

Towards a New World: Sculpture in Post-War Britain

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Press Release

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Marlborough Fine Art London is delighted to present *Towards a New World: Sculpture in Post-War Britain*. The exhibition will showcase works by the 'geometry of fear' group of post-war sculptors who were influenced by trail-blazing artists such as Germaine Richier and Alberto Giacometti.

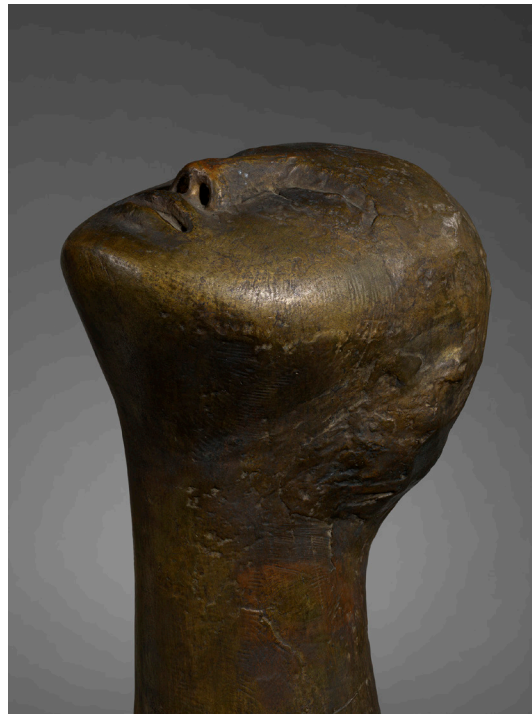
In 1952, art critic Herbert Read curated the British Pavillion at the Venice Biennale. Entitled *New Aspects of British Sculpture*, the exhibition introduced a group of young British sculptors to an international audience. Those on show included Kenneth Armitage (1916-2002), Reg Butler (1913-1981), Lynn Chadwick (1914-2003), Geoffrey Clarke (1924-2014), Bernard Meadows (1915-2005), Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005) and William Turnbull (1922-2012). Read coined the term 'geometry of fear' to describe their new angular and metallic style of sculpture:

These new images belong to the iconography of despair, or of defiance; and the more innocent the artist, the more effectively he transmits the collective guilt. Here are images of flight, or ragged claws 'scuttling across the floors of silent seas', of excoriated flesh, frustrated sex, the geometry of fear.

Splintering and adrift, human and inhuman, these ambiguous forms were emblematic of a period that precariously straddled the horror of the past and promise of the future.

This turn away from the direct hand-carved sculpture popularised by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth towards a more raw approach owes much to the influence of French sculptor Germaine Richier. Richier had staged her first London show at the Anglo-French Art Centre five years prior to the group's showing at the Venice Biennale. Her deformed, animal-hybrid figures resonated strongly with young British sculptors.

In 1950, Reg Butler exhibited with Germaine Richier in *London-Paris: New Trends in Painting and Sculpture* at the ICA, London. Butler's sculptures depict the human form as fragmented or on the precipice of metamorphosis.



Reg Butler
Study for Third Watcher, 1954
bronze, 72 x 45 x 27cm

While Butler's participation in the 1952 Venice Biennale marked his introduction to the international stage, his reputation was cemented the following year when he won the prize for *The Unknown Political Prisoner*. Likewise, Lynn Chadwick was subsequently selected as the lead sculptor at the 1956 Venice Biennale where he won the grand prize for sculpture, becoming the youngest ever winner.

While the distorted human figure became a prominent motif for many of the artists associated with the 'geometry of fear' group, for others, like Bernard Meadows, it was animal imagery that resonated most with the collective societal trauma of the war. Visceral depictions of birds and crabs acted as vehicles to express human emotion.

A student of Meadows, Elisabeth Frink's (1930-1993) sculptures are similarly informed by her experience of war and its reflection on humanity. Frink's warrior figures display a fragile 'hyper-masculinity', whose violent proclivities are juxtaposed with an uneasy vulnerability.

The 'geometry of fear' sculptors were shown at the Biennale alongside the paintings of Graham Sutherland (1903-1980). Although he was a generation older, his hybrid angular forms resonated strongly with the sculptures on display. While Sutherland's inspiration stemmed from the natural world, Prunella Clough (1919-1999) depicted post-war industrialism as Britain began to recover and rebuild from the shadow of war.

Towards a New World: Sculpture in Post-War Britain emphasises the international impact of a group of young sculptors and artists who merged past trauma, present anxieties, and future hopes into a new visual language.

Notes to Editors

Founded in 1946 in London, Marlborough began as a dealer of rare books and artworks belonging to families whose fortunes had changed following World War II. It quickly expanded its dealings, focusing on secondary market sales of Degas, Cassatt, Signac, Monet, Pissarro and Renoir.

The 1950s saw significant developments in the gallery's program, including exhibitions of Jawlensky, Kandinsky, Klee, Kokoschka and Munch. In 1958, Marlborough began its exclusive representation of Francis Bacon, setting a pattern for the gallery to form relationships with preeminent British artists, including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, Frank Auerbach and Lucian Freud.

In the 1960s, the gallery formed a partnership with Otto Gerson's widow, Ilse, culminating with the 1963 opening of Marlborough-Gerson Gallery in New York. Contradicting trends that favored Pop artists, the program embraced Abstract Expressionism. The following years featured exhibitions of Jackson Pollock, David Smith, Ad Reinhardt and Adolph Gottlieb mounted under the name Marlborough Gallery. In 1969, Marlborough presented the seminal exhibition of Phillip Guston's first figurative paintings. During this time, Marlborough expanded, opening branches in Rome, Zurich and Toronto.

During the 1970s and 80s, Marlborough continued to exhibit work by acclaimed artists, including Alex Katz, Larry Rivers, Red Grooms, Beverly Pepper and R.B. Kitaj. By the 1990s, the gallery had fostered new relationships with internationally renowned artists, including Magdalena Abakanowicz, Antonio López García and Paula Rego. Marlborough would also expand once again, opening two branches in Spain.

Marlborough continues to produce scholarly exhibitions and publications on Abakanowicz, Pepper, Rufino Tamayo, Tomás Sánchez, and, most recently, Maggi Hambling, Gillian Ayres Juan Genovés and Eduardo Arroyo, all while providing platforms to contemporary artists, including Ahmed Alsoudani, Ivana Bašić and Le'Andra LeSeur, among others.

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