



**CHARLOTTE MAYER
IN ESSENCE**

Charlotte Mayer

In Essence

Tom Flynn



Sea Pod
2003
Bronze
Edition of 7
17cm high

Charlotte Mayer - The Essence of Things

Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1934. It is an early autumn afternoon and a young girl, no more than five years old, is playing in the garden of the Villa Stutz, the home of her grandparents. The handsome, English-style building, known as Das Rosel Haus, The House of Roses, is situated in the fashionable Bubeneč district of the city. At the end of the garden, beside the rose-laden pergola, beneath a walnut tree, stands a statue of a woman. It is known to the young girl simply as Die Weise Dame, The White Lady. The girl gathers the wind-fallen fruits of the walnut tree and carries them to one of the two stone benches flanking the statue. She sits and begins slowly removing the green, outer layer before cracking the shell to expose the moist nut inside. Carefully peeling away its brown skin, she finds what she later remembers as "a wonderful, white, knobby form, beautiful to look at and wonderful to eat." After brushing the husks from her dress she runs to where her mother, Helen Marie, and her grandparents, Eduard and Ružena Stutz, are sitting in wicker chairs at a garden table set for tea. The dog, Luki, lies snoozing at Ružena's feet.

The young girl is Charlotte 'Charly' Fanta-Stutz, later to become Charlotte Mayer, and it was in that Prague garden, walnuts in her lap, that she first embarked on a fundamental sculptural quest - removing an outer shell to find the essential form within. If peeling walnuts in the garden of the Villa Stutz was a satisfyingly tactile activity for the young Charlotte Mayer, a more delicate operation occasionally took place in the sunny rooms on the top floor of the house. It was here that Máde (Mademoiselle), the family's housekeeper, tutored her young charge in the gentle art of carving tiny baskets out of chestnuts using a small silver penknife. Today, Charlotte Mayer looks back on those activities as the wellspring of her career as an artist.

This very simple carving was my first real memory of 'sculpture' - by which I mean a form deliberately made. It seems to me now that these two activities reflect the entire religious process and can be symbolized by the spiral. If one shows a drawing of a spiral to someone and asks them which way it moves, most people will say it starts at the centre and moves outwards. This, in essence, is what modelling is about. It is the story of the Creation, as in Genesis and in the Upanishads. ¹

A glance through Mayer's oeuvre reveals the extent to which she has continued to draw upon those early defining experiences. Her mature sculpture represents a constant meditation on the immutable spiritual



Das Rosel Haus,
The House of Roses



Die Weise Dame,
The White Lady



Eduard & Ružena
Stutz and Luki the
dog

symbols of the circle and the spiral, *Lacuna I & II*, *Luna*, *Voyager*, *Sea Scarf*, being just a few examples of variations on these shapes and forms.

The Stutz home was clearly an ideal environment in which to nurture a child's creative instincts but the house was also open to Prague's wider artistic community. Built in 1917, the Rosel Haus was well-known in Prague society as a crucible of culture, a place where writers, musicians, artists and poets assembled periodically to share their interests and activities with their enlightened hosts, Eduard and Ružena Stutz. Eduard, a successful banker and President of the Czechoslovak Stock Exchange, balanced his commercial interests with a passion for natural history which he passed on to his granddaughter, introducing her to books and animals and taking her on companionable walks around the garden whenever she and her mother visited.



Luna
2009
Bronze
Edition of 8
95cm high



left
Lacuna I
1999
Bronze
Edition of 6
45 x 30 cm high

Lacuna II
1999
Bronze
Edition of 6
61.5 x 41cm high

At the heart of the informal Rosel Haus 'salons' was Ružena, by all accounts a woman of remarkable versatility: a gifted amateur sculptor, violinist, biologist and, during the building of the house, a volunteer bricklayer. She was said to have been the first woman in Prague to wear trousers, a dash of Bohemianism that may have raised a few eyebrows among the genteel burghers of the city. Surviving photographs show a strong, smiling woman of Gertrude Stein-like physical stature with glittering eyes and a look of fierce intelligence. Ružena had trained as a sculptor under an artist called Vogel, a devotee of the classical tradition and admirer of the French sculptor Aristide Maillol (1861-1944). Those influences would later find an echo in Charlotte Mayer's student works, but it was almost certainly her early exposure to the rhythmic structures of nature, to the patterning of the material world, that would leave the most lasting legacy. Mayer recalls accompanying Ružena to a little pond in the vegetable garden where her grandmother gave her a small net with which they scooped algae from the surface before returning to the house to make them into slides for the microscope. The "beautiful creatures" thus revealed remain imprinted on her memory.

To the young Charlotte, it seemed, in the mid-1930s, as if those idyllic days spent in the garden of the Rosel Haus would go on forever. Little did she realise that a darker force was closing in. As the shadow of Nazism crept ever closer, not even her grandparents felt any need to worry. What, after all, had they to fear from the Germans, towards whom they felt no ill feeling and to whom they had done no harm? Moreover had the couple not made a significant contribution to the commercial and cultural life of Prague over many years? Surely this counted for something? What transpired would send tremors through three generations of the Stutz family and through the wider cultural community that had benefited from the Rosel Haus's warm atmosphere of artistic exchange. While the light Ružena generated may have been momentarily extinguished by Nazi tyranny, her legacy as sculptor, musician, bricklayer and inspirational role model lived on. It endured in the life and sculpture of her granddaughter Charlotte Mayer.

Sea Scarf
2003
Bronze
Edition of 7
35cm high

next page
Voyager
1994
Bronze
Edition of 6
161cm high





Charlotte was born Charlotte Renee Fanta-Stutz in Prague on January 4th 1929 to Helen Marie Stutzova (1905-1974) and Kurt Fanta (1897-1965). Mayer's mother Helen Marie had been raised and educated in the cultured ambience of inter-war Prague to which her own parents Eduard and Ružena had contributed so much. She progressed to a finishing school in Lausanne, Switzerland where she learnt the social skills required of an elegant young woman from a privileged middle-class background. Two further years were spent in London learning English, after which she returned to Prague. Here she met Kurt Fanta, a handsome young man who worked as an administrator in one of his family's sugar factories. They married in 1926. Kurt was a fine sportsman and a gifted cellist and jazz pianist. His musical talents were inherited from his mother, Elly Fanta, née Koenigswerther, a concert pianist and first cousin of the sugar magnate Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer whose beautiful wife Adele had been painted by the Austrian Secessionist Gustav Klimt in a famous portrait of 1907. ²

Much of Helen and Kurt's social life in Prague at that time revolved around a sports and social club called 'The Hockey' and it was here, in the mid-1930s, that Helen met and fell in love with Ludwig Friedrich Mayer (1903-1996), known as Frederick, a keen skier and tennis player who in time would become Charlotte's stepfather. By now Helen and Kurt had drifted apart and were pursuing different interests and ambitions and thus their divorce in June 1937 was something of a formality. Meanwhile the eight year-old Charlotte felt a clear sense that a golden age was about to end. The wider political developments were never discussed in front of her but she remembers that her parents' divorce and the nation's general mood of anxiety "percolated into my consciousness as a vague sense of unease." As former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright - many of whose own Czech relations perished in the Holocaust - has observed, "nobody who lived through the years 1937-1948 was a stranger to profound sadness." ³

Hitler's determination to protect the three million ethnic Germans who occupied the Sudetenland, or 'south land' of western Czechoslovakia was merely a pretext for his darker ambitions. As Madeleine Albright has summarised it:

Helen with Charlotte
1933



Kurt Fanta
1927



Fredrick Mayer and Helen
1938



The Anschluss—the merging of Austria and the German Reich—was for Hitler the latest in a series of planned provocations. In 1935, he had begun rebuilding his armed forces. In 1936, he reoccupied the Rhineland, thus strengthening his capacity to invade France. In 1938, the conquest of Austria achieved the threefold purpose of uniting Germans, encircling the Czechs and opening an invasion route to the Balkans. Hitler was on the march, and no one, as yet, dared stand in his path. ⁴

Helen was only too aware of what might happen if Hitler were to invade Czechoslovakia. Her Jewish background, albeit agnostic, would place her, her daughter Charlotte and the rest of the family in peril. Her lover Frederick, for his part, although not of Jewish ancestry, (he had been born in Czernowitz, Bukowina in what was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) was nevertheless a Communist sympathizer, thereby endangering him too. When the German army entered Prague in March 1939, Charlotte was instructed by her mother never to speak about her family while at school. She still remembers the class being told to stand and raise their arms in the 'Heil Hitler' salute. "There was fear in the air," she recalls.

In 1938, Helen's brother Frank Stutz (1893-1966), a banker living in Vienna, seized his opportunity to flee Austria, leaving for Paris with his beautiful Hungarian wife Iboyka. Later that year they emigrated to New York. Helen and Frederick were also aware of the storm clouds gathering and in 1939 decided to leave Czechoslovakia for England. For mother and daughter the profoundest sadness at that time was their inability to persuade Charlotte's grandparents Eduard and Ružena to accompany them. The couple considered themselves too old to begin a new life elsewhere and, like many others, chose to remain in Prague. The ensuing correspondence between Ružena and her son Frank in New York between 1940-1942 — the so-called Stutz Family Letters — are a poignant testimony to the couple's unquenchable optimism and resilience, even as the Nazi vice closed ever tighter around them.



