



Figuring It Out

Gallery Pangolin 2010



Front & Back cover
Nude Study 5
John Bridgeman
Ink on paper

Figuring it Out

October 2010

HAROLD AMBELLAN

DAVID BACKHOUSE

JOHN BRIDGEMAN

JON BUCK

Foreword

The human form has been a major preoccupation of artists from all periods and cultures from the very dawn of object-making. Indeed, the earliest known sculpture is the 'Venus of Hohle Fels', a 35,000 year-old ivory carving of a female figure found in Germany.

It seems appropriate therefore that we should make this the theme of our exhibition. For each of our four artists, the figure has been a constant source of inspiration and one to which they have returned time after time.

We are delighted to introduce the work of two artists new to the gallery, Harold Ambellan and John Bridgeman, both of whom had a long and prolific artistic life. We are particularly grateful to their families whose support and enthusiasm have been crucial to the planning of the exhibition.

The selection of work has been both instructive and enjoyable. We hope you will share our excitement at the infinite possibilities of expression stimulated by the human form. Each artist gives us an individual comment upon the human condition through their particular language, method, material and scale.

Jane Buck
Claude Koenig

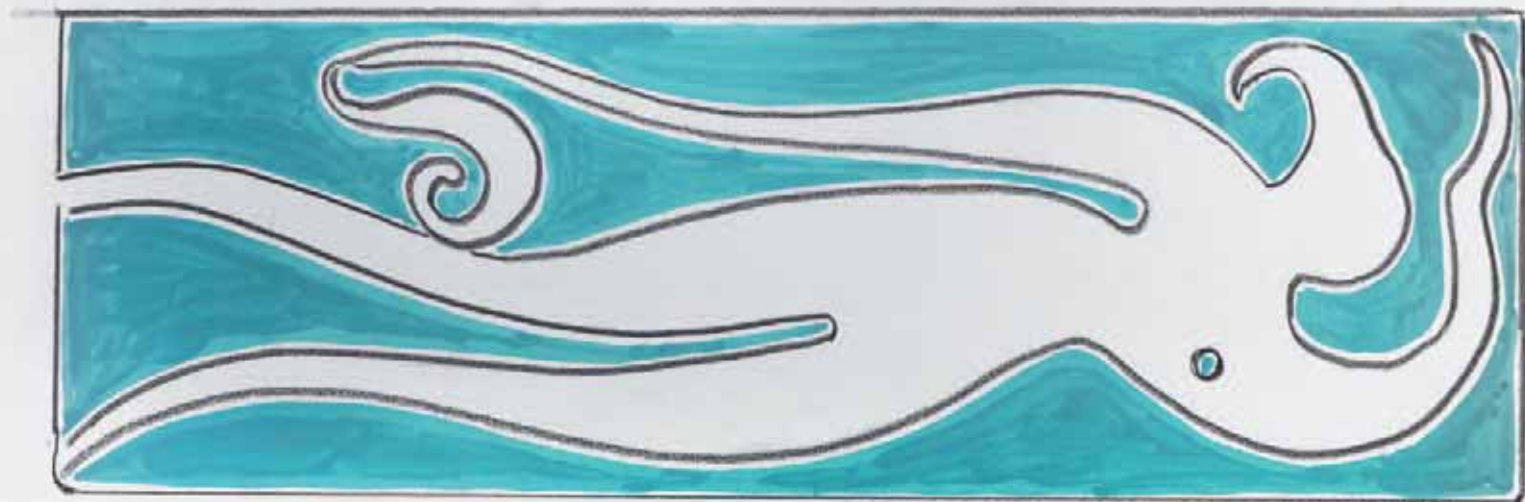
Harold Ambellan 1912-2006

Harold Ambellan was born in Buffalo, New York. From 1935-1939 he was one of the many American artists who benefited from Roosevelt's Federal Art Project which during the Great Depression hired hundreds of artists who collectively created more than 100,000 paintings and over 18,000 sculptures. Although friendly with Jackson Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko and others who later became known as the Abstract Expressionists, Ambellan remained committed to the figurative in both his sculpture and painting. He was elected President of the Sculptors' Guild of America in 1941 and in the same year his work was exhibited in group shows at both the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

With his broad humanist approach to art and his belief that art belongs to everyman, he was at odds with the rising tide of McCarthyism which was to sweep America and which eventually led him to move to France in 1954.

