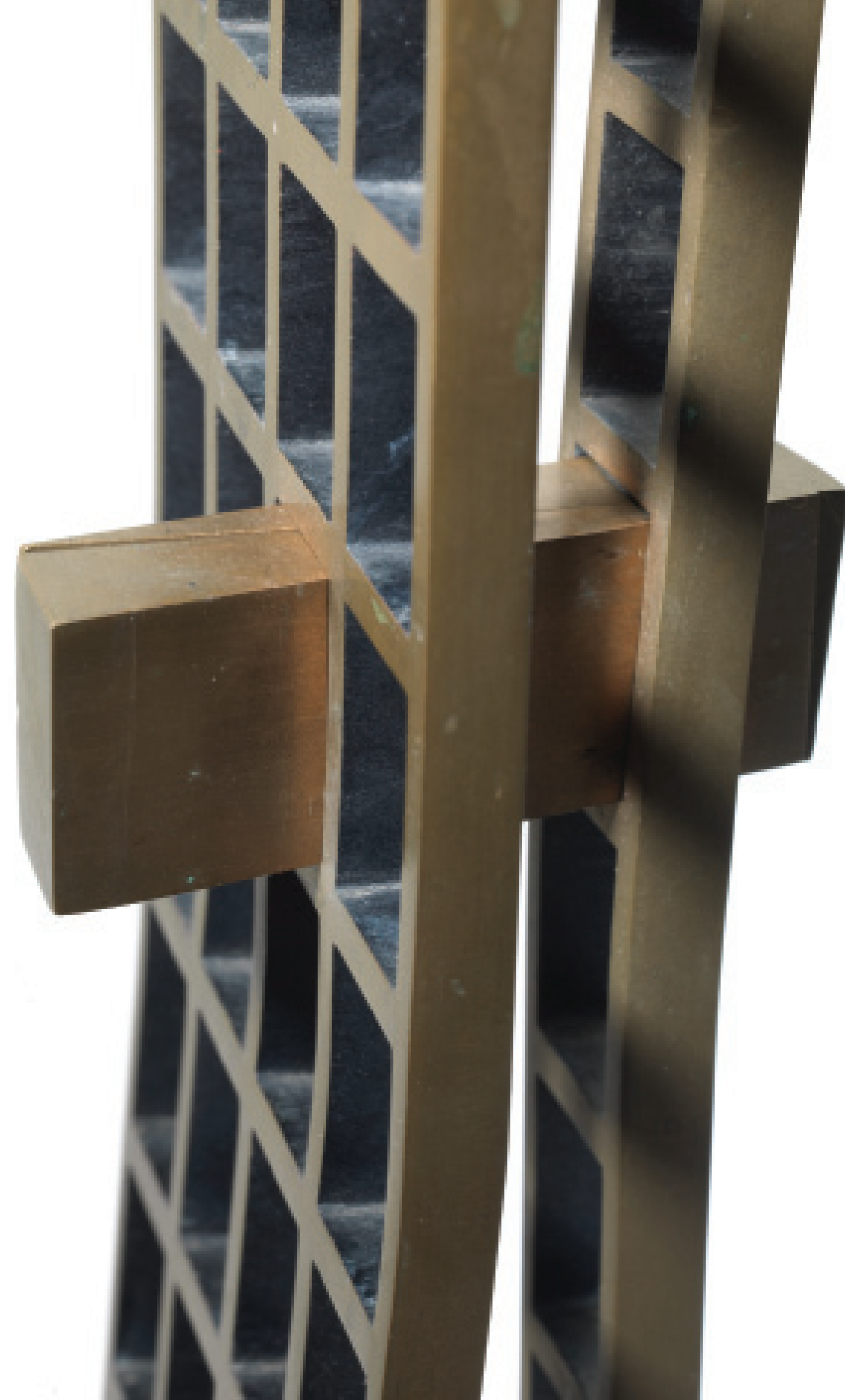
Untitled 1963
John Hoskin
Welded Steel
Unique
58cm high