Moon Gleam
2013
Mixed Media



left
Frank Stutz

right
Iboyka Stutz



left
Lita Spaniard

right
Elizabeth Von
Waldkirch

In April 1939, Helen and Charlotte boarded a train in Prague bound for Holland. They carried with them an invitation to a fictitious wedding in Amsterdam provided by Helen's lifelong friend Lita Spaniard whom she had met at finishing school in Lausanne. Although war had not yet been declared, the journey was nevertheless a precarious venture to undertake and Charlotte, with Pooh bear poking out of her little rucksack, was again warned not to engage anyone in conversation. At some point on the journey through Germany, they attracted the attention of a German army officer who was sharing their compartment. Helen's beauty may have been what caught the man's eye. As darkness fell, the train pulled up in a small station where everyone was instructed to alight and find overnight accommodation. Having been told by Helen that she had no German marks, the German officer offered to lend her sufficient money to take a room for the night. She accepted and took down the man's address, promising to reimburse him on arrival at her destination. Mother and daughter then proceeded to a small hotel nearby where Mayer remembers a gloomy, cream-coloured room containing nothing but a bed, a table and an enormous portrait of Hitler on the wall. The next morning they re-boarded the train; the German officer had departed.

In Amsterdam, mother and daughter were welcomed in the home of Lita Spaniard's mother and were reunited with Frederick who had travelled separately from elsewhere in Czechoslovakia. Over the following week they enjoyed the city's many cultural diversions, seeing works by van Gogh at the Stedelijk Museum and paying homage to Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* at the Rijksmuseum. A week later Helen and Charlotte flew to England, while Frederick prepared to follow on by boat.

As a student, Helen had fallen in love with England and had long dreamed of settling there, nurturing a vision of carefree summer days spent boating on the Thames or relaxing under a willow tree with a lover. By 1939 however, the circumstances conspired otherwise and although her romantic life flourished - she and Frederick were married in London in May 1939 - her student dreams soon gave way to the challenging reality of a refugee existence in a country edging inexorably towards war. For her daughter Charlotte, a life of art awaited. En route there would be many diversions.



The Thornflower
2006
Bronze &
Stainless Steel
Edition of 12
150cm high

Ambleside and after

Convinced that their safe passage to the UK might have been thwarted had the German officer on the train not loaned her enough money for their overnight lodgings, one of the first things Helen Mayer did on arrival in England was to send him back the money. He had almost certainly suspected their true destination but had chosen to turn a blind eye. Now she had discharged her moral promise.

After a few days in a B&B near the British Museum, where they were joined by Frederick who had been delayed by immigration authorities, the family found longer term lodgings in west London. Charlotte was enrolled into the Beltane School in Queensmere Road, Wimbledon, which had been founded by Ernst and Ilse Bulova of Berlin who had also fled Germany after Hitler's rise to power. A proponent of the liberal Montessori Method of education, Ernst Bulova (1902-2001) stressed to his pupils that the creative process was more important than the results. "Does a poet finish every poem he begins?" he liked to ask. Yet the Beltane School was not a happy time for Charlotte Mayer. As a refugee who spoke little English, she was bullied, locked by her classmates in a wardrobe lined with stinging nettles, wearing only her nightdress, and on another occasion coaxed into a tree house by a group of boys, only to see her tormentors then depart with the ladder. These experiences may have had a positive long-term effect however, since they reminded her of a lamentable human tendency to persecute others marked out as in some way different. She was to revisit these feelings much later in life when witnessing how her son Julian suffered as a result of being gay.

Much of Mayer's sculpture is an attempt to mediate feelings of pain, loss and the sense of being an outsider. It stems from an innate understanding of the communicative potential of three-dimensional form. The contrast between the soft, smooth surfaces of the flower petals and the sharp, spiky stems of the thorns in the bronze work entitled *The Thornflower*, for example - made in commemoration of her grandmother Ružena who perished at Treblinka - exemplifies her ability to create forms that are both visually arresting and emotionally expressive. The psychologist Bruno Bettelheim has written of how life consists of struggles to reach higher stages of integration within what often seems like an irreconcilable conflict but that it can be achieved through what he called "the concordance of opposites." Mayer's *Thornflower* might be read as a realisation of that concept in material form. She expresses it best herself: "Each one of us has at some time experienced the thorns of personal pain in our life and each one of us has also, however fleeting the experience may have been, felt

the joy of flowers touch our heart. Duality is in the nature of our life on earth." Over the years, many of her works have struck a chord with people who have suffered loss or emotional trauma of one kind or another. *The Thornflower* exemplifies this approach to her life and art.

In the summer of 1940, after a short period living in West Kirby on Merseyside in the north west of England, Mayer and her mother were obliged to move to Ambleside in the Lake District along with many other central European refugees. Charlotte attended a local Church of England girls' school. Her stepfather Frederick, meanwhile, was interned in Huyton refugee camp near Liverpool until he could prove that he had no Nazi affiliations. Throughout this period, intermittent correspondence took place between Eduard and Ružena in Prague and Charlotte's uncle Frank in New York, with occasional letters reaching England. Correspondence from Prague was sent via Elizabeth von Waldkirch whom Helen had befriended while at finishing school in Switzerland. Elizabeth forwarded the letters on to New York and England. Thus, despite their location in the rural outpost of Ambleside, Helen and Charlotte periodically received news from Prague. It was through the letters that the family learnt of the death of Eduard in September 1941. For some time afterwards, Ružena continued to write, via Elizabeth in Zurich, to her son Frank in New York and from time to time heard news of her granddaughter Charlotte's literary and musical accomplishments in England. Despite the constraints of life as a Jew in Nazi-occupied Prague and her drastically diminished circumstances, her fortitude and eternal optimism shine through her correspondence. She speaks of her passion for "Biology, Violin and Sculpture waiting to be resurrected" and "longs for some clay to work." In a typical letter of May 1942, Ružena writes:

Dearest all, Charlotte's delightful lines were a laughing oasis in a serious day and Frederick's good letter made me cry with joy. What a kind man he is and I am satisfied to know how good he is to my big and little girl; God bless the house. I have only one wish, to know you are well and to see you again in peacetime. I know I have a duty to keep my nerves under control. I don't see friends here as I would not like to in a small room. I am missing my books and music; how I would enjoy a Mozart sonata with violin accompaniment. Good that Charlotte learns the piano. Later [I] will get her a Bluthner if the sky will bring some money from the clouds. My address has not changed. Don't worry about me. Kisses to you all... 7

Thornflower
2002
Sterling Silver
Edition of 6
16cm high



Ružena's final letter was written on July 2nd 1942 — "I am leaving Prague today and will be able to breathe country air." She was transported on July 6th to the Terezín internment camp and later to the death camp of Treblinka. It was only later, in the 1960s, while visiting New York after Frank's death, that the full Prague-America end of the correspondence was uncovered. Charlotte's mother could not bring herself to read it.

Ambleside was a curious cultural outpost during the war years. Shortly after the Mayers' arrival in the town, the Royal College of Art was evacuated to Ambleside on the instructions of the Board of Education. Almost 150 students and members of staff took over the Queens' Hotel and the Salutation Hotel, many of the rooms being turned into makeshift classrooms. Some members of the college staff were already on active service by this time, including Edward Bawden, John and Paul Nash and Eric Ravilious. The remaining part-time members of staff such as Richard Garbe, Professor of Sculpture, and Gilbert Spencer, Professor of Painting, were among those bunking down alongside their student charges in the Ambleside hotels from 1940-45. The "strangely garbed" art students with their "wild and woolly beards" attracted their fair share of sideways glances from local residents, one in particular ruffling feathers by pronouncing on the "connections between sculpting and the creative acts of God."⁸ Had she been aware of this at the time, Charlotte Mayer would probably have sympathized with the suggestion but as an eleven year-old schoolgirl in 1940 she was oblivious to such lofty notions. It would not be until 1949 on taking up her own studentship at the Royal College of Art, which by then had relocated to London, that she would begin to explore the metaphysical potentialities of sculpture with some seriousness.

Another Ambleside resident in the 1940s was the German emigré artist Kurt Schwitters, who lodged at 2, Gale Crescent just above the town, while he worked on his third *Merzbau* barn. Schwitters went largely unrecognized by Ambleside locals and Royal College students. Christopher Frayling has noted how he was remembered by most residents as "a penniless, eccentric foreigner who eked a living out of the tourist trade," executing naturalistic drawings and paintings which he sold to passersby. ⁹



Charlotte (right of centre, third row) with RCA fellow-students and staff 1951

It was in Ambleside that the first intimations of Charlotte Mayer's own artistic inclinations were recognized. Required to write a critique of a Shakespeare play she and her classmates had attended, Charlotte's review was spotted by the Director of Education for Westmoreland who pronounced her too talented for a village school. She was enrolled at Kendal High School as a day girl. Soon afterwards, Frederick developed pleurisy and a fortnight later her mother Helen contracted pneumonia and both were consigned to a sanatorium in North Wales. Charlotte suddenly found herself a homeless boarder and facing an uncertain future.