In studios in Montparnasse and Antibes he continued his exploration of the human figure. Calling himself an artisan, Ambellan worked every day, often drawing on the scraps of paper and correspondence that happen to be scattered around his studio. He drew inspiration for his work from sources as varied as German Expressionism and Cubism and also from Greek, Indian and African art.

As an artist who always identified with the common man, Ambellan took pleasure in knowing that his work was accessible to all and often sold pieces at very modest prices. From his most monumental sculptures to his smallest studies on paper, he devoted his life to the study of the human form. The rhythm and flow of his lines and curves are fundamentally instinctive; they speak a language which we intuitively recognise and to which we feel connected.



Pablo Picasso

Swimmer XII (1st version)
Charcoal and gouache on paper



Dancer
Bronze
Edition of 6
27cm high







Standing Girl
Fired clay
Unique
26.5cm high

Dancer
Fired clay
Unique
35cm high



Diver
Lead
Open Edition
9.5cm high

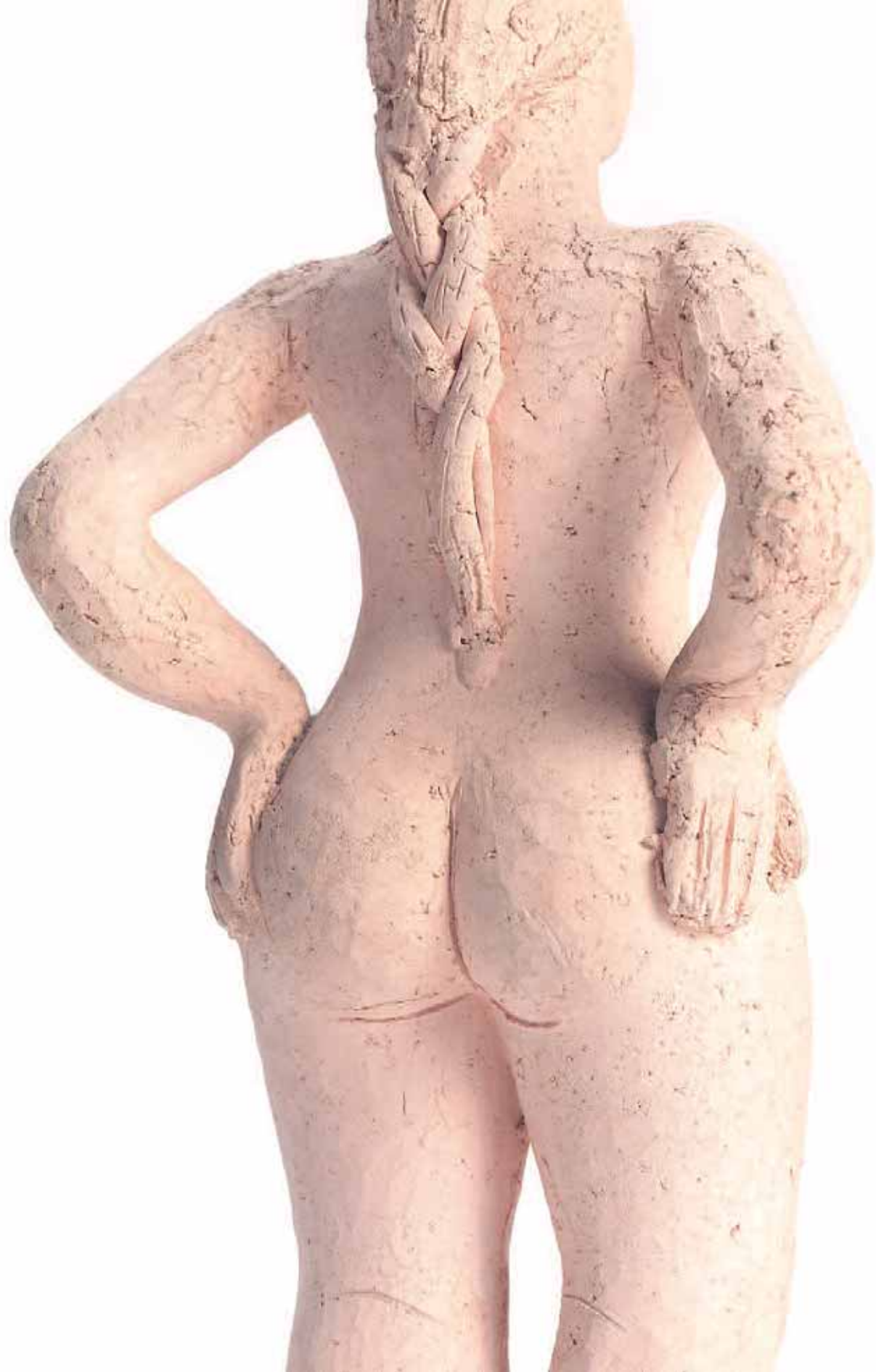
Small Standing Figure I
Bronze
Open Edition
10cm high

