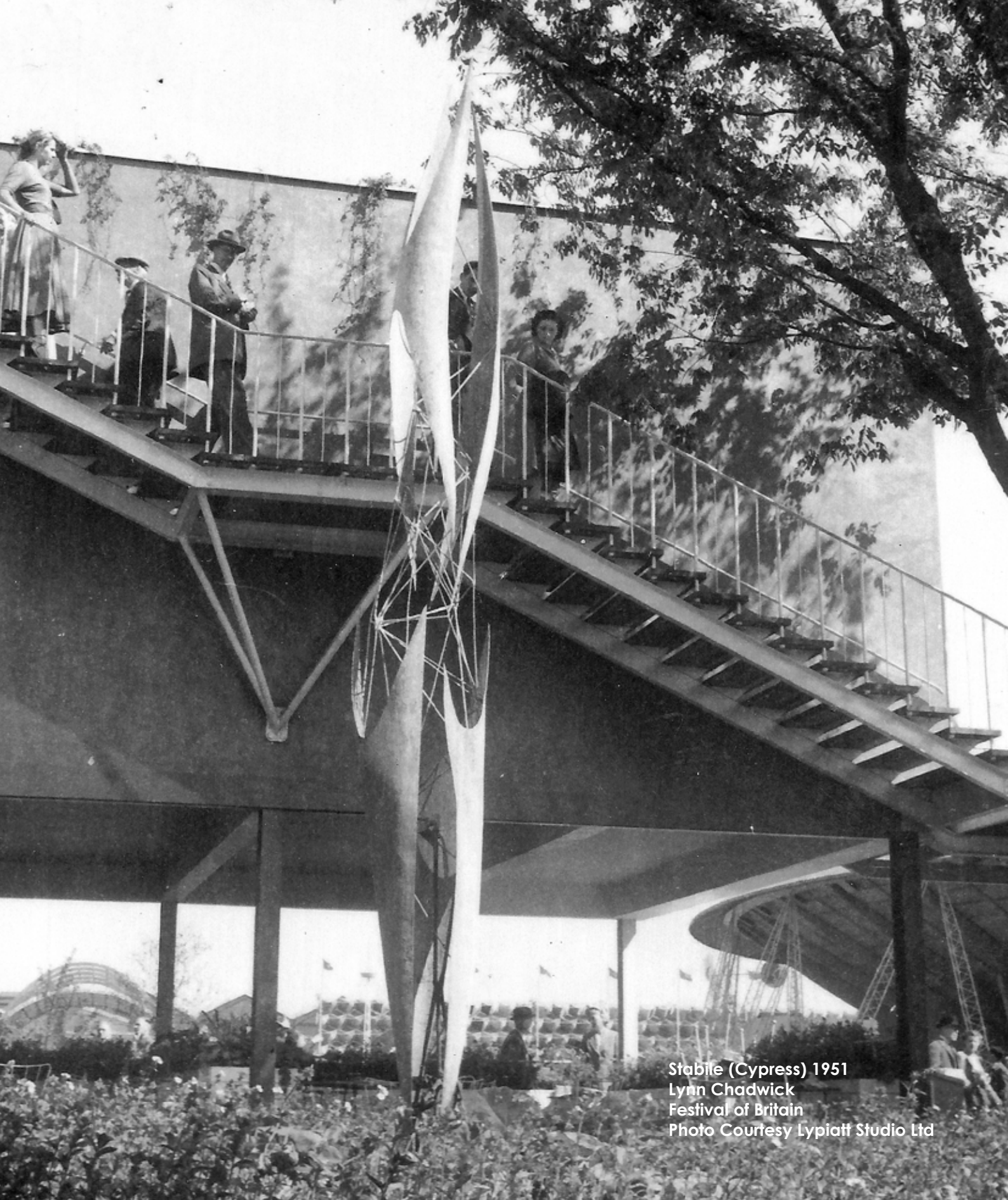


STRANGE BEASTS

Lynn Chadwick and the New Generation

June 2011

Lynn Chadwick
Cockings & Hodge
Ralph Macartney
Gavin McClafferty
Lorraine Robbins
Daniel Sparkes



Stabile (Cypress) 1951
Lynn Chadwick
Festival of Britain
Photo Courtesy Lypiatt Studio Ltd

Introduction

This year is the 60th anniversary of the Festival of Britain when the new and relatively unknown artist Lynn Chadwick exhibited his mobiles and stabiles to a massive public (over 8 million visitors). The next year he was chosen to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale and exhibited again in 1956, when he won the International Prize for Sculpture. This was an incredible achievement within such a short space of time for an artist who was essentially self-taught. The sculptures from this period are iconic '50s style', large bulky bodies balancing improbably on skinny tapering legs. There is an intrinsic appeal to Chadwick's forms that seduced audiences then and has continued to do so ever since. Alan Bowness described the essence of this lasting appeal when he said of Chadwick *'he has the sculptor's remarkable power to make images that have a symbolic value, images that we know mean something to us without us understanding why...'*

When Gallery Pangolin asked me to guest curate a show of young local artists I knew straight away I'd like to include work by Lynn Chadwick. As a recent graduate working in the wax department at Pangolin in the late nineties, Chadwick was for me an intriguing and mysterious figure. Although I never actually met the man, catching only fleeting glimpses from my work bench, it was through the unique forms and textures of his sculptures that my connection with Chadwick as an artist grew.

I decided to focus the exhibition on Chadwick and ask invited artists to create new sculptures in response to his work. The artists would each select a Chadwick sculpture and make four sculptures inspired by that piece. As a lecturer in Art and Design at Stroud College, I knew that placing restrictions can enhance creativity but there was something I'd forgotten. What I had forgotten was that artists love boundaries; they love them because they love to smash them down. The title 'Strange Beasts' was not, as might perhaps be thought, inspired by the curious sculptures in the exhibition but through working with the artists themselves. Each artist challenged the brief in their own way and the relatively short timescale for production made for some tense dialogue. However, I was overwhelmed by the commitment and effort that each artist brought to this project and every conversation brought renewed enthusiasm. The resulting ideas and work, whilst not always fitting neatly into the discipline of sculpture, have exceeded my expectations.