As her student Shakespeare review and her prolific story-writing indicated, Mayer's talent might easily have taken her towards a literary career (her mother nursed vicarious aspirations for her daughter, imagining her punting beneath the willows as an Oxford undergraduate). However, it was the recognition of her skill as a visual artist that struck Miss Jordan, her teacher at Kendal High School. At the end of the war, knowing the family were London-bound, Jordan recommended that Charlotte get in touch with Clive Gardiner (1891-1960), then Principal of Goldsmith's College in New Cross. Gardiner, a successful designer of Cubist-style posters for London Transport, endorsed Miss Jordan's opinion and Mayer was accepted onto Goldsmith's Fine Art course in 1945. It was at this point that her life took a significant turn as she soon discovered that her creative instincts lay in sculpture. Her tutors at that time were Edward Folkard (1911-2005), Harold Wilson Parker (1896-1980), who designed the popular Wren farthing coin of 1937, and the portrait sculptor Ivor Roberts-Jones (1913-1996) whose statue of Churchill (1973) remains a much-loved feature of Parliament Square. Parker made a great impression on Mayer. On one occasion he grasped her by the arm, pointed to her forearm and said, "Any bloody fool can model that; it's the elbows you need to watch. Always watch the junctions." She remembers Roberts-Jones — 'Bobby' Jones, as he was known — with rather less affection. A "fierce and most unpleasant little Welshman," he was nevertheless a gifted teacher whose influence on Mayer was deep and lasting:

He concentrated on the essence. If anybody would talk about my work, if they felt that that bird or that piece, was essentially that bird, was the essence of that bird or that piece, I would be happy. That came from Bobby Jones. It's so interesting looking at portraits. Some are so dead, but some are so alive because the sculptor or the painter has got the essence of that person.

At Goldsmith's, Mayer did two years of "a bit of everything" - life drawing, drawing from the antique, illustration, and some painting.



Reclining Figure
1945
Plaster
Unique
17cm high

But it was when she set foot in the sculpture school that she sensed where her future lay - "I just knew. That was it." She still has one of the first works she made at that time - a nude in plaster. Bobby Jones had applauded it as a first attempt at sculpting but warned her against over-reliance on Maillol. She felt hurt and insulted, insisting that she had never heard of Maillol. Some time afterwards she found a book on Maillol's work - "Lo and behold, even I could now see what Jones was talking about, but I could not understand it." One day, many years later, she realized that the influence had come indirectly through her grandmother Ružena and her exposure to the sculpture of The White Lady in the garden of the Rosel Haus.

Her next task at Goldsmith's was to convince her parents that sculpture was a serious career. It did not help that there were few role models for women sculptors at the time. She remembers one newspaper reviewer dismissing Barbara Hepworth's exquisitely beautiful Hospital Drawings of the 1940s as "housewifely". Mayer herself experienced what amounted to a culture of institutionalized misogyny during her years as a fine art student. On one occasion an older sculptor, "a big, ego-driven third year," rounded on her, thundering, "What the hell are you doing here? You should be at home, having babies!" while one of the tutors bluntly informed her, "You will never be a decent sculptor until you lose your virginity."

Having completed two years of sculpture at Goldsmith's, she was accepted onto the sculpture course at the Royal College of Art in 1950. Her tutors at that time included Frank Dobson (1888-1963), who had taken over from Richard Garbe (1876-1957) as head of the sculpture department in 1946 and (Herbert) Barry Hart (1894-1954), a stonemason who had been a technician in the sculpture department when Henry Moore was a student there in the 1920s (as well as Moore's best man at his marriage to Irina Radetsky in 1929). Hart taught letter-cutting, which Mayer took to with enthusiasm. Dobson had also brought John Skeaping (1901-1980) into the department. Skeaping once said that to be a sculptor you needed to be "one part artist and nine parts navy," but Mayer remembers how he also liked to experiment with natural materials.

He got us fluffing up bulrushes. You can take the whole seed-head to bits, so we were making life-size female figures, coiling them from the feet upwards with this bulrush seed mixed in with terracotta and then they were sent off to be fired. Many of us found that bits dropped off, but it was an interesting process to try and visualise a form as it comes up.

The experiment with bulrushes may have had a longer term impact, broadening Mayer's sense that all kinds of organic material might provide a starting point for sculpture. Her repertoire remains unconstrained by externally imposed conventions. In recent years she has even turned to apple peelings, using them to construct the maquette for *Release* (2012), another work that uses the spiral form she finds so compelling and versatile.

Another of her Royal College tutors was Heinz Henghes (1906-1975) who taught wood carving and whom she remembers as "a very embittered and rather sexy German." He was certainly a man with an exotic hinterland, having emigrated from Hamburg to New York in 1924 where he became a protégé of Isamu Noguchi and later an acquaintance of Henry Miller, André Breton and Anais Nin, with whom he had a relationship. After a time as studio assistant to Brancusi and a collaboration with Ezra Pound in Rapallo, Italy, he



Probe
2013
Mixed Media

Release
2012
Bronze
Edition of 8
49.8cm high





arrived in London in 1937. Mayer incurred his wrath after persuading a fellow male student to help her cut a piece of yew in half to make a torso which she still owns. Henghes entered the studio to discover that she had solicited some assistance in the task and promptly exploded: "What the hell do you think you're doing? You're not going to play those sorts of games here, you know, getting men to run around doing odd jobs for you!" Her ability to do just that eventually stood her in good stead, however, for she was later to take on a number of ambitious sculptural projects that anyone, woman or man, would need to recruit some assistance with. Sculpture has always been one of the most collaborative of practices. She shrugged off the Henghes outburst for by now she had a clear sense of what she wanted to do: "I had no idea where I was going with it, but I just knew that I loved the whole process of sculpture. I loved carving, but much preferred stone carving to wood." The surviving photographs of her Diploma Show at the Royal College of Art in 1952 testify to her preoccupations at that time, but it was a commission for a Mother and Child group in 1953 that represented her first large-scale work in stone - or alabaster as it turned out.

Shortly after leaving the Royal College she found work with the WEA, the Workers' Educational Association, and later lectured on colour for the Council for Industrial Design. At one of the courses she taught at Urchfont Manor in Wiltshire one of the participants suggested she take on a commission to make a work for the waiting room of the maternity wing at Epsom General Hospital. She accepted the challenge and quickly acquired a ton of alabaster from the same Derbyshire quarry from which Epstein's alabaster *Adam* had



left
Torso
1952
Polyphant
Unique
27cm high

RCA Diploma show
1952

originated. Now she needed someone to help her rough it out and this time there was no Heinz Henghes to stand in her way. It was at this point that she was introduced to Leonard McCaul, known as 'Mac', a friend of Ann Howse, one of Mayer's fellow students at the Royal College of Art. Mac had been working for a monumental mason, cutting letters on gravestones, and he agreed to do some of the heavy lifting. It was the beginning of a long and intimate friendship. They were given a mortuary in which to make the maquette in plaster and carving proceeded later at the Brompton Hospital. When the *Mother and Child* was completed, the architects from the respected firm of Yorke, Rosenberg and Mardall came by to see it. They offered their resounding approval. However, the members of the Hospital Board were not quite so positive. Mayer recalls "a deathly silence," followed by baffled questions: "Why hasn't it got any ears? Why hasn't it got a mouth?" Despite these less than ringing endorsements, the work was duly transported to Epsom for installation in the maternity wing. Some time later Mayer and Mac went to see the work in situ:

We went into the waiting room. No sculpture. We looked around but couldn't find it anywhere. Finally we located it. It was in a cellar. It had never been put up. They considered it 'unsuitable'. It was 'too modern'. And this was 1953!

It was not an encouraging start to a career in large-scale public sculpture, but Mayer was undeterred. As it transpired, other obstacles lay ahead, but there were also happier developments. While at the Royal College, Mayer met her future husband Geoffrey, an ambitious young architect. He and his associates had been looking for young sculptors with whom to collaborate on architectural projects they were hatching at the time. Mayer was among the convention of hopefuls responding to their invitation and the two hit it off. They were married on 13th December 1952. Mayer's life now took a quite different course to what she had planned. For the next twelve years, her aspirations to become a professional sculptor gave way to her role as wife and mother as she encouraged her husband in his architectural practice and raised her three children. Her son Julian was born in 1956 and her twin daughters Antonia and Louise in 1959. It would be a full decade before she would begin tentatively to retrace her steps and awaken the instincts she had temporarily surrendered to family life.

Mother and Child
1953
Alabaster
Unique
183cm high



Sculpture resurrected

In the mid-1960s, Mayer began to think seriously about making sculpture again. Her children were growing up and she could see a way to carve out more time for herself. The torsos and standing figures she made at this time share an affinity with the work of Germaine Richier, Elisabeth Frink and Reg Butler. However, she found the process of carving too ponderous and began to seek other ways of working. Two events around this time had a marked influence on the direction she was to take.