Small Standing Figure II
Fired clay
Unique
10cm high





Girl with Plait
Fired clay
Unique
27cm high



David Backhouse b. 1941

David Backhouse was born in Wiltshire and studied at the Royal West of England College of Art. His early career was spent working and travelling in Europe where he undertook many commissions for portrait busts.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, a Royal West of England Academician, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Founder Member of the Fountain Society and a Member of The Society of Equestrian Artists.

Through his work Backhouse tries to communicate his awareness of the interrelationship of all life and his delight in the vitality of the natural world. He sees his sculptures as comments on the dilemmas of contemporary life.

'My themes are simple and universal: the interdependence of nature and humanity, and the search for balance and harmony. The sculptures are meditations on the human condition in our time, reflecting loss and tragedy, hope and delight, and above all the tenacity of the human spirit.'

The collection of recent bronzes in this exhibition were conceived as a group '.....in response to a state of mind where a person can exist in painful isolation and even when in a relationship with another. *Little Lady* and *Solo* suggest that man is an island but I believe that we are all entrapped within the complexities of life, mostly of our own choosing. All the other pieces in this series reflect this; even in *Not Strictly Dancing* the figures are together but anchored in the wall.'

Little Lady
Bronze
Edition of 7
24.5 cm high





Not Strictly Dancing

Bronze

Edition of 7

17.5cm high



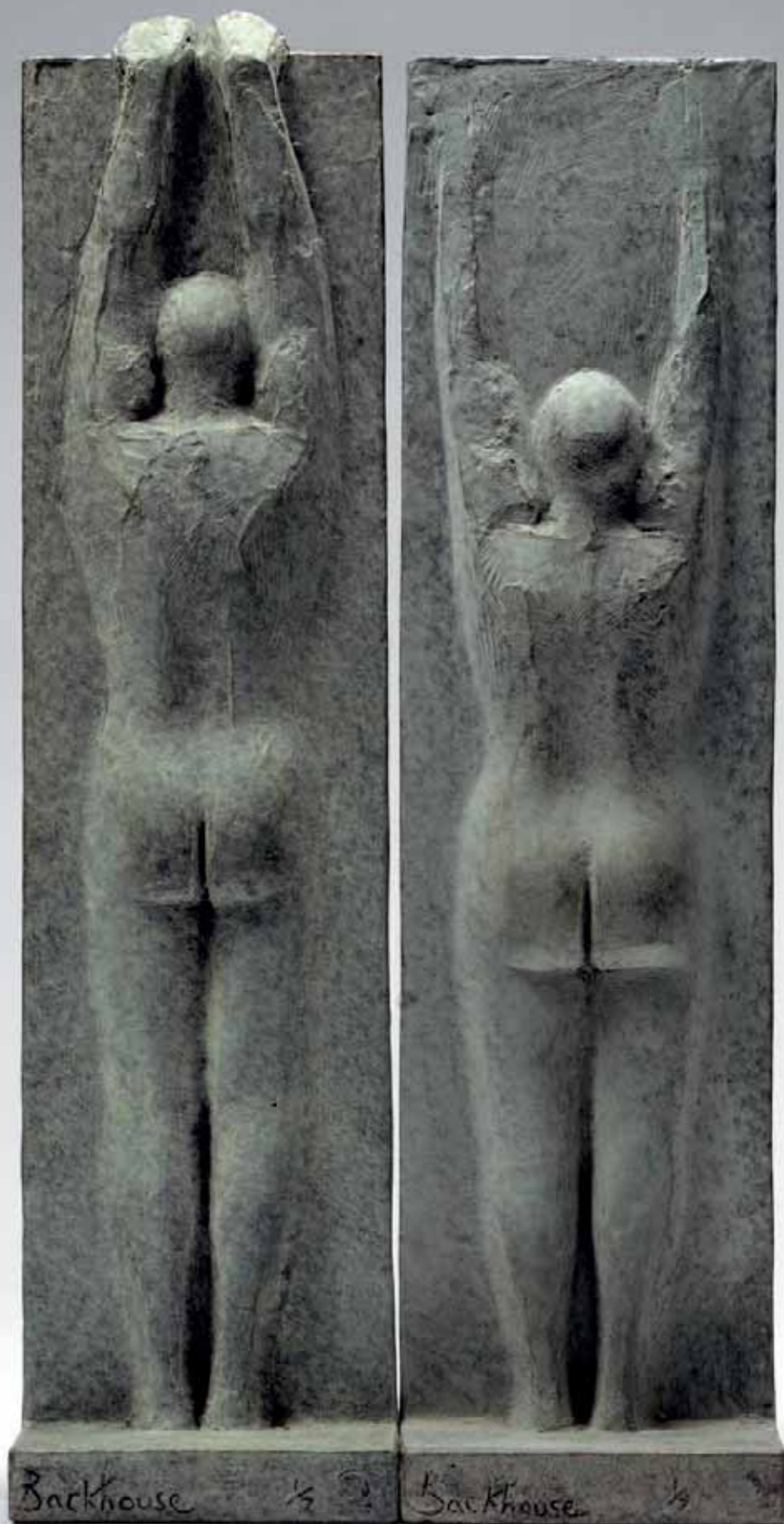


Victim
Bronze
Edition of 7
43cm high



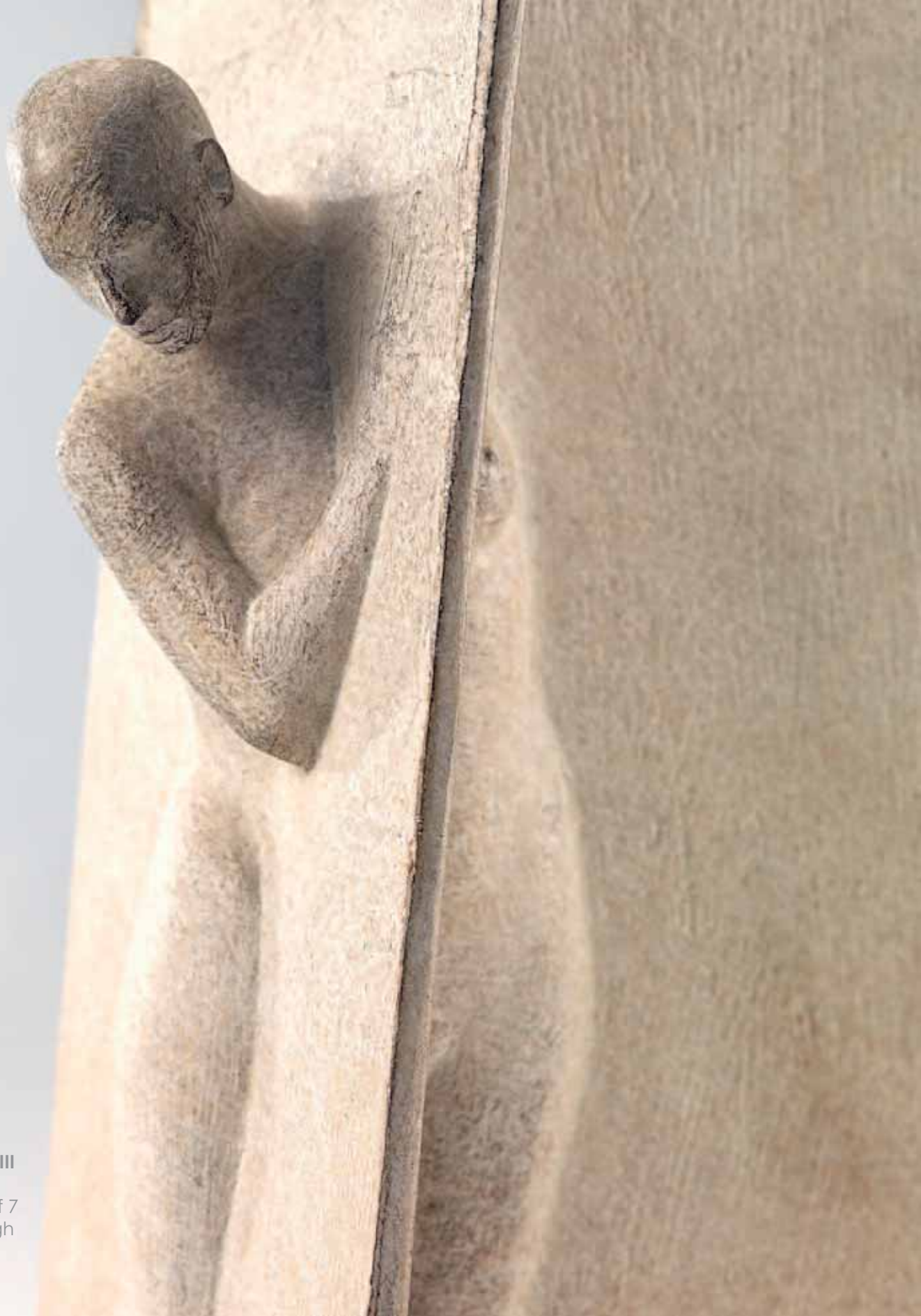


Dilemma
Bronze
Edition of 7
37.5cm high



The Emperor
Bronze
Edition of 7
14cm high





The Wall III
Bronze
Edition of 7
23cm high



John Bridgeman 1916-2004

Born in Suffolk, John Bridgeman showed early promise in drawing and joined Colchester School of Art at the age of 14. He was awarded a scholarship to the Royal College of Art but his studies were delayed until after the war when he was awarded the Otto Beit Award for Sculpture and a Rome Scholarship. A teacher of great integrity and dedication, he was appointed Head of Sculpture at Birmingham School of Art in 1956 and was an inspiration to many generations of students for almost 30 years.

During the war he was a conscientious objector and worked amongst the chaos of the bomb sites of London, retrieving the dead from the rubble and assisting the injured. This experience left a deep scar on Bridgeman and later found expression in his sculpture which reflected his profound understanding of and compassion for the human condition.

He became actively involved in the post-war regeneration of Birmingham through several major public commissions and designed and built numerous interactive sculptures for children's playgrounds in inner city housing estates.

Right up to the end of his life, Bridgeman was continually modelling, returning again and again to the female form. Working in wax and clay for casting in lead, resin and bronze, he was extraordinarily prolific and left an impressive body of work, little of which has been exhibited before. The group of sculptures on show are striking for their immediacy, delicacy and simplicity. They embody a certain carefreeness yet at the same time possess an innate quietude and calm composure.