right
Big V 1963
John Hoskin
Welded Steel
Unique
103cm high



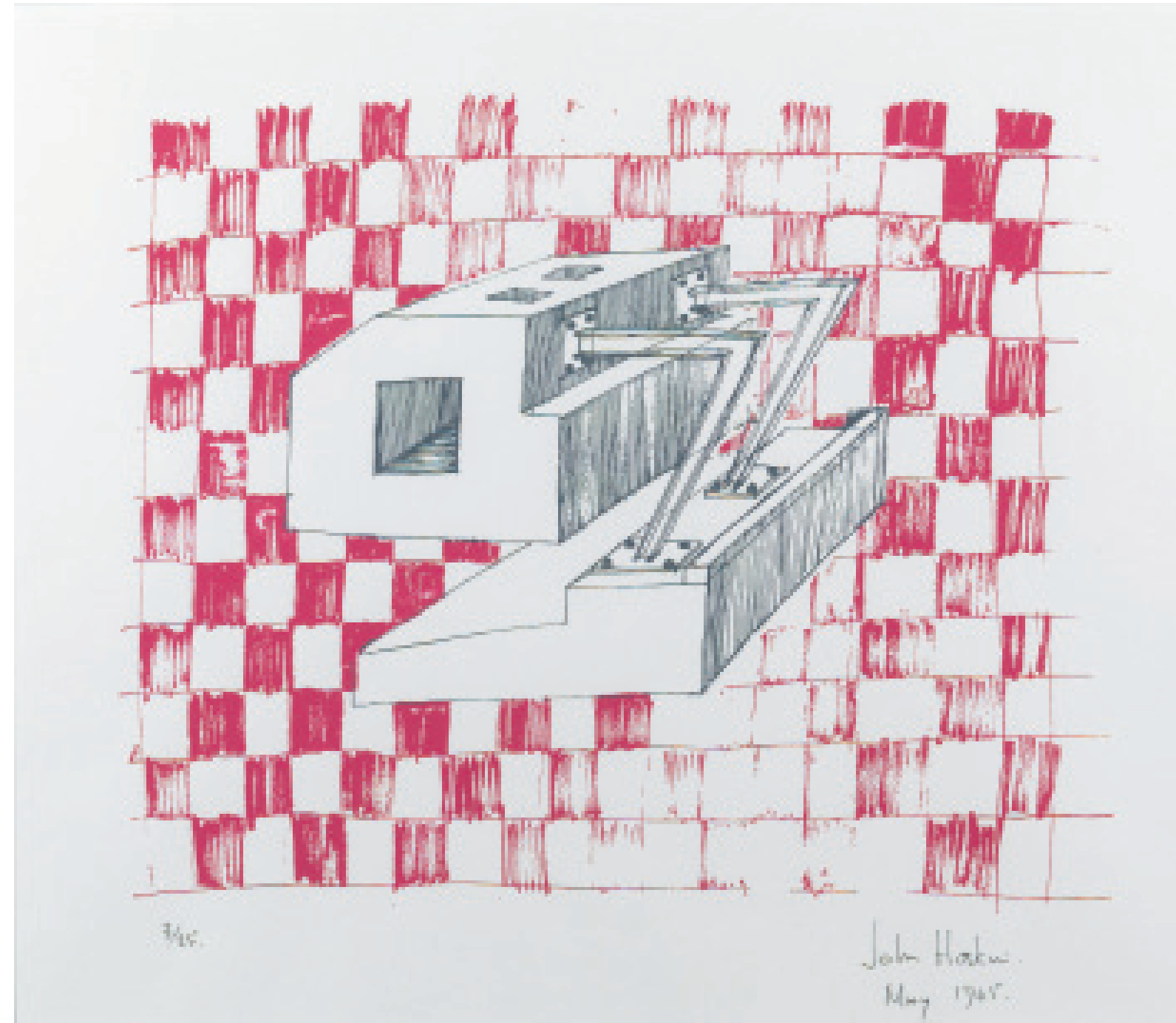


Bronze Piece I 1984
John Hoskin
Bronze
Unique
45.5cm high



A few years later we met again in the sculpture department at Bristol – John as senior lecturer and myself as a tutor and chief technician. John's easy, open, relaxed way of teaching had not left him. He enjoyed the company of students, speaking to them in a manner which was neither superior nor bullish, easing them through the uncertainties of their choice as a potential artist with a gentle word or two of encouragement and/or a concise and accurate critique of their work.