In early 1967, following the death of her uncle, Frank Stutz, in America, Mayer and her mother travelled to New York to settle his affairs. It was here that they discovered the Stutz family letters as well as a trove of other material. Charlotte assumed the responsibility for the Prague correspondence and assisted her mother in sorting the estate. However, it was New York city itself that exerted the greatest impact. Venturing out alone one day, she recalls being "absolutely gobsmacked" by Manhattan, "bowled over by these tall, shimmering buildings in the snow." On her return to England she was energized. "I thought, 'I've got to get this all out of me,' and the only way I could think of doing it was to knock together old timbers and paint them black. And I called them Black Cities." The resulting works have a certain dark, constructivist power that derives from their quality of being both open and yet enclosing. By now she had absorbed certain architectural concepts and particularly the communicative potential of the spaces and voids between solids. Then another significant event occurred. She had been driving along the Embankment one day when she became aware of the smoke issuing from the chimneys of Battersea Power Station. "I was absolutely riveted," she recalls. "I stopped the car and I don't know how long I spent looking at that smoke coming out." She returned home and immediately made a sculpture inspired by the rings of smoke. This would become *Source*, the first of four ring-form sculptures, the others entitled *Cascade*, *Flow* and *Nebula*. In 2006, *Flow* was enlarged in stainless steel, retitled *Concord* and exhibited in Winchester Cathedral. A simple ring bisected by two highly polished arrangements of soft, delicately overlapping petal-like discs, it is a fine example of Mayer's facility at imparting a sense of organic fragility to steel. Much of her work stems from observations of this kind — registering evanescent movement in the world around her which she then translates into her own sculptural language.

Corydon
1972
Stove-enamelled
steel
Unique
104cm high



Concorde
2006
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
80cm high



During the mid-1960s Mayer began practicing meditation. It has been an important part of her creative life ever since. On many occasions during meditation, shapes have arrived in her mind's eye, fully formed as it were, which she then gives material presence to in the studio. That continuity between her meditation and her sculpture is a key to understanding her life and work. It is about stillness and calm and making the spirit somehow present in the form.

After completing around fifty of the *Black Cities* she began to show them to galleries. The response was generally positive but she was told they would have more impact and would have a better chance of selling if made in metal, so she decided to learn to weld. She completed a course in oxyacetylene welding at British Oxygen in Cricklewood, a resource that a number of other British sculptors, notably Geoffrey Clarke and Lynn Chadwick, had availed themselves of after the war. Now Mayer needed space in which to work. Her friend and Highgate neighbour, Rosa Branson, offered her the basement of her house as a studio, which she gratefully accepted. However, no sooner had she set up there with her newly-acquired welding gear when the insurance company intervened, identifying the welding rig as an obvious fire hazard. Mayer returned the equipment and instead took a course in arc welding. Using scrap metals she began making animal sculptures, which have enabled her, periodically, to connect with the natural world. The birds she made during the mid-1970s, elegant studies in distilled abstraction, reveal the extent to which she had absorbed the lessons in essential form imparted by her old Goldsmith's tutor Ivor Roberts-Jones.



Peacock (small)
1999
Bronze
Edition of 6
14cm high



Goat
1996
Bronze
Edition of 6
79cm high



Cow
1984
Bronze
Edition of 6
53cm high



Goose
1987
Bronze
Edition of 6
56cm high

Mayer's interaction with nature intensified after she and her husband bought an old cottage on Dartmoor. Initially she had been opposed to the idea of a second home but she soon found it a place of tranquillity and a stimulus to a different sort of creativity. Most of her works at this time were small studies of animals, but around 1979-80 an opportunity arose to create something on a larger scale. It evolved from a commission for a new office headquarters in Slough for the multinational healthcare and pharmaceutical company, Johnson & Johnson. Mayer made a maquette for the preliminary models but the project did not progress until the building was erected and the question of landscaping arose. On hearing that Johnson & Johnson promulgated a caring and paternalistic attitude towards its customers and employees, Mayer suggested a rising, circular form comprised of overlapping hands that would symbolize the company's avowed corporate culture. This was universally approved and she began exploring possible designs. At about the same time, she was approached by an acquaintance who asked her to use her meditation practice to pray for a neighbour who had contracted cancer. She did so and also began to incorporate into her thoughts her friend Liz Aldridge who was disabled (and whose hands she used to draw). All of this seemed to lend additional meaning to her *Caring Hands* sculpture project and soon the maquette was complete and was submitted to the Johnson & Johnson board. She then received a phone call from Ann Howse to inform her that their mutual friend Mac, who had helped Mayer carve the alabaster *Mother and Child*, had developed Motor Neurone Disease. Mayer went to visit Mac at his home in Loughton, Essex and found him in an already advanced state of the illness. She was struck, however, by his hands, once powerful enough to dominate a recalcitrant block of alabaster, but now soft and possessed of "an innocent beauty" that put her in mind of the hands of the angels in Giotto's Crucifixion in Padua. She drew Mac's hands that day and again on two other occasions before his death some months later. Her reconnection with him after many years was to have a happy coda however, for it was in Mac's large studio adjacent to his home in Loughton that Mayer eventually constructed *Caring Hands*.

Many sculptors find their first large-scale commission a fraught affair despite the excitement it generates. In Mayer's case it was "a lot of agony but not much ecstasy." She had taken on an enormous project that required a scaffold tower to reach the upper sections and she had no head for heights and minimal assistance in the work. The technique involved constructing layer upon layer of polyurethane, covering it in industrial plaster and then carving it back, before repeating the process. There were moments during the bitterly cold winter when, overwhelmed by the scale of the undertaking, she would sit on the top of the scaffold tower and weep. But it was also



Working on the
plaster for
Caring Hands
1981



Caring Hands
1981
Bronze
Unique
350cm high

a positive time, with the studio becoming a focal point, visited by Mac's and Charlotte's friends and family. As it neared completion the members of Mayer's meditation group also visited and meditated around the work as if to send it safely on its way to the foundry.

Mayer's circle of enfolding, nurturing hands fulfilled its symbolic function in the Johnson & Johnson context, although she was disappointed that none of the company's employees gave it so much as a second glance when it was installed. Such is the lot of the sculptor of large-scale objects. Nevertheless, *Caring Hands* won sufficient admirers in the wider world to secure its future when the Johnson & Johnson building was sold to the global information technology giant Unisys for whom the symbolism of encircling hands was somewhat at odds with their corporate mission. Not so Basingstoke General Hospital, whose director, Charles Kaye, stepped in to offer it a new home. Some time later *Caring Hands* was installed in the Lord Mayor Treloar Hospital in Alton, Hampshire, where it was secure for a few more years until the building was threatened with demolition to make way for a residential development. Kaye, determined not to see it consigned to a skip, asked Mayer if she could find a new home for it. Mayer called the entrepreneur and philanthropist Dame Stephanie 'Steve' Shirley, for whom she had already made the large-scale work entitled *Moon Arch* for Prior's Court School for autistic children in Newbury. Asked if she could provide a new home for *Caring Hands*, Dame Shirley gratefully accepted it for her autism centre in Bromsgrove in the Wirral and it was promptly sent back to Pangolin Editions foundry in Stroud for cleaning and conservation before being installed. Today it is owned by the Wirral Autistic Society and is finally free of the vicissitudes of public planning, its gentle symbolism resonating once again within the wider community.

Many of the works Mayer has made over the years seem to speak with extraordinary clarity to those who have suffered pain or loss in their lives. The healing quality that certain objects possess defies easy explanation. In Mayer's case it is surely a combination of her choice of iconography, her ability to conjoin contrasting formal elements, her facility at selecting the right surface finish for the materials she uses, and an instinct for suggesting the essence of something ineffable and beyond language. Suffice to say that much of her work, despite often being somewhat sharp, prickly, spiky, spindled, ridged, or roughly textured, nevertheless has a deeply comforting physical presence. It may be that it symbolizes a duality present in all of us which we subliminally recognize even though we don't always acknowledge it.

Scintilla
2009
Bronze
Edition of 8
45cm high



The Tree of Life

Mayer's regular practice of meditation has been a critical factor in these forms emerging into the world. She sees meditation as a form of "education and guidance" which she is moved to pass on, in abstract form, through her sculpture. That continuity between the two practices, between meditation and sculpture, has also enabled her to cope with periods of great sadness in her own life. In 1989, she lost her son Julian to a rare and aggressive form of cancer. One of her most important works - the *Tree of Life* - stems from that period.

The idea for a tree had first come to her in 1983 when, on the strength of her proven ability to create large-scale work, she was invited to submit a design for a public sculpture for a shopping centre. It was a tight deadline with a limited budget. Ideas came thick and fast but were just as quickly dismissed. Finally she persuaded herself to stop thinking, let her mind grow still and allow the right side of her brain to take over. She spent the next day looking at books on trees and other forms, read Jung on symbols and poring over images of roots and bark. In doing so, was she perhaps revisiting her childhood experiences in the Rosel Haus in Prague, her strolls through the garden with Eduard, her algae-collecting with Ružena?