Walking Woman
Bronze
Unique
20cm high



Seated Figure
Bronze on marble base
Unique
18cm high







Seated Girl 3
Bronze
Unique
18cm high

Nude Study 18
Pencil on paper

Nude Study 12
Pencil on paper





Seated Girl 2
Bronze
Unique
20cm high







Figure with Bird
Bronze
Edition of 5
21cm high

Jon Buck b. 1951

Jon Buck studied at Nottingham and Manchester Art Schools. He was a Fellow in Sculpture at Cheltenham College of Art and the first Artist in Residence for Thamesdown Borough Council in 1983. He is a Royal West of England Academician and an Associate of the Royal Society of British Sculptors.

Throughout his creative life Buck has always returned to the human form. Over time his figures have evolved from life studies to more iconic images reminiscent of goddesses and fertility symbols. He sees his sculptures as intercessors between our contemporary intellectual selves and a more ancient, unconscious self that connects with our primitive, fundamental nature. In recent years drawing has played an increasing role in his work and lately the two activities of drawing and sculpture have become thoroughly intermeshed. The graphic elements are not only integral to the form but are also essential to the reading of the object.

The bold and contemporary use of colour and line in Buck's sculpture enhances the message of his imagery and reinforces its power. With *'Inner Man'*, specially made for this exhibition, Buck rejoices in the rich and vibrant red with contrasting blue line that has almost become a signature combination:

'Red has always seemed to me slightly shocking for a sculpture but sensuous at the same time. I am very much in sympathy with Alexander Calder who said: "I like red so much that I would like to paint all my sculptures that colour."'