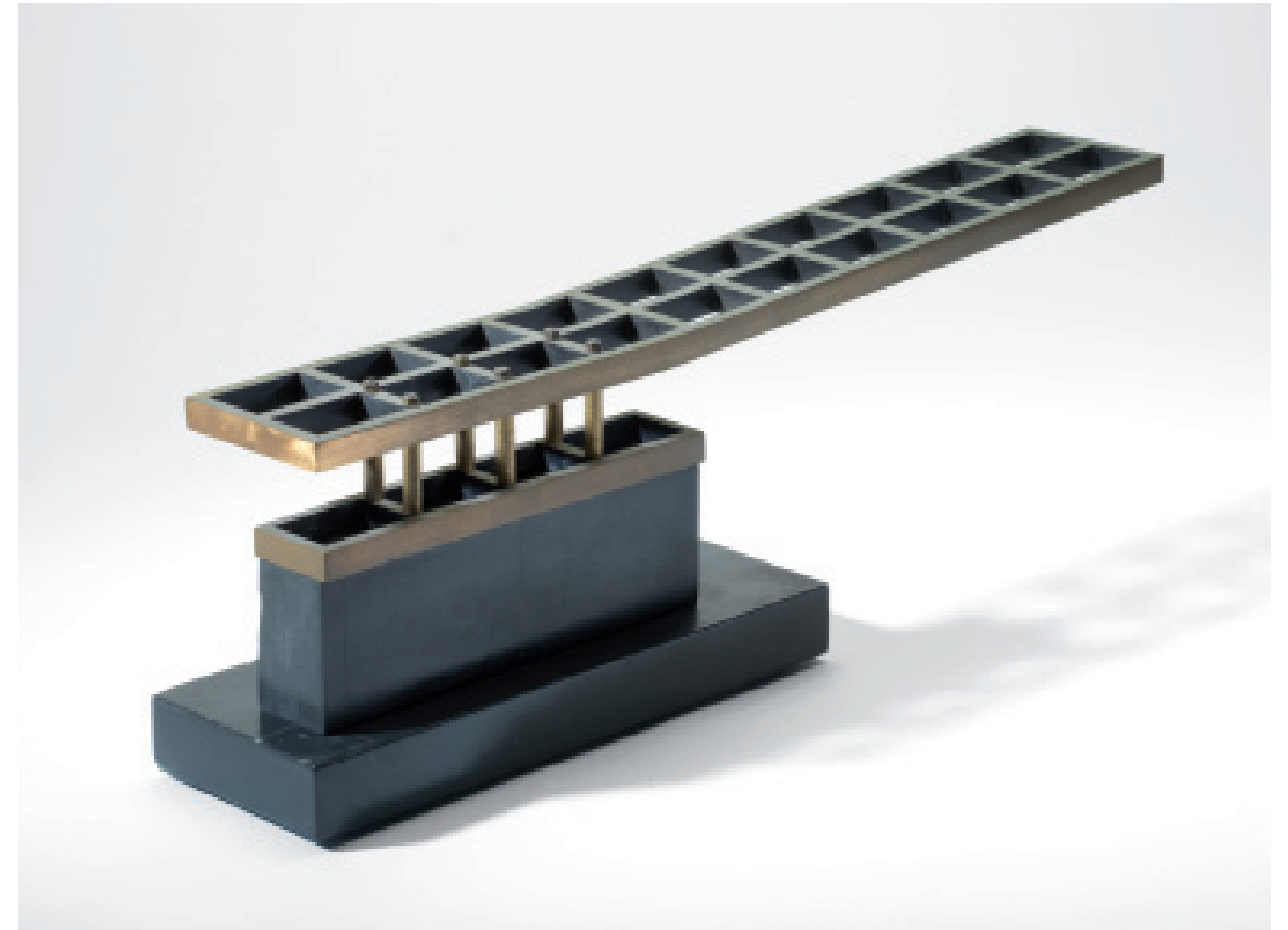
John Hoskin was a stylish, sophisticated man who enjoyed 'the contemporary': music, architecture and technology. His model railway trains were jewels, a 'JCB' digger a magnificent object and a building by the young Norman Foster a joy to behold. John had a love of cars, particularly foreign cars, Ford Taunus in the 60's, Citroen Safaris later. These cars were always equipped with the most sophisticated stereo systems so he could listen to his music: Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. Jazz was a way of life. Not only did he love the cars but he also loved the journeys he took in them. The longer the better; the motorway, autobahn and autoroute were made for him.



May 1965
John Hoskin
Lithograph
Edition 3/25

John's studio, designed by like-minded colleague Raymond Burton who taught with him at Bath College of Art in Corsham, also resounded to the same sounds from his then 'state of the art' Sony reel to reel tape system. Any opportunity to hear one of his favourite musicians live, and he and his wife and partner Doreen would be there. With this love of jazz and elegant cars came another aspect of John and Doreen's life – their home. Their grand Cotswold farmhouse was full of contemporary design, stainless steel and marble, with Charles and Ray Eames furniture, Terry Frost paintings, John's own designed coffee table made of glass and welded steel and a fibreglass shower pod – a wealth of creativity.

Whether talking about his sculpture, the workbench under construction or the glass table he was designing, John would gesticulate with short sharp chopping movements to emphasize the planes, verticals and horizontals he was searching for.