Tree of Life
Maquette
1989
Bronze
Edition of 12
66cm high





left
Joy
2006
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
38cm high

right
Unity
2006
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
38cm high



far right
Tree of Abundance
2006
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
38cm high



left
Friendship
2006
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
38cm high

right
Laughter
2006
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
38cm high



far right
Hope
2006
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
38cm high



In the event, the shopping centre commission never reached fruition, although the tree concept re-emerged in 1984 when Mayer was invited with five other artists to make a 40ft high sculpture for the Abbey National Building Society in Milton Keynes. She made a tree, 1:10 scale, in anodised aluminium but that commission was also eventually shelved when the Abbey National board decided not to “waste shareholders’ money” on a piece of sculpture. Nevertheless, she continued to experiment with her tree-inspired designs until the early summer of 1988 when her son Julian became ill. One day he came into her studio where she was working on a cardboard maquette of a tree and exclaimed, “That is my tree of life!” She decided to create one for him in bronze on a small scale and began to prepare the maquette in wax. She had been taught to work in wax by a German sculptor friend, Joseph ‘Sepp’ Hamburger, whom she had met at the Royal College of Art and who made sculptures for Bavarian churches. With Julian’s condition worsening by the day, she was working fast to make sure that the bronze would be ready in time. It was completed by the end of January, largely thanks to a superhuman effort by her friends at Pangolin Editions. The foundry’s owners, Rungwe Kingdon and Claude Koenig, then drove to London on a Friday night to deliver it. Mayer took it to the hospital the next day for Julian to see. “It stood beside his bed for a week and had a profound effect on all who came into the room, especially the nurses.”

Throughout this period, a variant of her Tree of Life theme was under consideration as a large-scale work for Basingstoke General Hospital whose director Charles Kaye was one of Mayer’s most loyal patrons. Kaye collected impromptu comments from colleagues about the proposed sculpture. It met with widespread approval, some interpreting it as an emblem of the human circulatory system, of arteries or lungs, while for others it symbolized rebirth and regeneration. Sadly it was never realized for Basingstoke on account of Charles Kaye’s appointment as Chief Executive of the Special Hospitals Authority. Julian’s *Tree of Life* however, was eventually scaled up and offered to the North London Hospice in Finchley, which cares for people with life-limiting illnesses. Thus, like *Caring Hands*, it too found an appropriate home. It is one of Mayer’s most successful works, its open, stylized elements combining to create a visually rewarding complexity as one walks around it. The gently arcing curvature of the stems of each ‘leaf’ generate a sense of uplift and growth and this may explain why, for many, it instills a sense of hope and optimism. One of the small-scale versions was acquired by Dame Stephanie Shirley in memory of her late son, a victim of autism and epilepsy. It is as if the genesis of the work in Julian’s initial naming of it in the studio that day has contributed to its enduring signifying power.

Tree of Life
1992
Bronze
Edition of 3
210cm high



Tree of Life (detail)
1992
Bronze
Edition of 3
210cm high



Mayer's next major commission was for the Barbican, a difficult project on account of the development's brutalist architecture. The idea was to create a walkway with raised beds for shrubs in order to 'humanise' the environment. She remembers visiting the site and how her heart sank on seeing where the winning sculpture would be located. She knew the work would need to be of a certain height in order to deal with a series of air vents on site. Bronze, she decided, would be too heavy, even if patinated green, so she began considering stainless steel. After much improvising back in the studio with hoops and poles, she alighted on a tall, vertical 'tent-like' structure suggestive of movement and musicality. On December 6th 1990 she heard that her design had won the Barbican competition and the fabrication of *Ascent* could proceed. It was unveiled in 1991 and won a Royal British Society of Sculptors Silver Medal — a prize awarded to the best sculpture first shown in London the previous year. The work has an architectural grace, its graduated tubular rods creating an ascending spiral — one of Mayer's enduring preoccupations. It battles valiantly with the lumpen concrete air vents that flank it but it is hard to imagine what kind of work could ever 'humanize' a fundamentally alienating urban environment like the Barbican. It underscores how bad architecture challenges even the most talented of sculptors. In 2000, Mayer re-phrased the rising, spiralling pattern she had devised for the Barbican project in the work entitled *Pharus*, commissioned in 2000 by the Cass Foundation in Goodwood, West Sussex. This time, Mayer constructed the individual members herself, carving the polystyrene components which she pinned to an enormous cone before plastering over them. The work represents another of her excursions into the timeless symbolism of the elements, on this occasion referencing the licking flames of a fire, a theme she would return to later in her career.