Each of the artists in this exhibition had impressed me with work I'd seen in exhibitions over the past few years. Some had become good friends, a shared interest in art makes for strong dynamic friendships. All of them I considered as having an artistic rigour and innovative approach to their practice, leading to art that doesn't always sit quietly and well-mannered in the gallery. All constantly evolve and surprise in the work they produce.

Cockings and Hodge were the first artists I approached. They have a wide-ranging, collaborative practice, from Situationist style works to paintings and installations. The economic necessity of working as cleaners transforming into a poetic statement on banality and filth; exhibitions culminating in large, joyous, irreverent feasts in the centre of the gallery; Cockings and Hodge are artists for whom art and life intermingle. Theirs is not an exclusive, sterile practice but an all-embracing adventure where the viewer is a welcomed participant, often in fact completing the work.

In his video works, Ralph Macartney metaphorically stretches time to near breaking point, sometimes teasing out the very moment of committing a mark to surface to a painful climax, sometimes turning the artistic endeavour into a protracted, self-flagellating process. In other work he transforms the detritus of labour into mind-liberating landscapes. Macartney gets inside the very nature of creativity and blows it apart.

When I first went to an exhibition curated by Gavin McClafferty (Works with Sunlight: Tests and Demonstrations at Meantime), what most struck me was his intelligent and passionate engagement in a discussion about science and art. The impression he made on me was lasting. As an artist, McClafferty makes work that has utopian ambitions but at the same time is grounded in the reality of a committed family man. McClafferty takes an academic, well-researched and considered approach to work in which new, evolving computer technologies coexist with manual practices towards the creation of new dynamic possibilities.

Daniel Sparkes' practice seems to me to be the one that is closest to that of Chadwick. Not in a physical way but in a spiritual sense (Sparkes' main discipline is drawing, something which Chadwick, although trained as a draughtsman or perhaps in spite of it, seemed to do only if essential).

For Sparkes, as for Chadwick, the daily toil in the studio seems to be a necessity, almost as if creativity is a visceral thing, an organ that continually pumps and must be fed if the artist is to survive.

Through working on this exhibition, both as an artist and curator, I have gained a great insight into how other artists work and have come to understand and develop my own practice further. I hope this exhibition shows that Lynn Chadwick's legacy is not a lesson to be learned or a heritage to be hermetically preserved but a body of vital work to be enjoyed and to inspire further generations of artists.

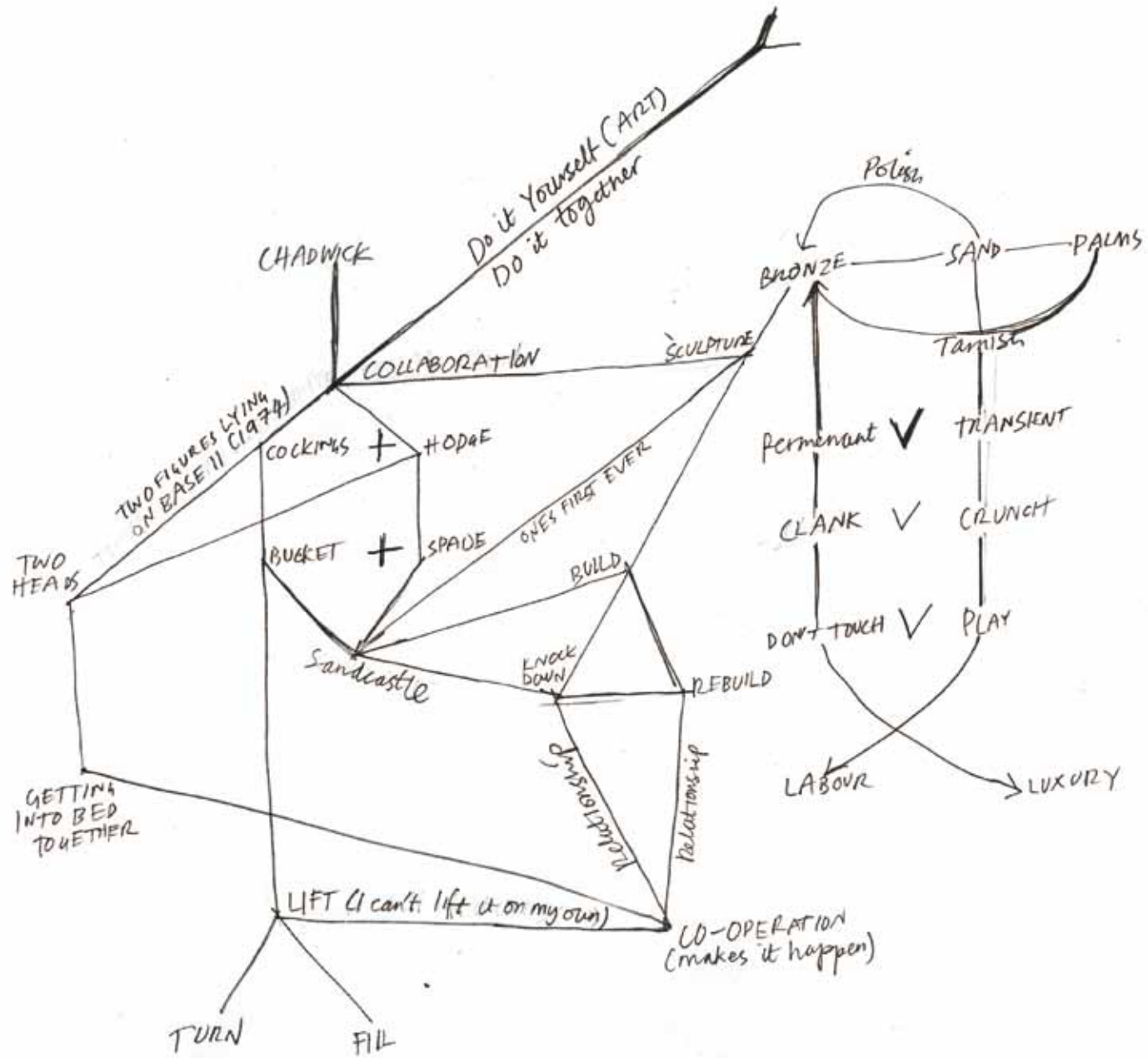
Many people helped to make this exhibition possible through generosity with their time and resources. I'd like to warmly thank Lynn Chadwick's family, Eva Chadwick and Sarah Marchant for loaning the sculptures in the exhibition and Dan Chadwick for supporting the production of new work. I'm grateful to Billie and Christian Wiseman for their time and expertise (and much appreciated sense of humour) and to George Butcher at Stroud College for his kindness. I'd really like to send out thanks to all the artists' families and friends; it isn't always easy to live with someone in the midst of a creative outpouring. Of course none of this would have been possible without the faith and expertise of everyone at Gallery Pangolin and the dedication and enthusiasm of the artists themselves.

