

STERLING STUFF





STERLING STUFF

FIFTY SCULPTORS

GALLERY PANGOLIN

2002

Anthony Abrahams
Kenneth Armitage
David Backhouse
Glenys Barton
Bruce Beasley
Nick Bibby
Petur Bjarnason
Christie Brown
Ralph Brown
Jon Buck
Daniel Chadwick
Lynn Chadwick
Ann Christopher
Michael Cooper
Terence Coventry
Geoffrey Dashwood
Steve Dilworth

Angus Fairhurst
Abigail Fallis
Sue Freeborough
Mike Ghaui
Antony Gormley
Steven Gregory
Nigel Hall
Nicola Hicks
Damien Hirst
Steve Hurst
Jonathan Kenworthy
Phillip King
Jonathan Kingdon
Bryan Kneale
Claude Koenig
David Mach
John Maine

Anita Mandl
Charlotte Mayer
David Nash
Eilis O'Connell
William Pye
Peter Randall-Page
Ian Rank-Broadley
Kenneth Robertson
Smyly
Anthony Stones
Olivier Strebelle
Guy Taplin
Johanna Thordardottir
William Tucker
Alison Wilding
Glynn Williams

STERLING STUFF

If anything characterises today's art it is revision. Symptomatic of this is the renewed interest in cast sculpture symbolised by the success of the Pangolin Foundry. Rungwe Kingdon and his wife Claude Koenig began Pangolin in 1985. Today it is the largest foundry in Britain, with a staff of 50 and a list of 300 artists.

Pangolin is exceptional in welcoming artists to work alongside its craftsmen - Dan Chadwick and Damien Hirst even have studios close by - and for having its own gallery. This acts as a show-room for visitors and annually mounts two special exhibitions. 'Sterling Stuff' is one in which the artists have been invited to work to a brief. The gallery and the shows bond process and product, craftsmen and artists, just as did the recent summer outing to the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition, where an array of Pangolin-cast works were on display in the hallowed rooms of Burlington House. And there is a commercial benefit. As Rungwe says: 'Foundries never make money and the gallery helps by providing enough to give us the option to deal with emergencies – like buying a piece of equipment in a hurry if something breaks down, which can be an expensive business.'

'Sterling Stuff' makes a virtue of the fact that Pangolin works with sculptors of every genre, from animaliers to abstractionists. It is the most ambitious show so far. Fifty sculptors have been invited to make a piece no bigger than 15cm in its largest dimension and to be cast in silver.

'You think of silver and you think of Asprey's, but it's a metal and as suited to sculpture as any other,' Rungwe explains. Bronze is an alloy, whereas silver is a precious metal with an intrinsic value. All British silverware has to be hallmarked at one of four official centres in London, Birmingham, Sheffield and Edinburgh to guarantee its value. Each of these sculptures is duly hallmarked.

Silver has a similar melting point to bronze. It is softer, purer and can be polished to a moon-like glow and, although less versatile, still commands a wide range of effects. It has a narrower textural range, tarnishes black and erodes quicker. Tarnishing can be imposed with acids but otherwise occurs naturally at different rates according to the climate. When the exhibition is shown at the Sigurjon Olafsson Museum in Reykavik the pieces will tarnish in a matter of days, whereas at Pangolin the process ordinarily takes months and even years.

The artists have risen to this challenge of working on a scale and with a metal often new to them. The result is proof that sculpture need not lose its force, or even its monumentality, on a small scale; and that silver has much greater visual diversity than might be assumed from its decorative use.

The egg is perhaps the most basic and pleasing shape in nature and a number of the artists have made variations on this theme. There could be no better demonstration of silver's surprising textural and visual range than by comparing Geoffrey Dashwood's *Nest Egg*, a bird's head in the shape of an egg, and David Nash's gashed cone, *Silver Egg* – the one as smooth, white and luminous as the other is rough, black and matt.

The dramatic 'pour' of the molten metal in a foundry invites the romantic thought that in casting nothing has changed in thousands of years. But one look at the mighty, electrically operated, overhead crane in Pangolin's Unit 9 building dispels the fantasy. The technology of casting is constantly up-dated and refined as the craftsmen search for greater speed, efficiency and perfection. These silver casts have been made using a new vacuum method Pangolin is still in the process of

developing. There is no end to finding a way further to refine the fidelity of the cast surface to that of the original model.