Ascent
1991
Stainless Steel
Unique
600cm high





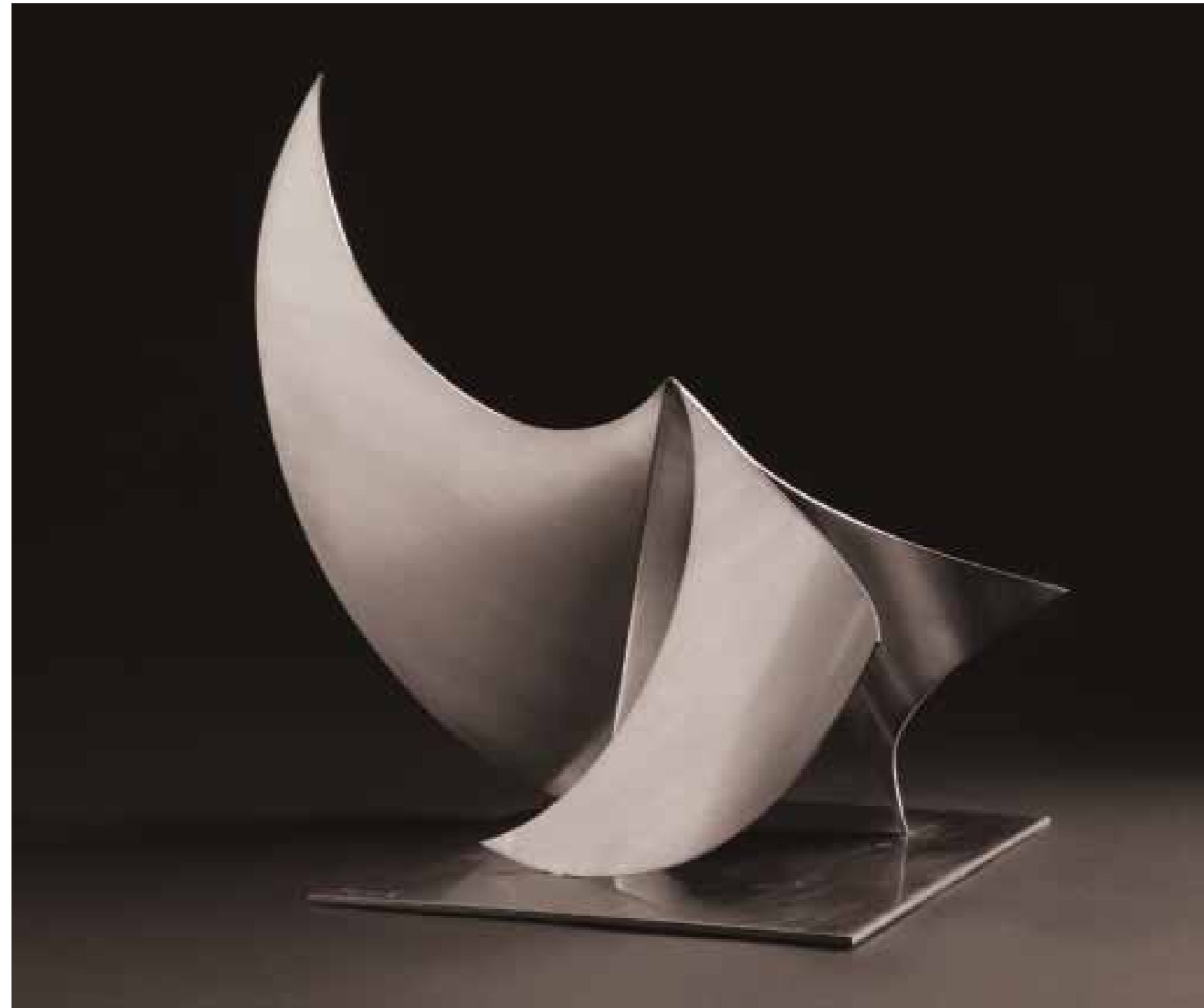
Pharus
2000
Bronze
Unique
360cm high

Pharus (detail)
2000
Bronze
Unique
360cm high





Reed Drift
2005
Bronze
Edition of 7
62cm high



Levanta
2004
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
48cm high

Back in 1981, while Mayer was making *Caring Hands* in Mac's studio in Essex, the inner-city area of Toxteth in Liverpool was descending into urban chaos as the city's disaffected youth fought pitched battles with riot police. Deep-seated and long-standing tensions between local police and the city's black community were exacerbated by the broader economic climate which had brought about radical changes to Liverpool's docklands. Unemployment in Britain was at its highest for fifty years and Toxteth was one of the areas hardest hit as the decline of the Liverpool docks bit deep into the social fabric. The Brixton riots earlier that year served to encourage alienated working-class Liverpudlians who finally took to the streets in July 1981. Mayer listened to radio and television reports as the chaos unfolded and vowed that one day she would make a work dedicated to Merseyside's once-thriving and peaceful maritime heritage. Merseyside had, after all, been one of the first places she had settled on arrival in England almost half a century ago. That opportunity arrived in the 1980s and as with so many of her works the design came to her in a moment of quiet contemplation. She cut a spiral line through a small circle of copper foil and twisted it into a standing form like an ammonite. Once again the concept of the spiral was given new life. At her meeting with the commissioning authorities she took the circle from her bag and twisted it into shape. They immediately approved of the design but warned her that it needed to be completed within a constrained timeline since the date of the unveiling had already been agreed. "It has to be finished and in place on that day and no later," they said, "as we've already ordered the sardine sandwiches"! Back in London, Mayer set to work. She was helped by having a new small building in which to make large-scale objects thanks to her husband's single-handed construction over the course of a weekend of a Japanese-style 'summer house' in their Highgate garden, which they refer to as the Ho-Ho. She fulfilled her obligations and the bronze *Sea Circle* was duly installed on its circular brick plinth on Copperas Hill in Seymour Street, Liverpool.



Model for *Sea Circle*
1983
Copper
Unique
10cm high

right
Sea Circle (detail)
1984
Bronze
Unique
240cm high

next page
Sea Circle
1984
Bronze
Unique
240cm high







Large Spiral Form
1976
Bronze
Edition of 9
8cm high



Spiral Form
1999
Bronze
Edition of 6
27cm high

One local newspaper announced, with characteristic scouse bluntness, that “Liverpool doesn’t need an apple peel,” unaware that Mayer would later deem apple peelings to be as viable as any other material in her repertoire. She is not alone in considering *Sea Circle* one of her most successful works in terms of its form and it has won universal admiration on Merseyside where its shape and mottled green patina evoke both a marine organism and the swell of a wave at sea. Once again her minimal manipulation of a primal shape has created a self-supporting, Möbius-like volute symbolizing the constant movement of departure and return so central to Liverpool’s maritime tradition. It is further evidence of her having fully internalized the mantra of her old Royal College of Art tutor Frank Dobson to “keep it simple!” Viewed from some angles its gently curving lines enter into a dynamic dialogue with the spindled spires of Frederick Gibberd’s nearby Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral visible above the surrounding rooftops.

As *Sea Circle* shows, Mayer’s great strength as a sculptor is her ability to make form, rather than colour or structural complexity, the most expressive component of the work. Some of her most eloquent forms come from her long-established habit of taking a stock of cardboard with her on holiday or when staying at their cottage in Dartmoor. Other small-scale examples of this include *Lacuna I* and *II*, and the *Journey* series of works.



Release III
2013
Bronze
Edition of 8
50cm high

Release IV
2013
Bronze
Edition of 8
65cm high



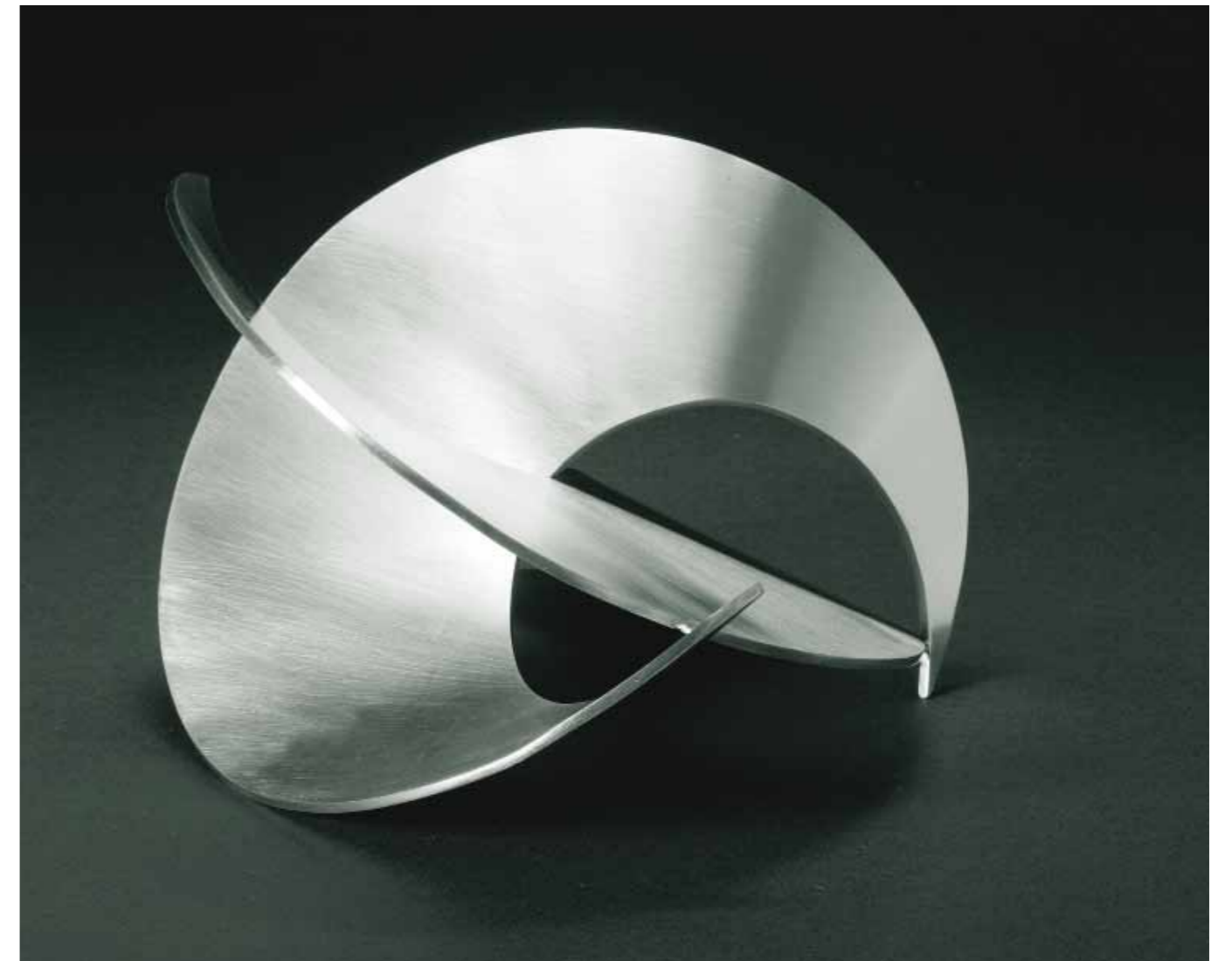
Another relatively recent large-scale work, the bronze *Moon Arch* of 2003, is further evidence of her minimalist approach to design, although as the photographs of her working on the original in Pangolin's workshops clearly demonstrate, construction is always a more complex business. She has never been happier than when hunkering down with a bucket of plaster. *Moon Arch* is one of a number of works inspired by the shape and symbolism of the moon - *Moon Dance I* and *II*, *Luna* and *Selene* being other examples of her ability to bring simple elements into a harmonious arrangement.



Working on
Moon Arch
2003

right
Moon Arch
2003
Bronze
Unique
270cm high





left
Selene
2008
Sterling Silver
& Bronze
Edition of 12
15cm high

Moon Dance I
2006
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
16cm high

Mayer is modest and self-effacing about her work and seems disarmingly oblivious to the esteem in which she is widely held. The sad reality is that the opportunities for women sculptors to get their work into high-profile public environments are anything but plentiful. Even when invited to submit proposals there is always only ever a minimal chance that the work will be accepted and fully realized, so competitive is the field of public sculpture, so rare the commissioning vision, and so constrained the available resources. In the mid-1990s she won a limited competition to make two works to flank the front entrance of Marylebone Gate, the London headquarters of the French bank Parisbas. On this occasion she used another of her signature techniques, the joining of graduated balsa wood rods to create a dynamic, wave-like form evocative of a bird's wing or a licking flame. *Wind* and *Fire* revisit the ring-form structures she used in the early 1970s that were originally inspired by the Battersea Power Station smoke-stacks, but this time she used them to enclose a fan-shaped structure that seems about to flutter free of the enclosing circle. It is the relationship between the solid outer ring and the more organic elements within — which appear to oscillate in the optical field — that lends the works an almost kinetic energy. She has never been entirely at peace with its creamy patina but is constantly reassured by those who see the work that its true strength lies in its form.