Lorraine Robbins
May 2011

COCKINGS & HODGE



Two Lying Figures on Base II 1974
Lynn Chadwick
Bronze
Edition of 8
45 cm long



Bucket + Spade detail
 Cockings + Hodge
 Bronze and Sand
 Series of 6
 32cm high

RALPH MACARTNEY



Pyro-Biro II (Negative)
Ralph Macartney
C-Type Print
Edition of 3
90 cm h x 120 cm w

Drawing on Chadwick: Exploring and Re-interpreting the working methods of Lynn Chadwick

'He was never a modeller as such, but always a constructor, beginning always with an open, frame-like structure built of metal rods and wires. In this way, drawing, as it were, the basic form or image he required in actual space...'

William Packer¹

As William Packer recounts in his introductory essay to 'Lynn Chadwick 1914 – 2003', *'In this way, drawing...'* how does something so familiar as one art form, sculpture, seem to evoke another, in this case drawing? Pamela M. Lee suggested in 'Afterimage: Drawing Through Process' [that] drawing has always occupied an ambivalent role within the historiography of art, regarded as both foundational and peripheral, central and marginal. Commonly thought of as 'the mother of the arts', the basis of both painting and sculpture, drawing has been treated as the ground from which all other arts originate.²

Welding rods would commonly be melted via a welder to join sheet or solid metal together. Chadwick used these rods in a more unconventional manner, to construct a framework of lines delineated through space, a preparatory sketch in 3D, much as designers and architects make nowadays using computer applications. These skeletal forms were filled with a plaster and iron-filing mixture pushed and squeezed through the initiating armature, obscuring but never hiding the genesis of the work (as Packer denotes *'the structure exposed and evident, and integral to the image...its imaginative source in part in the nature of its making would always remain apparent'*).³ This suggests the idea of the sketch/drawing/framework for the original sculpture, exposed like an exoskeleton, both the drawing and sculpture inhabiting the same form, 'the double time of drawing' as Lee goes on to proclaim:

*'If, say, the drawing is a preparatory sketch for a work of art, it can in no way approximate the visual plenitude of the completed work. If, on the other hand, the drawing takes after a work of art, it functions as a simulacrum twice removed from its original source. In both cases, the drawing takes on the status of either trace or leftover – a clue as to its formation or a remainder left behind.'*⁴

From this it is possible to ascertain a distinction between a drawing as a preparatory sketch which is then made into a finished artwork, or the drawing coming after the event and existing as a drawing, but as Lee suggests, the outcome is the same. This seems to further Packer's contention that Chadwick's sculptures evoke the notion of another art form by containing both sketch and finished drawing, existing if a little obscured within the same object.