Jonathan Kenworthy's exceptional skill at modelling clay earned him a place at the Royal College when he was eleven. His *Afghan Girl* preserves every pinched and knuckled nuance of his modelling. This sense of malleability characterises William Tucker's *Dancer after Degas*, a detail taken from a Degas sculpture, and Alison Wilding's *Wolf (Captive)*, where only the muzzle is clarified.

The artists also explore scale and colour. Antony Gormley's foetus is the embryo at 21 days, the moment when the cells first coalesce into recognisable human form; but small though it is, the reality is even smaller. Daniel Chadwick's *Mother & Child* takes this miniaturisation to an extreme. Flocked crimson and shocking pink it looks like some amoeba or nucleus seen through a microscope. Angus Fairhurst's *Undone* uses colour to make a facsimile good enough to eat. But most prefer truth to the material.

Lynn Chadwick, doyen of the exhibitors and paternal half of the Chadwick duo, is in this modernist tradition. He played a key role in the

founding of Pangolin. Rungwe Kingdon learned his trade as a sculptural assistant and foundryman working for Chadwick at nearby Lypiatt Park, and he still drops in for a daily chat. In the show Chadwick is represented by his trademark angular-headed figures, an hieratic male and female couple in commanding movement.

Chadwick is one of the diminishing band of British sculptors, collectively described as introducing a 'new Bronze Age', who came to international prominence in the 1950s. In those early days his name was inseparable from that of his friend Kenneth Armitage, who died in January. Armitage chose to cast an early 1950s plaster model, *Man with Raised Arms*, for the show. His association with Pangolin over the last couple of years, when the foundry cast the three largest pieces of his career, marked a thrilling climax to his life.

The 'new Bronze Age' sculptors opened the way for successive generations of British sculptors to make a similar impact. Damien Hirst has achieved greater international fame at a younger age than any of his predecessors. Is his *Sadness* an open hand spilling its box of pills, the gesture of a solicitous friend or a suicide? The ambiguity leaves the viewer to complete the story.

Steve Hurst's *Geometric Organic* includes an embracing couple, a seminal sculptural subject. Hurst was taught by Albert Angeloni at the Royal College of Art's School of Metal Casting. There is still something of the arcane and ancient science of alchemy in casting and Angeloni maintained this mystery by being notoriously secretive about his methods. Via Hurst some of this immemorial lore has been passed on to Pangolin. That Claude Koenig herself contributes a piece, *The Venus of Cocoom*, renders the Pangolin bond between foundry and artist indivisible. Sue Freeborough might be said to 'round off' the figurative representation with *Cardinal Points*, which comically shows Leonardo's perfectly proportioned Vitruvian Man in flaccid form.

All art is 'conceptual' and 'abstract', but the sloppy terms usefully differentiate distinctive genres. Abstract work is in a minority in the selection, but strongly represented by such notable artists as Nigel Hall, William Pye and Phillip King, President of the Royal Academy. It is a fashionable academic tendency to call everything 'sculpture' today. The success of Pangolin rebuts this slack conceit. Sculpture is about objects - and the power of objects, for artists and public, is clearly undiminished. Artists feel compelled to make them and we, their audience, have an equal need to see and touch the result.

'A show of small and precious objects concentrates objectness. Look at the Willendorf Venus – it's tiny and yet its impact is as great as ever after 30,000 years,' says Rungwe Kingdon. Sterling stuff.