Largo
1998
Bronze
Edition of 6
90cm high

next page
Wind and Fire
1997
Bronze
Unique
250cm & 300cm
high





Mayer continues to work with balsa wood. A glance inside her studio confirms the extent to which she has subjected the material to constant and sustained investigation over the years and how she continues to draw from it ever more subtle configurations. The pieces entitled *Turning I and II*, *Solar*, *Largo*, *Rondo*, *Spindrift* and *Rising* confirm that the technique is equally successful when deployed on a small scale. Some of her more recent works — such as *Shadow* and *Storm Bird* — are studies in abstraction and yet they provide evidence of her continuing sensitivity to the mysteries of nature and its subtle visual vibrations. Nature may never surrender its innermost essence, but it continues to draw Mayer into a fertile collaboration through its shapes and surfaces. Her work testifies to a desire to explore the fleeting, evanescent forms of what the writer W.G. Sebald described as “the shadow-filled edifice of the world.”



Shadow
2013
Bronze
Edition of 8
77cm high

right
Solar
2009
Bronze
Edition of 8
106cm high

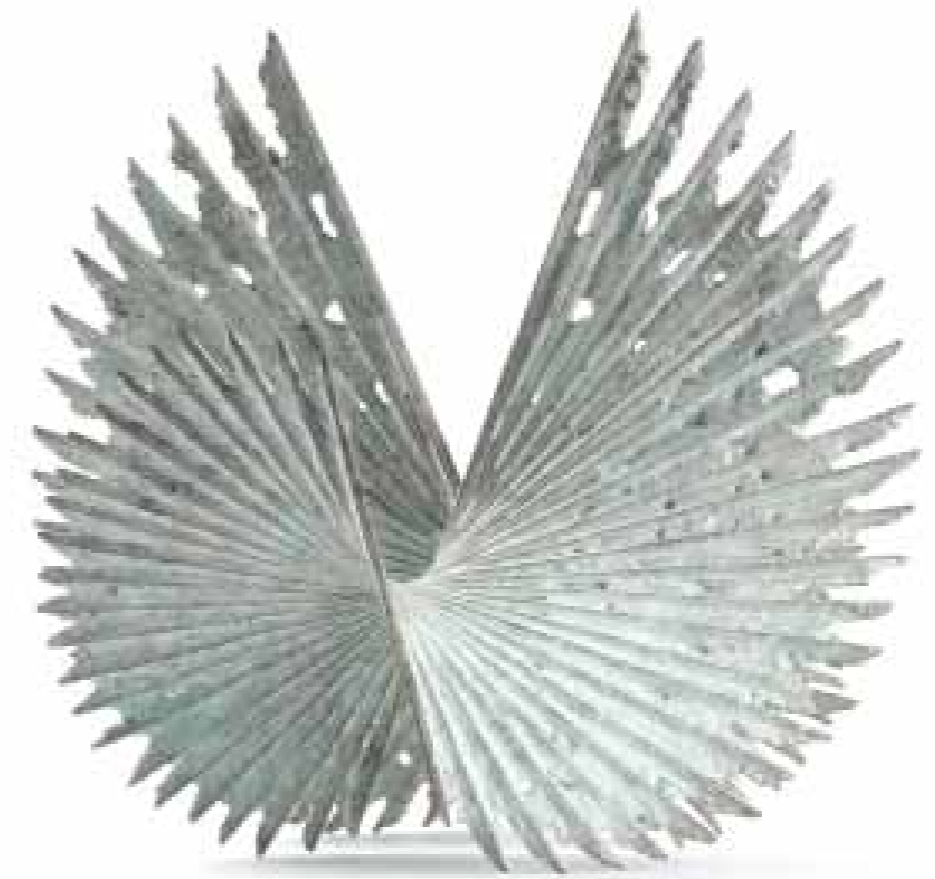




Rising
2013
Bronze
Edition of 6
217cm high

right
Small Rondo
1999
Bronze
Edition of 6
32cm high

next page
Turning
1994/95
Painted Wood
Unique
104cm high





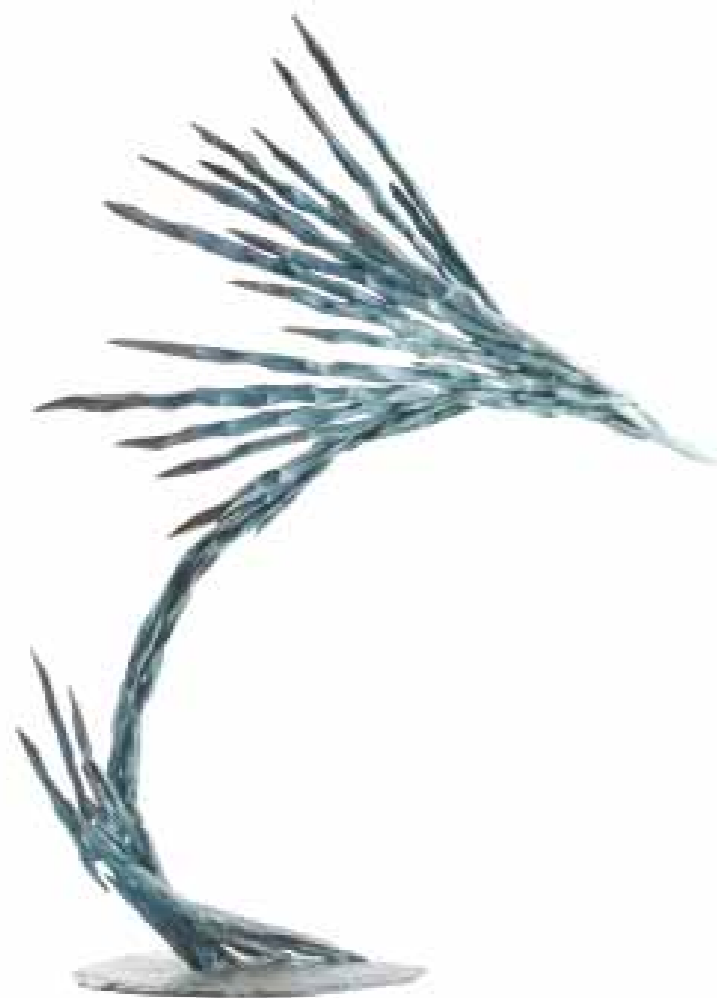
Turning II
1998
Bronze
Edition of 9
22cm high





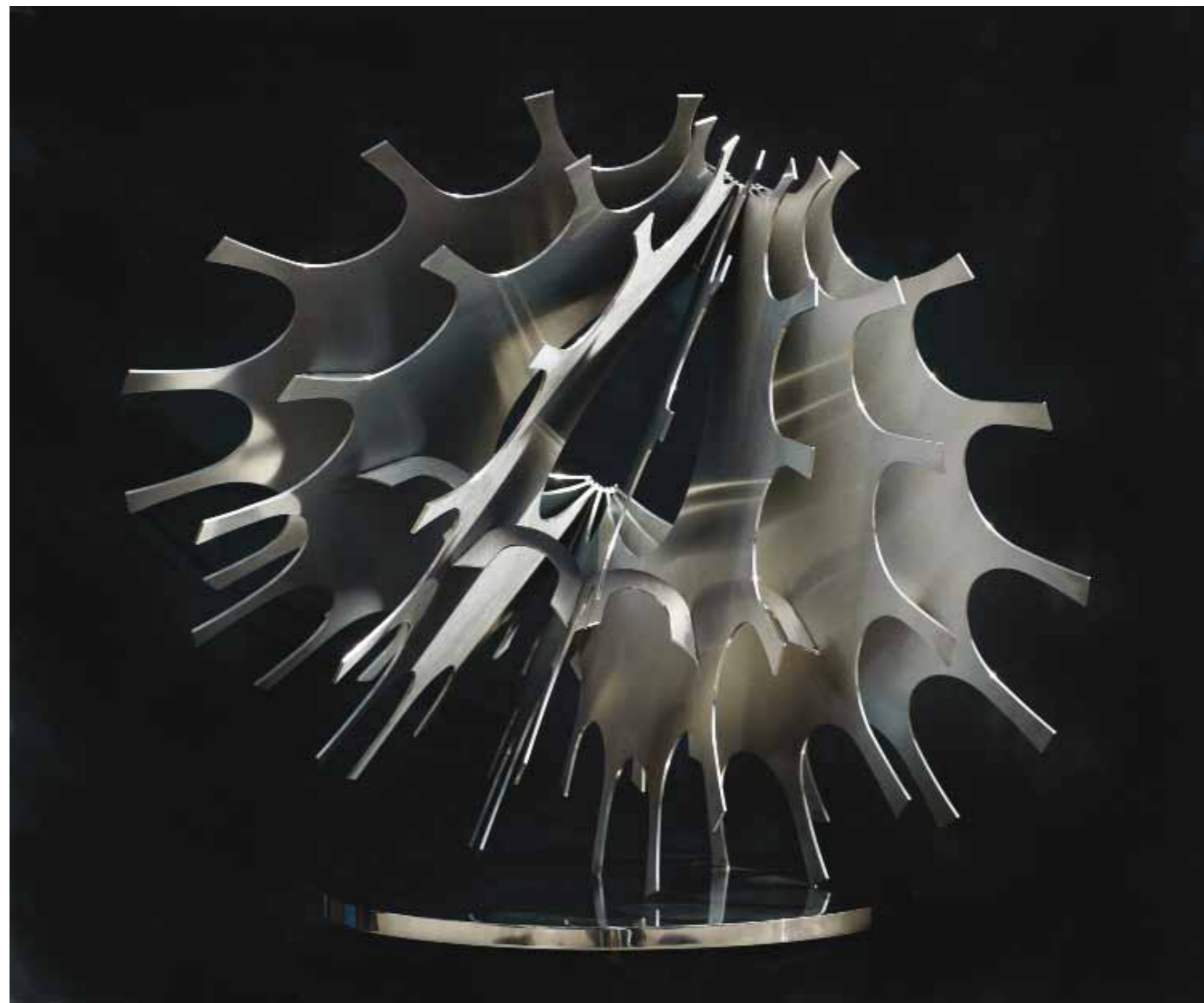
Flight II
2013
Bronze
Edition of 8
90cm high