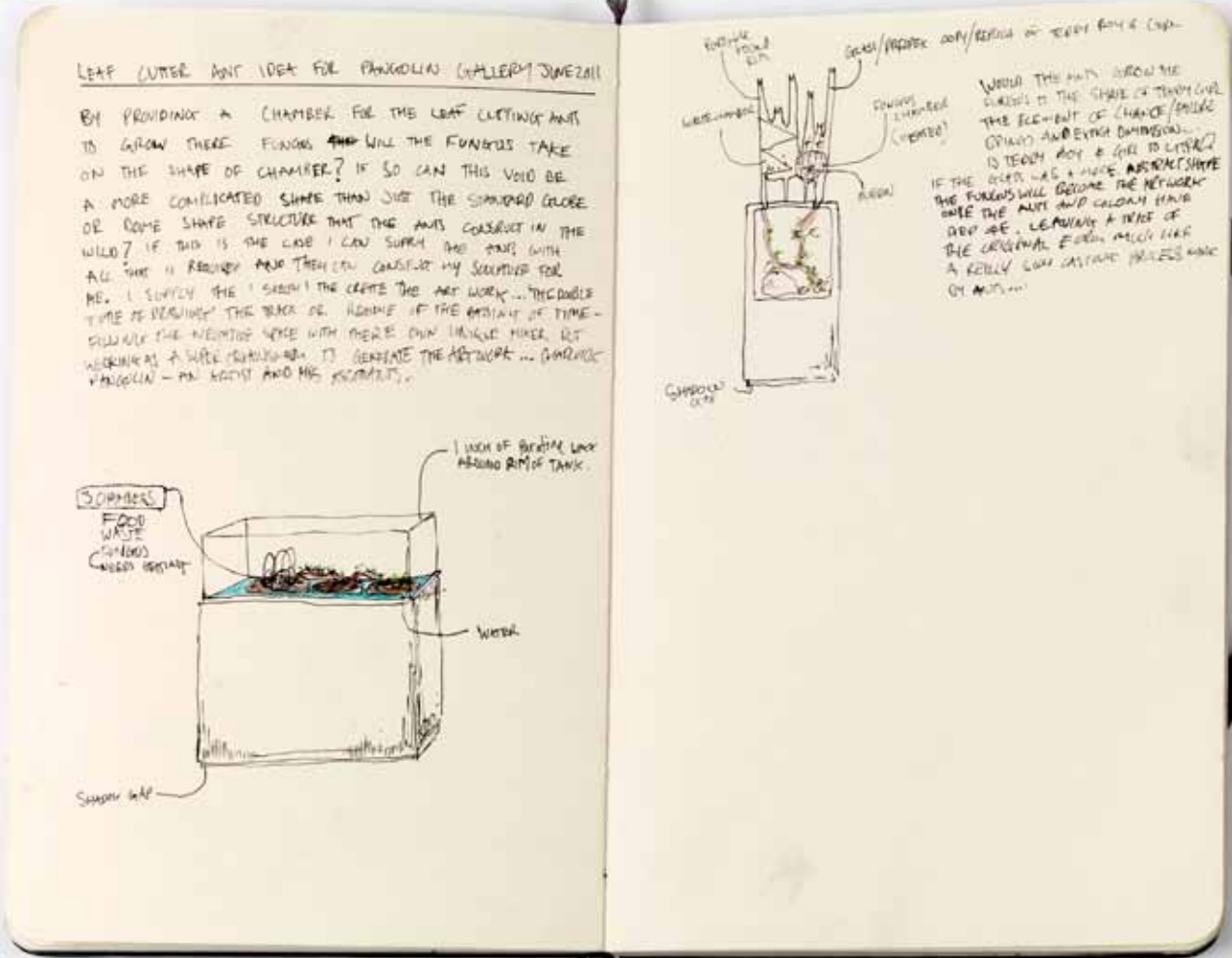
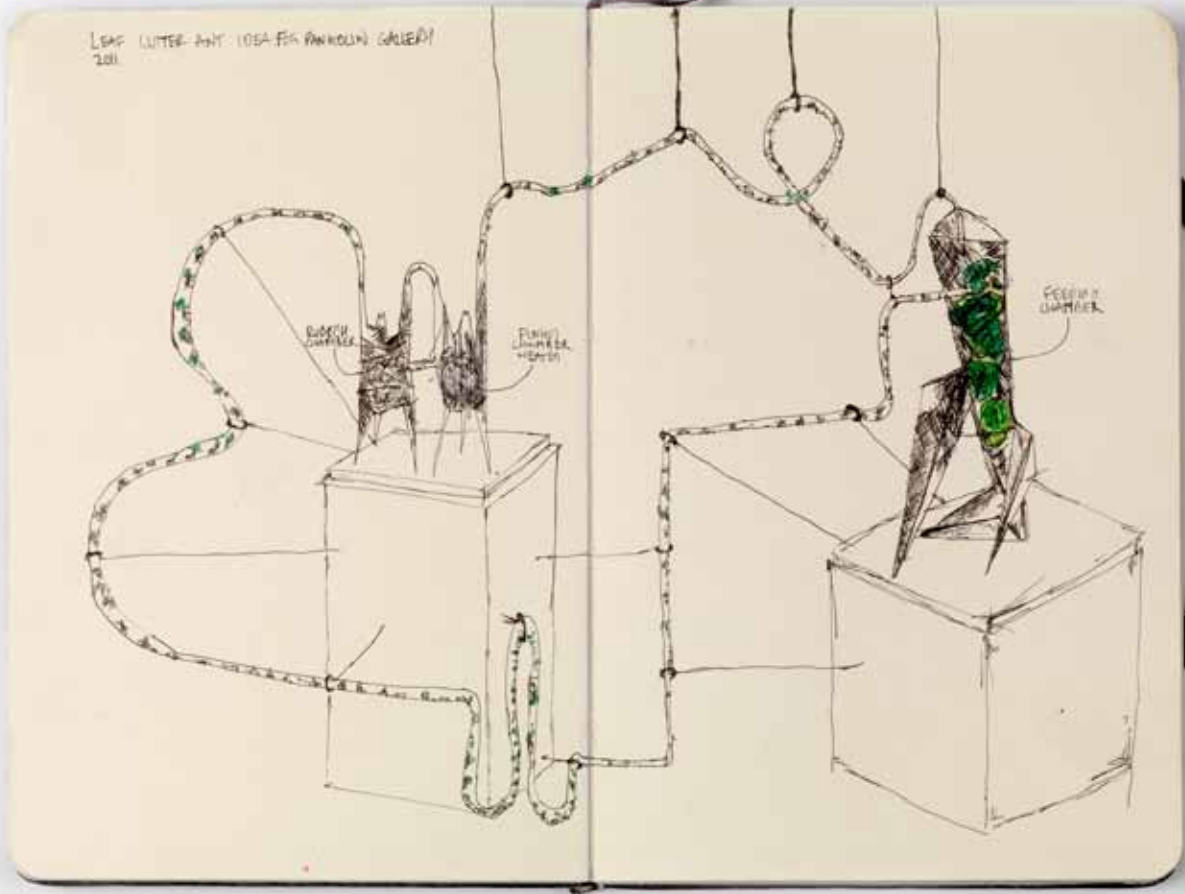


Maq. III Teddy Boy and Girl 1957
Lynn Chadwick
Bronze
Edition of 9
53 cm high

The idea of 'the double time of drawing' co-habiting Maquette III Teddy Boy and Girl led me to select it and to explore through my own work the methods Lynn Chadwick used in its making. The idea of both trace and residue led me to pursue two avenues of thought, one in which the framework 'drawing' was re-examined and the other re-interpreting the filling of negative space.