Bronze Piece II 1984
John Hoskin
Bronze
Unique
13.5cm high

Untitled 5 1960
John Hoskin
Gouache



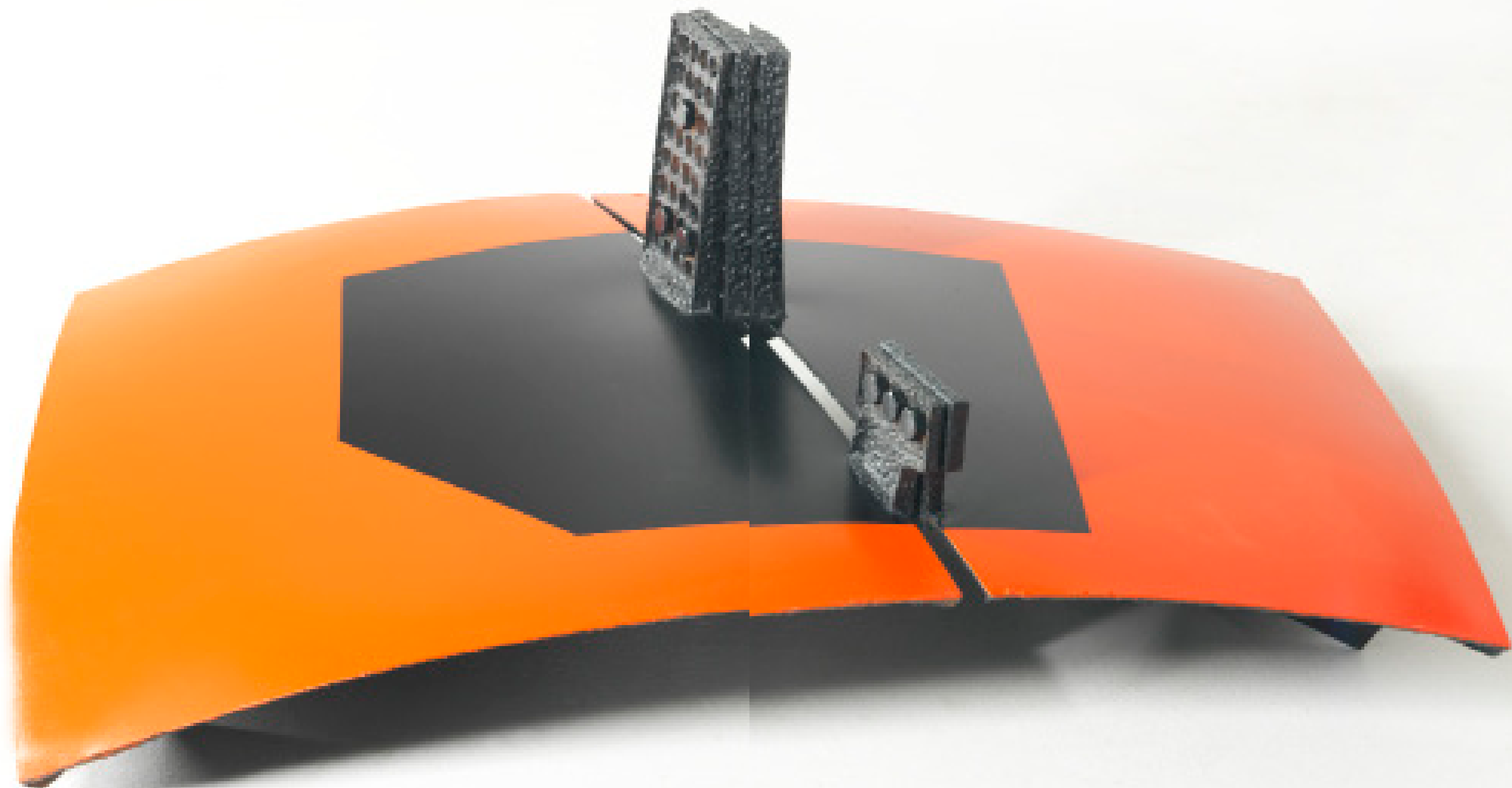
Though his was a very focused lifestyle, he was also a very generous, gregarious and loving man, always ready to enjoy himself. Doreen tells a story of the large Frost family turning up at their Cricklade home for Christmas and John welding sledges for everyone.

Well respected by his contemporaries, John Hoskin was indifferent to his own status within his peer group and to use a term fashionable amongst the young, John was certainly 'cool' but he was never cold.

Flat Flat 1963 *detail*
John Hoskin
Welded Steel
Unique
66cm high

overleaf
Flat Flat 1963
John Hoskin
Welded Steel
Unique
66cm high





Cantilever Square 1966
John Hoskin
Welded steel
Unique
245cm high



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