John McEwen

2002



KING OF KINGS
ANTHONY ABRAHAMS

STERLING SILVER ON BASALT BASE WITH STAINLESS STEEL
EDITION OF 6
16.5 cms HIGH INC. BASE



MAN WITH RAISED ARMS
KENNETH ARMITAGE

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 6
29 cms HIGH



MERLIN
DAVID BACKHOUSE

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
13.5 cms HIGH



BIRTH
GLENYS BARTON

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 6
15 cms HIGH



ARCANUM
BRUCE BEASLEY

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
10 cms HIGH



IN THE BALANCE
NICK BIBBY

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
13.5 cms HIGH



AUGA
PETUR BJARNASON

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 7
13.5 cms HIGH



CHILD OF GLASS
CHRISTIE BROWN

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 6
13 cms HIGH



LA VELATA
RALPH BROWN

STERLING SILVER ON SLATE BASE
EDITION OF 12
20.5 cms HIGH WITH BASE



EARLY BIRD
JON BUCK

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
13.5 cms HIGH



MOTHER AND CHILD
DANIEL CHADWICK

FLOCKED STERLING SILVER
SERIES OF 6
3.5 cms HIGH



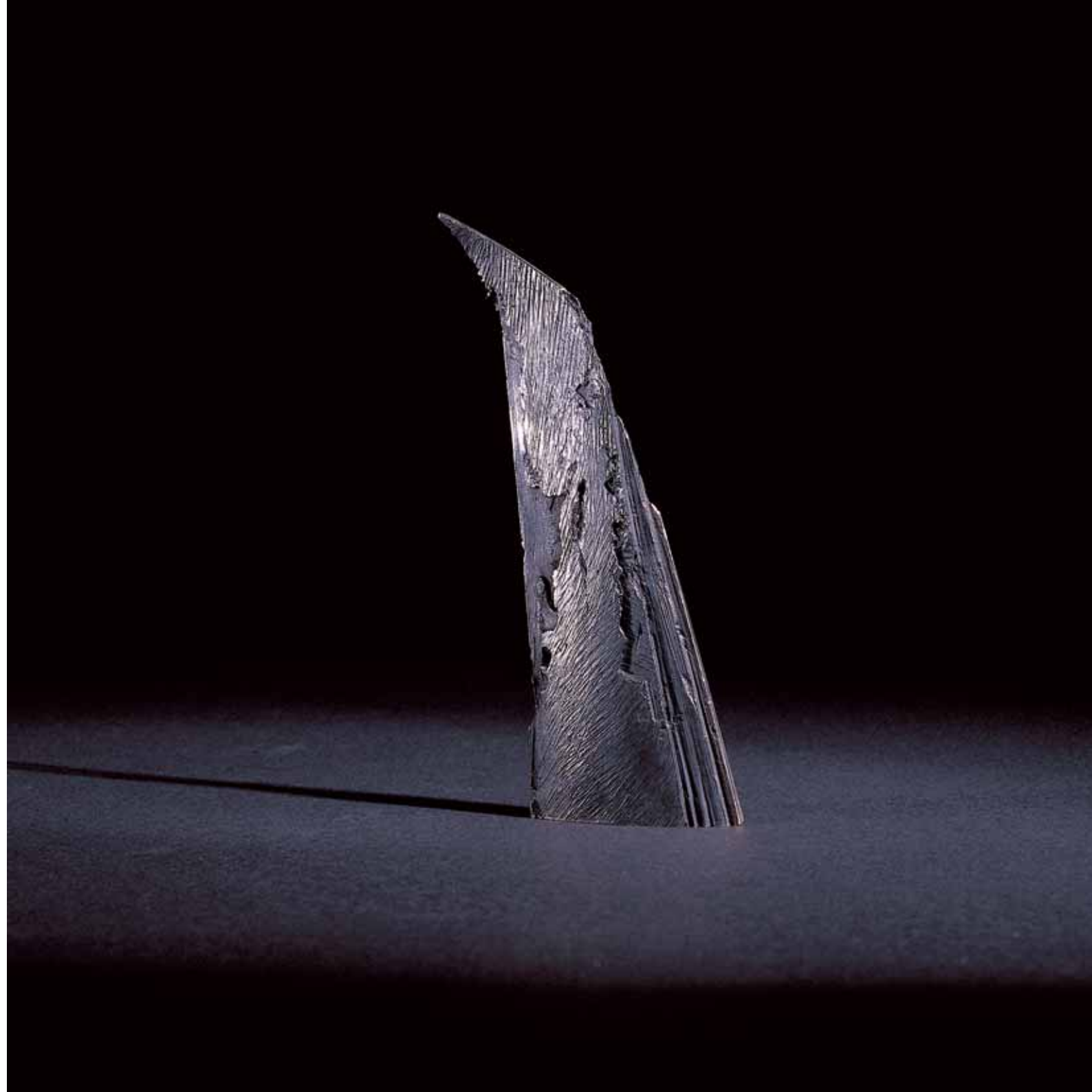
MAQUETTE IV WALKING CLOAKED FIGURES
LYNN CHADWICK

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 20
8 cms HIGH



SHADOW OF LIGHT
ANN CHRISTOPHER

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 9
16.5 cms HIGH



JAGUAR
MICHAEL COOPER

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 9
4 cms HIGH



OWL
TERENCE COVENTRY

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 10
14 cms HIGH



NEST EGG
GEOFFREY DASHWOOD

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
5.5 cms HIGH



DEEPWATER
STEVE DILWORTH

STERLING SILVER WITH GLASS PHIAL AND WATER
EDITION OF 9
8 cms HIGH



UNDONE
ANGUS FAIRHURST

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 9
3 cms HIGH



HEAD OVER HEELS
ABIGAIL FALLIS

STERLING SILVER
SERIES OF 6
16.5 cms HIGH



CARDINAL POINTS
SUE FREEBOROUGH

STERLING SILVER AND STAINLESS STEEL
EDITION OF 10
16.5 cms HIGH



RIVER BANK – YOUNG ELEPHANTS
MIKE GHAI

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 9
9.5 cms HIGH



HOME AND AWAY
ANTONY GORMLEY

STERLING SILVER ON PETRI DISH
EDITION OF 12
3.5 cms HIGH



FISH 'N TITS
STEVEN GREGORY

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 9
13.5 cms HIGH



THE HOUR OF DUSK
NIGEL HALL