Ralph Macartney 2011

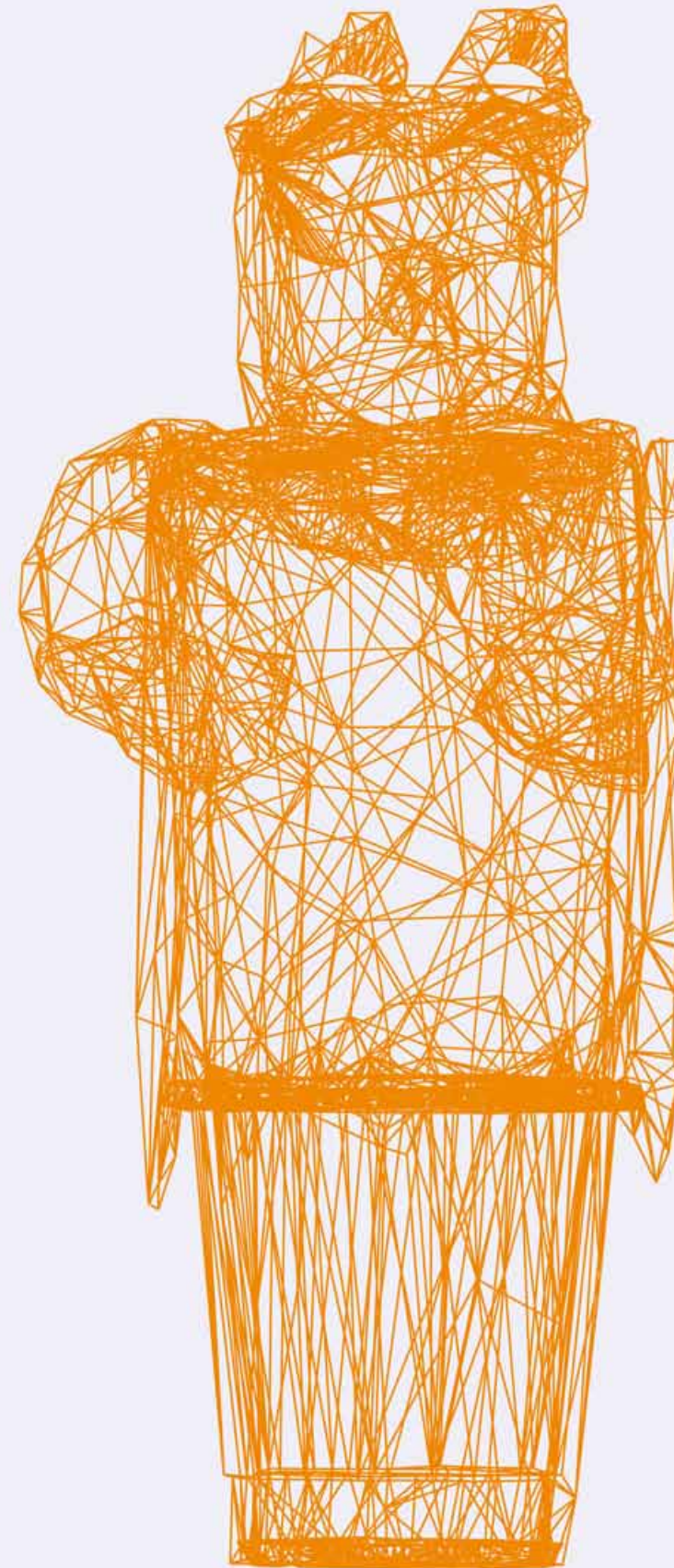
- 1 PACKER, William. Exh. Cat. Gallery Pangolin, Chalford, 2004.
- 2 EDIS-BARZMAN, Karen. Exh. Cat. "Perception, Knowledge and the theory of Design in Sixteenth Century Florence," in From Studio to Studio, Exh. Cat. Oberlin: Allen Memorial Art Museum, 1991.
- 3 PACKER, William. Ibid, Page 19.
- 4 BUTLER, Cornelia H. Exh. Cat. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1999.



Left & Top: Pages from notebook
Work in Progress: Fungus Chamber

GAVIN McCLAFFERTY

Untitled Pyramid II {Ra, Man with
Falcon Head} 2009
Gavin McClafferty
Giclée Print on archival paper
47.6 cm h x 34.4 cm w
Edition of 120



By creating two new sculptures I have positioned myself back in a traditional mode of working in the hope of creating a dialogue between my current interest in the possibilities of 3D computer modelling and ideas and methods that Chadwick might have found familiar.

With the stone piece, 'Untitled Pyramids {Dymaxion Rock or Spaceship Earth} 2011' I decided to employ a simple rule: to redefine the surface of a rock as a series of triangles. To tessellate a simple geometry is to produce a surface of rational complexity. It is from this complexity that the human mind creates patterns, faces or meaning.

For my other work, 'Untitled Pyramid II {Ra, Man with Falcon Head} 2011' I took an existing piece, 'The Bisley Bird' (2009) that I had been working on in collaboration with David Huson at the Fine Print Research department based at UWE. I had the piece laser-scanned and a *point-cloud* created on the computer. These points were then connected together with a single line creating a network of tessellated triangles that described the form and size of the object (rendered as a complex tetrahedron or polygon). By reducing the number of triangles in the rendered image I was able to create a stylistic similarity with Lynn Chadwick.

Studying Lynn Chadwick's work has led me to the ideas of Buckminster Fuller and to contemporary artists such as Toby Zeigler and Conrad Shawcross and back, back to a point where the surface of the object reveals the mode of its construction. Lynn Chadwick's work for the Festival of Britain 1951, revealed the armature as integral to the piece.

Although not the same, it is reminiscent of *tensegrity*, a construction method pioneered by Buckminster Fuller that is lightweight, strong but crucially efficient - this triangular network forms a rigid and light weight armature, partially exposed as if to revel in the elegance and the practicality of its geometry.

I'm sure that Chadwick would have been aware of Buckminster Fuller's ideas. For instance the artist Kenneth Snelson, creator of the Skylon, centre-piece to the Festival of Britain, studied under Buckminster Fuller at the Black Mountain College where the two of them prototyped the first geodesic dome in the college backyard.