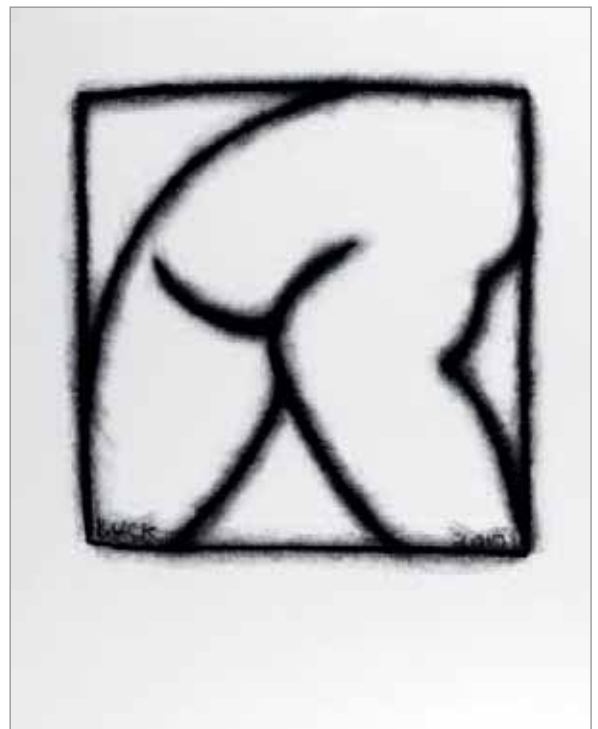
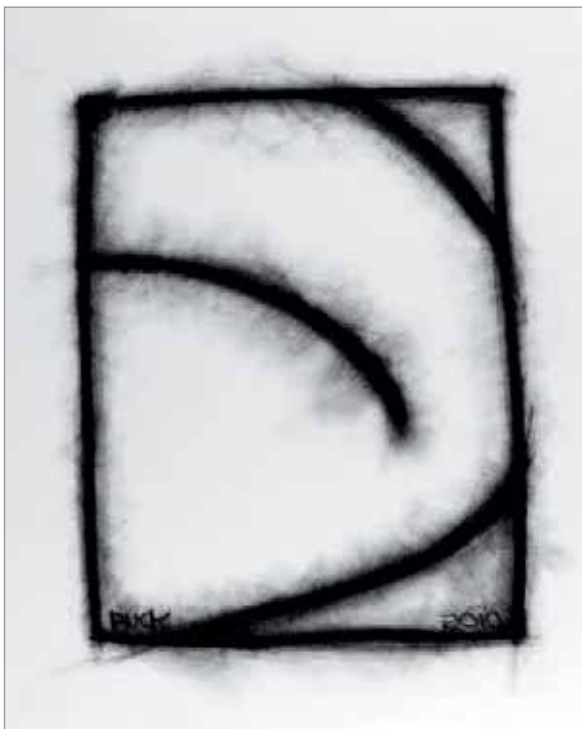
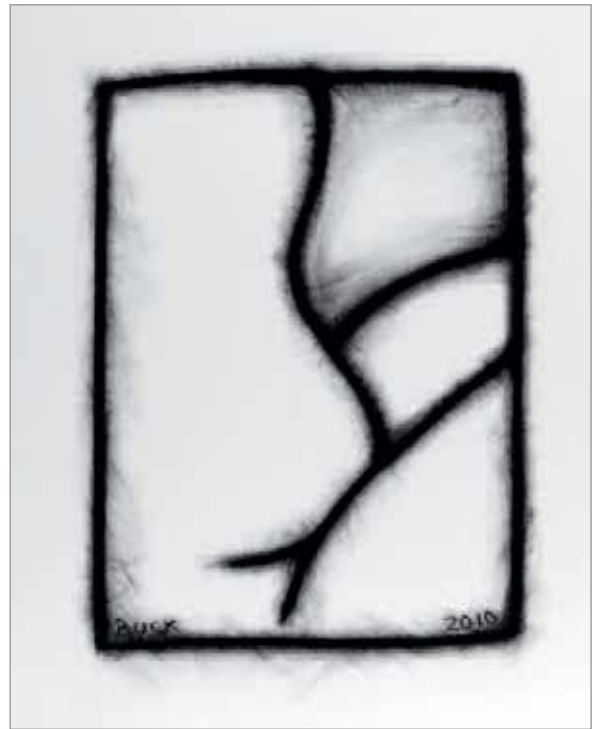
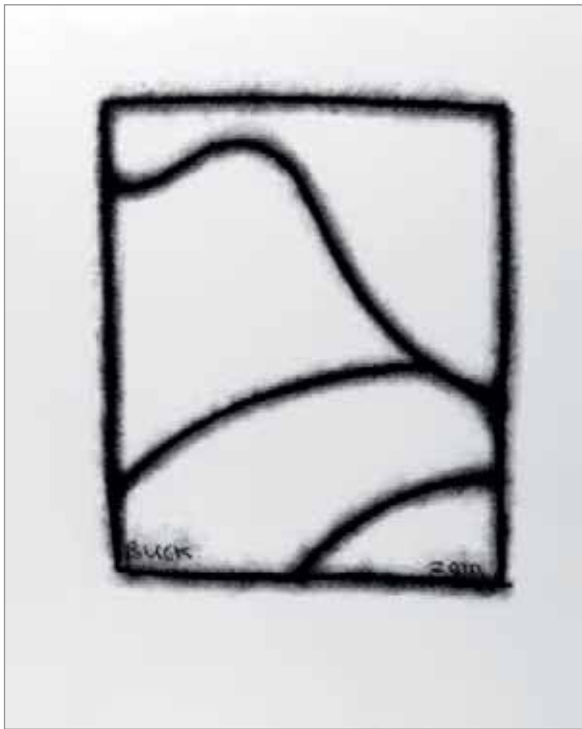
Pink Lady
Bronze
Edition of 10
50cm high