Her versatility and constant curiosity have also guided her towards other materials. She has worked in most of the traditional mediums, including wood, bronze and clay, and has created numerous acclaimed works in stainless steel, including the Battersea-inspired ring series and an extraordinary and uncharacteristically complex work entitled *Kasta*. It is a fixed, static form and yet one senses its latent propensity to hinge and fold into new configurations. Echoing Gabo and the constructivists, it illustrates how void is as vital as mass in communicating a work's essential energy.



Storm Bird
2013
Bronze
Edition of 8
54cm high

right
Kasta
2005
Stainless Steel
Edition of 6
71cm high





Mayer's close relationship with Pangolin Editions bronze foundry has resulted in some remarkable collaborative projects. In 2009, she was one of twelve artists invited by Gallery Pangolin to explore "the drama and sensuality of the casting process." She rose to the challenge to reveal "the magical transformation effected by fire and metal on sculptural media" with a work entitled *Earth Fire*. Fittingly, it had been partly inspired by a television programme about volcanoes, surely one of the closest natural phenomena to the concept of the forge or bronze foundry. It was created using a hot wire applied to a block of polystyrene, again an apt application of heat to create form. The finished work is somewhat anomalous in relation to the rest of Mayer's oeuvre and yet at the same time entirely in keeping with her intuitive approach. Technically, it is a masterpiece of patination, its interior and exterior all of a piece and continuous, creating an enriching ambiguity. The inside is a subtly different colour to the exterior and communicates the sense of a threshold to a unseen, molten core. It certainly looks too hot to handle and yet at the same time its chunky, rippled surfaces bring to mind another tactile object altogether — the interior of a walnut shell, perhaps? Surely this is another faint echo from the beautiful garden of the Rosel Haus in Prague where, as a young girl, Mayer first embarked on her sculptural adventure, peeling away the outer membrane of an object to expose the treasure within?

Earth Fire
2009
Bronze
Edition of 7
30cm high

Mayer is as passionate and committed to her work today as she was back in Prague where she meticulously carved her chestnut baskets or at the Royal College in the 1950s where she sought her own creative voice. She has adapted her techniques and procedures in order to continue making work. To that end her meditation remains a constant source of quiet inspiration. For a dozen years in the 1960s, Mayer effectively shelved her sculptural aspirations in favour of family life. It is a testament to her innate creative drive that she battled her way back to her true vocation. In doing so, she has brought joy to countless individuals. Above all, through the healing gift of her work she has demonstrated that sculpture, when made with care and love, can be not only beautiful and uplifting to behold, but can bring spiritual comfort and hope.

Tom Flynn

Guardian
2009
Bronze
Unique
145cm high



References

¹ Charlotte Mayer, unpublished memoir. Hereafter all Charlotte Mayer quotes are drawn either from her memoir or from an interview with the author, May 2013.

² Klimt's Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I was looted by the Nazis during the war and later became the subject of a complex restitution lawsuit. In 2006, it was sold privately to the cosmetics tycoon Ronald Lauder for a price reported to be \$135 million, making it for a time the most expensive work of art ever transacted. Today it hangs in Lauder's Neue Galerie in New York City.

³ Madeleine Albright, Prague Winter: A Personal Story of Remembrance and War, 1937-1948, Harper Perennial, 2013, p5

⁴ Albright (2013), p77

⁵ Bulova had used his inheritance from the Bulova watch company to pursue his educational mission in the UK and later in the USA. At the end of the war, Beltane School in Wimbledon became an internment camp holding 250 German scientists and technologists abducted from Germany in 1945 and 1946, including Dr Otto Dietrich, Hitler's Press Chief.

⁶ Bruno Bettelheim, The Informed Heart: A study of the psychological consequences of living under extreme fear and terror, Peregrine, 1986 (1960), p8

⁷ Letter from Ružena Stutzova to Frank Stutz (New York) and Helen Marie Mayer (née Stutzova), Ambleside, 19th May, 1942. The Stutz Letters, unpublished correspondence, London, 2001, p27.

⁸ Christopher Frayling, The Royal College of Art: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Art & Design, London, Barrie & Jenkins, 1987, p122.

⁹ Frayling (1987), pp124-5

Congress
2013
Mixed media

next page
Wind
2012
Bronze
Edition of 8
59cm high





Biography

1929	Born in Prague, Czechoslovakia
1939	Moved to England
1945-49	Goldsmith's College of Art, London
1949-52	Royal College of Art, London
1980	Elected Associate of Royal Society of British Sculptors
1983	Weldex 83 Arc Art Award
1991	Elected Fellow of Royal Society of British Sculptors Awarded Royal Society of British Sculptors Silver Medal

Selected Exhibitions

2012	'Sculptors' Drawings' Pangolin London 'Two in One: Charlotte Mayer & Almuth Tebbenhoff' Pangolin London
2011	'Women Make Sculpture' Pangolin London 'Mayer & Von Stumm' Turrill Garden, Oxford
2010	'Crucible' Gloucester Cathedral 'The Thornflower' Southwark Cathedral, London
2009	'The Thornflower & other works' Salisbury Cathedral 'Fire and Brimstone' Gallery Pangolin, Glos.
2008	'Sterling Stuff II' Pangolin London
2006	'All Female Cast' Gallery Pangolin, Glos. Solo show, The Garden Gallery, Hants. 'Fe ₂ O ₅ Gili, Mayer, Rance, Tebbenhoff, Vollmer' Canary Wharf, London and APT Gallery, London
2005	'Quartet - Four Czech Sculptors' Curwen & New Academy Gallery, London 'Sculpture in the Garden: RBS Centenary' University of Leicester 'Fe ₂ O ₅ Gili, Mayer, Rance, Tebbenhoff, Vollmer' Myles Meehan Gallery, Darlington
2004	Solo show, Matara Centre, Kingscote, Glos.
2003	'Deirdre Hubbard & Charlotte Mayer' Thompson's Marylebone, London 'Sterling Stuff' RA Friends Room, London 'Sterling Stuff' Sigurjon Olafsson Museum, Reykjavik
2002	'Sterling Stuff' Gallery Pangolin, Glos. Solo Show, Bohun Gallery, Henley on Thames
2000	'Bronze: Contemporary British Sculpture' Holland Park, London 'Sculpture 2000' Milton Keynes General Hospital
1999	'Charlotte Mayer - Recent Sculptures' Gallery Pangolin, Glos. Solo Show, Ashbourne Gallery, Ashbourne, Derbys. Hodgkins/ Hubbard/ Mayer, Royal British Society of Artists



Selected Commissions

2007	<i>'The Thornflower'</i> St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation & Peace, London <i>'Autumn'</i> Private garden, Hants.
2003	<i>'Moon Arch'</i> Prior's Court School, Berks.
2000	<i>'Pharus'</i> Cass Sculpture Foundation, Goodwood
1997	<i>'Wind'</i> and <i>'Fire'</i> BNP Paribas, London
1994	<i>'Journey 2'</i> Nene College, Northampton
1992	<i>'Tree of Life'</i> North London Hospice
1991	<i>'Ascent'</i> Barbican, London <i>'Crown of Thorns'</i> Private garden, Wales
1986	<i>'Journey'</i> Basingstoke District Hospital <i>'Grasshopper Corbels'</i> Gresham House, Oxted
1984	<i>'Sea Circle'</i> Inner City, Liverpool
1983	<i>'Thin Man'</i> Wadham College, Oxford
1981	<i>'Caring Hands'</i> Johnson & Johnson HQ, Slough
1970	<i>'Corydon'</i> Wadham College, Oxford
1953	<i>'Mother & Child'</i> Epsom General Hospital

Abyss
2013
Mixed Media

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Sculpture at Goodwood
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ISBN: 0 9537794 2 4

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ISBN: 0 9537794 3 2

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Ann Elliott, Bohun Gallery 2002
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ISBN: 0 902242 19 9

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Tony Birks-Hay, Marston House 1998 and 2004
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'The Arts in Health Care: Palette of Possibilities'
Charles Kaye & Tony Blee, Jessica Kingsley 1996
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'Liverpool Seen - Post-War Artists in the City'
Peter Davies, Redcliffe Press 1992
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