I wanted to make a sculpture that reflected my desire to respond to personal interests and those of Lynn Chadwick and also to understand the context in which Lynn Chadwick worked. I was looking to describe a parallel I saw between Chadwick's work and ideas of the time, particularly those of Richard Buckminster Fuller.

I was curious as to how Buckminster Fuller was able to extrapolate an entire philosophy from the triangle - how to do more with less. This basic principal guided his aspiration to enable the people of the world to have equal shares of the world's resources. Buckminster Fuller considered himself a *design scientist* and set about creating a methodology that is particularly relevant in our present age.

At this time British art had been exploring the depths of its pain through a cathartic exercise relying heavily on tormented animal and naturalistic themes, muted tones indicative of the scarcities of the day and the dreariness of everyday life:

'Streets are deserted, lighting is dim, people's clothes are shabby and their tables bare.'

As opposed to a 'geometry of fear', Buckminster Fuller represented the geometry of hope.

'Dreariness is everywhere' wrote one schoolteacher in 1948 and in a way the points of Chadwick's sculptures are a way of puncturing this and a way to visually inject excitement and dynamism into the viewer. Lynn Chadwick's early days as an architectural draughtsman explain the structural approach in his work - the armature, in essence, is worn on the skin of the sculpture, its method of construction becomes its style. There is an expediency in this, an economy that really is of its day, expressing a bid for truth and an industrial approach or aesthetic.

Later Chadwick worked with greatly simplified pyramids, often used as elemental architectural forms, these pyramids forming the heads of figures. I feel that this surrealist abstraction of the head or face becomes a shorthand for the figures becoming generalised statements of personhood and shared experience, the pyramid also signifying an ancient knowledge or mysticism and crucially, order and governance.



Untitled (Pyramids) 1965
Lynn Chadwick
Bronze
Edition of 6
40 cm high



Untitled Pyramids {Dymaxion Rock or Spaceship Earth} 2011
Gavin McClafferty
Cotswold stone
Unique
17 cm high

I picked up the rock near to my house, in fact on the other side of the hill to Lypiatt Park (perhaps that means it's site specific). In truth it is specific because it comes as a direct response to Lynn Chadwick's piece 'Untitled (Pyramids) 1969', a series of stacked three-sided pyramids in bronze. I wanted my rock to maintain its original shape, to hold on to its rock-ness suggesting an arbitrary or ubiquitous character, then to apply hours of work to it, meticulously correcting and readjusting the surface with the potential to be viewed as an endless and futile task and one that was influenced by my recent work with 3D computer modelling programs. I wanted to recreate this process manually, to emulate the computer, not because I was threatened by it but because I was intrigued. I began to muse on Buckminster Fuller's attempt to redesign our world using this same fundamental structure and on how contemporary computer programs form STL files and employ a polygonal interpretation of the world.

So the ideas behind my work are underpinned by a connection between the symbolic value of the triangle and its engineering capabilities. My rock however is impractical. It talks more of intent than actual potential; it talks of time and geology and although inspired by Chadwick's 'Pyramids', becomes a reflection upon Buckminster Fuller's optimism.

Ultimately my exhibits straddle two opposing forces indicative of today, the traditional and the stridently cutting-edge; ancient rock versus the hi-tech bird, the gold representing the new idolatry of our computer age.

Gavin McClafferty 2011



Untitled Pyramids {Dymaxion Rock or Spaceship Earth}

LORRAINE ROBBINS



The Beast Within

Chadwick's Beast VII is a powerful, thrusting, dangerous beast, an animal devoid of sentimentality, its strength accentuated by hard geometric forms. My first reaction to this sculpture was that it must be a comment on warfare, the menacing violence of war made manifest in this angular, unnatural beast with its head resembling the barrels of a Gatling gun. I knew a little of Chadwick's history, his time as a pilot in WW2 and the label 'Geometry of Fear' that was subsequently given to work by that group of British sculptors in the post-war period, although I later read that Chadwick had always rejected this association.

In choosing a piece that had attracted me on such an emotional level there was a real danger of only reproducing it, creating a poor, second-rate Chadwick. Through a process of stripping back and limiting materials, Chadwick created his own language of forms. In order to produce a valid response to Chadwick's Beast VII, I needed to look at what had been removed or left out in the evolution of this sculpture. I also wanted to explore 'beast' as an expression or label.

Beast VII 1956
Lynn Chadwick
Bronze
Edition of 9
112 cm high

What strikes me about Chadwick's work and this piece in particular, is a real maleness in its welded angular construction, emphasising hard geometric shapes. In her book, *The Nude in Art*, Lynda Nead suggests that '*If the male signifies culture, order, geometry... then the female stands for nature and physicality.*'¹ She also posits that within the ideal, muscular, male body there lies a fear that it may revert to '*its own female formlessness*'² or '*the beast within*'.³ Beast 43 started as a desire to physically become Chadwick's beast. I wanted to perch heavily and precariously on a plinth, an unsavoury intruder in the gallery. In making the cast I chose to wear a bra and G-string, (a garment described by Roland Barthes in his essay 'Spectacle' as the '*ultimate triangle*'),⁴ the flimsy, ornate triangles of underwear forming a distorted echo to the simple, masculine forms of Chadwick's Beast VII.



The Beast of Florence playfully questions existing definitions of female beauty within art history and the wider culture. It comments on accepted 'norms' and our sly voyeuristic obsession with bodies falling outside of this narrow definition of normal. The freak shows of the Victorian age have now been replaced by television programmes such as *Body Matters*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Embarrassing Bodies*. Our greedy eyes that thirst for glimpses of the 'abnormal' body can be satiated in an anonymous, guilt free manner from the comfort of our living rooms.



The title of the sculpture, *Death by Sofa*, not only refers to the potential death of an endangered species but to the death of imagination, to the loss of an age when a piece of polystyrene can become an iceberg and a bedspread an explorer's tent or the raging sea.