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 9
15 cms HIGH



MINOTAUR
NICOLA HICKS

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
12.5 cms HIGH



SADNESS
DAMIEN HIRST

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
7.5 cms HIGH



GEOMETRIC ORGANIC
STEVE HURST

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 10
14 cms HIGH



AFGHAN GIRL
JONATHAN KENWORTHY

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 5
20 cms HIGH



JERUSALEM
PHILLIP KING

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 8
12 cms HIGH



PANGOLIN
JONATHAN KINGDON

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 10
8 cms HIGH



ARREYAH
BRYAN KNEALE

STERLING SILVER AND STAINLESS STEEL
EDITION OF 12
20.5 cms HIGH



VENUS OF COCOOM
CLAUDE KOENIG

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 8
4.5 cms HIGH

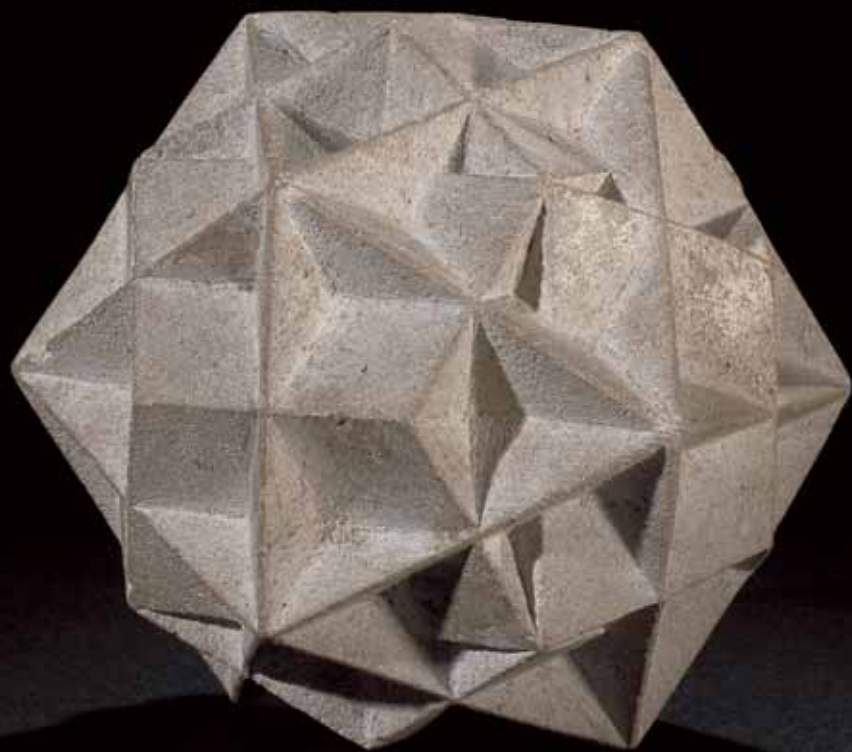


IT TAKES TWO
DAVID MACH

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
12.5 cms HIGH



EQUATION
JOHN MAINE
STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 9
13 cms HIGH



ARMADILLO
ANITA MANDL

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 6
8.5 cms HIGH



THORNFLOWER
CHARLOTTE MAYER

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 6
16 cms HIGH



SILVER EGG
DAVID NASH

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
12 cms HIGH



PRAIRIE
EILIS O'CONNELL

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 8
16.5 cms HIGH



CLUSTER
WILLIAM PYE
STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 8
13.5 cms HIGH



THE LITTLE NUT TREE SEED
PETER RANDALL-PAGE
STERLING SILVER WITH LEAD
EDITION OF 4
9.5 cms HIGH



HORSE OF THERMOPYLAE
IAN RANK-BROADLEY

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 10
14 cms HIGH



RADICAL DANCE
KENNETH ROBERTSON

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
6 cms HIGH



16-D
SMYLY

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 6
15 cms HIGH



BELLEROPHON RIDING PEGASUS FIGHTING THE CHIMÆRA
ANTHONY STONES

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 12
17 cms HIGH



HORS DE QUESTION
OLIVIER STREBELLE

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 8
8 cms HIGH



PREENING CURLEW
GUY TAPLIN

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 25
13 cms HIGH



BON VOYAGE
JOHANNA THORDARDOTTIR

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 10