Venus
Bronze
Edition of 10
29cm high

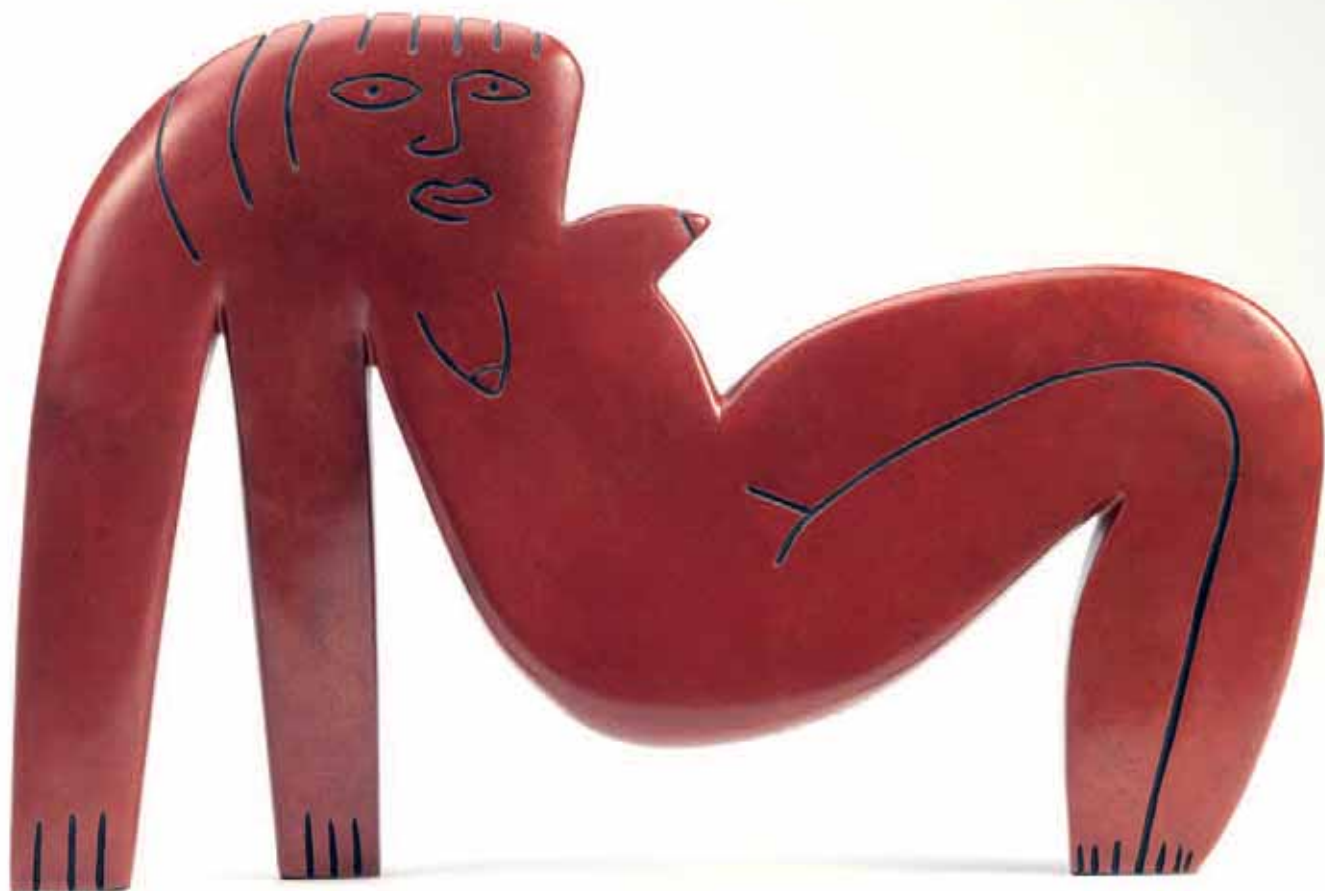


Bodyscape 10
Bodyscape 3
Bodyscape 6
Bodyscape 11
Charcoal on paper





Lying Lady
Bronze
Edition of 10
30cm high





Drawn In
Bronze
Edition of 10
48cm high





Inner Man
Bronze
Edition of 10
65cm high



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GALLERY PANGOLIN

**Unit 9 Chalford Ind Estate Chalford Glos GL6 8NT England
T: 01453 889765 F: 01453 889762 E: gallery@pangolin-editions.com
www.gallery-pangolin.com**