Lorraine Robbins 2011

Endnotes

¹ Nead, Lynda, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p18

² Nead, Lynda, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p18

³ Nead, Lynda, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p17

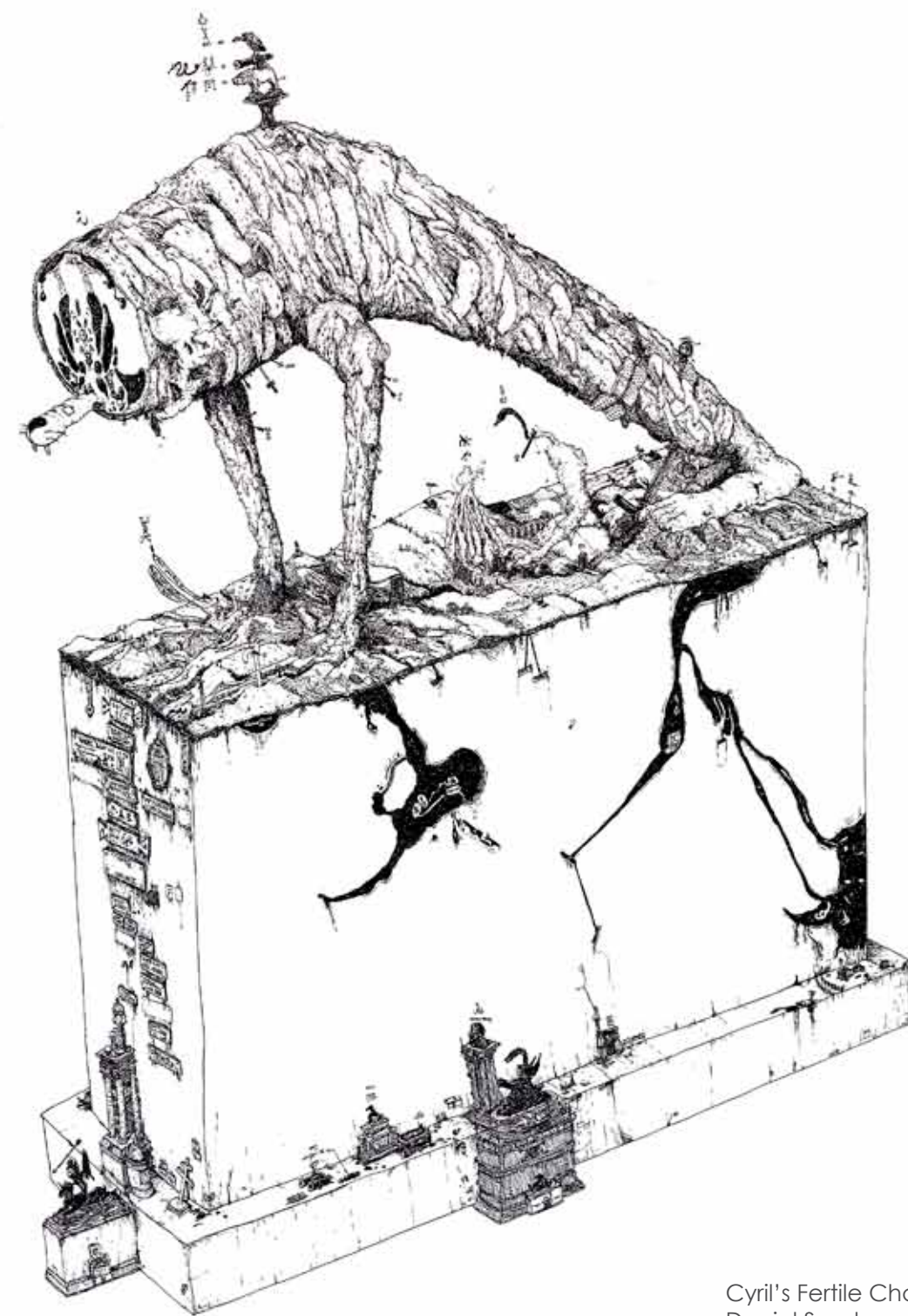
⁴Barthes in talking about the significance of the G-string as the final garment of the striptease describes "This ultimate triangle, by its pure and geometric shape, by its hard and shiny material, bars the way to the sexual parts like a sword of purity, and definitively drives the woman back into a mineral world, the (precious) stone being here the irrefutable symbol of the absolute object, that which serves no purpose". Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, London: Vintage, 2000

Top: Beast of Florence
Lorraine Robbins
Plaster and found pencil-topper
Unique
20 cm high