8 cms HIGH



DANCER AFTER DEGAS
WILLIAM TUCKER

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 10
13.5 cms HIGH



WOLF (CAPTIVE)
ALISON WILDING

STERLING SILVER
EDITION OF 6
5.5 cms HIGH



THROWAWAY
GLYNN WILLIAMS

STERLING SILVER
SERIES OF 6
7 cms HIGH



AFTERWORD

Variety is indeed the spice of life and who would have imagined that a brief seemingly so restrictive could result in such an explosion of creative diversity?

Our invitation to fifty contemporary sculptors, to produce a piece for silver under 15cms, presented a challenge to more than a few but for us it has been a very exciting adventure. Christmas came early here as parcels arrived from across the globe bearing the most surprising and wonderful contents: tiny modelled waxes, intricately carved stones, found objects, sometimes smelly, crushed paper balls, meticulously detailed pieces and bold abstractions. We also had some interesting telephone instructions and a visit to the fruit section of the local supermarket with a six inch ruler resulted in some puzzled looks from fellow shoppers!

A few skillful hours down the line and the sculptures became unified as they emerged in wax. Further transformed into silver by the consummate skills of the foundry craftsmen they began to hint at the impact of the exhibition. The final stage was all about discovery as Rungwe explored with each artist the range of surface treatments, patinas and colour effects achievable on silver.

It is only now however, as we stand back from the tribulations of the process and see all the sculptures displayed in the gallery that it becomes overwhelmingly clear that this exhibition is truly 'Sterling Stuff'.

We would like to thank all the artists for their time and effort and for rising to the challenge with such enthusiasm. Without them of course, the exhibition would not have been possible.

Our thanks must also go to John McEwen for writing such an insightful introduction and to our foundry colleagues who have shared this exciting adventure with us.

Jane Buck

Claude Koenig

Autumn 2002

Catalogue Design:

Casting:

Photography:

Printing:

Gallery Pangolin

Pangolin Editions

Stan Dutton

Arlequin Press/Healeys Printers, Ipswich



Gallery Pangolin
Chalford
Glos
GL6 8NT
England

Tel: 00 44 (0)1453 886527

Fax: 00 44 (0)1453 731499

Email: gallery@pangolin-editions.com



STERLING STUFF