Below: Death by Sofa,
Lorraine Robbins
Bronze
Edition of 5
15cm high

Left: Beast 43
Lorraine Robbins
Plaster and Paint
Unique
85 cm high

DANIEL SPARKES

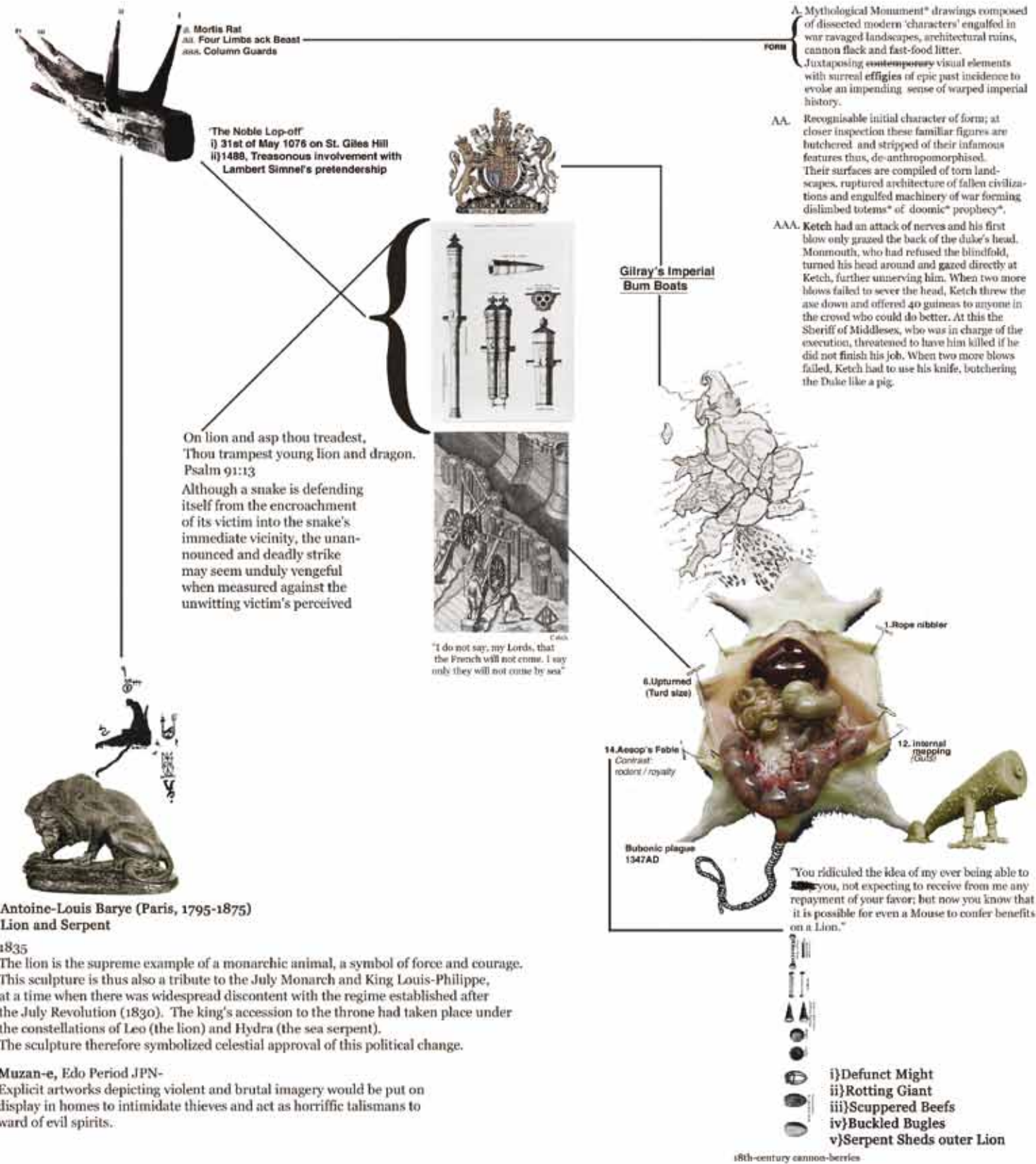


Cyril's Fertile Chazltaph
Daniel Sparkes
Ink on heritage paper
100 cm h x 75 cm w

Daniel Sparkes

Lynn Chadwick Lion

1986 Bronze, Ed9.C50 Ht 4 in.



Miniature Lion IV 1986
Lynn Chadwick
Bronze
Edition of 20
13 cm long



Thorpham's Grunt
Daniel Sparkes
Mixed media
Unique
13 cm high



Lappysent
Daniel Sparkes
Mixed media
Unique
7.5 cm high

‘Outside the Box’

When we came to discuss our exhibition programme for 2011 we felt the need to come up with something different, something that would perhaps break the mould a little. We wanted to do something that would celebrate the wealth of artistic talent and creative enterprise that we have on our doorstep. We had become progressively more conscious that there was a need to connect what we do here at Gallery Pangolin with the vibrant local art scene and it was natural to focus on the month of June when the whole of Stroud explodes into a frenzy of events, exhibitions, performances and preview parties.

To strike at the heart of the local scene we needed an ambassador to make the connection and Lorraine Robbins instantly came to mind. She was born and grew up in Stroud and now lectures at Stroud College. Our paths first met when, as an Fine Art graduate, she joined the wax department at Pangolin Editions in the late 1990’s and in 1999 we invited her to show her characteristically humorous and thought-provoking works in ‘Less is More’. It was clear that Lorraine’s determination was going to develop her art into something much more central to her life and in 2000 she won a Jerwood award for drawing, leaving the foundry soon afterwards and going on to achieve an MA with Distinction in Drawing at Wimbledon School of Art.

Since returning home Lorraine has become deeply involved in the Stroud art world; she has her own studio, shows widely, takes on residencies and initiates and curates exhibitions. Having known her and admired her work for almost fifteen years, she was ideally placed to curate an exhibition for us and we were delighted when she accepted the challenge.

Our brief was deliberately vague, save for an emphasis on a Gloucestershire connection between the artists and the theme, with Gallery Pangolin as the inspiration for and energy behind the whole project. Our expectations were fully met when Lorraine proposed an exhibition in which a carefully chosen group of artists would each choose a sculpture by Lynn Chadwick to explore and inspire new works. For we who have been identified with Chadwick for so many years, this was a simple yet beautiful answer, creating a perfect link between our own history and traditions and that of the area and the contemporary art world.

We hope that our audience will share our enthusiasm for this adventure and enjoy the change of context for familiar Chadwick imagery which reaffirms his status as one of the giants of the Modern era. For the artists, we hope that the challenge has been worthwhile and that the experience of examining and exploring a fellow sculptor’s language has led to positive developments within their own practice. For the gallery, ‘stepping out of the box’ has been a leap in the dark, at times unnerving and strange but above all rewarding and stimulating. We have an exhibition which surprises and delights and most of all will encourage and provoke thought, opinion, discussion and debate.

Our thanks must go to all the artists who responded so magnificently to our brief within such a tight timescale. We are also very grateful to Lorraine for her generosity in dedicating so much time to bringing together the artists and co-ordinating this exhibition.

Jane Buck
Claude Koenig
June 2011

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Stretching Beast 1990
Lynn Chadwick
Welded Stainless Steel
Edition of 9
58.5 cm high

