



# ***Nature Decoded***

**Jonathan Kingdon at Ninety**

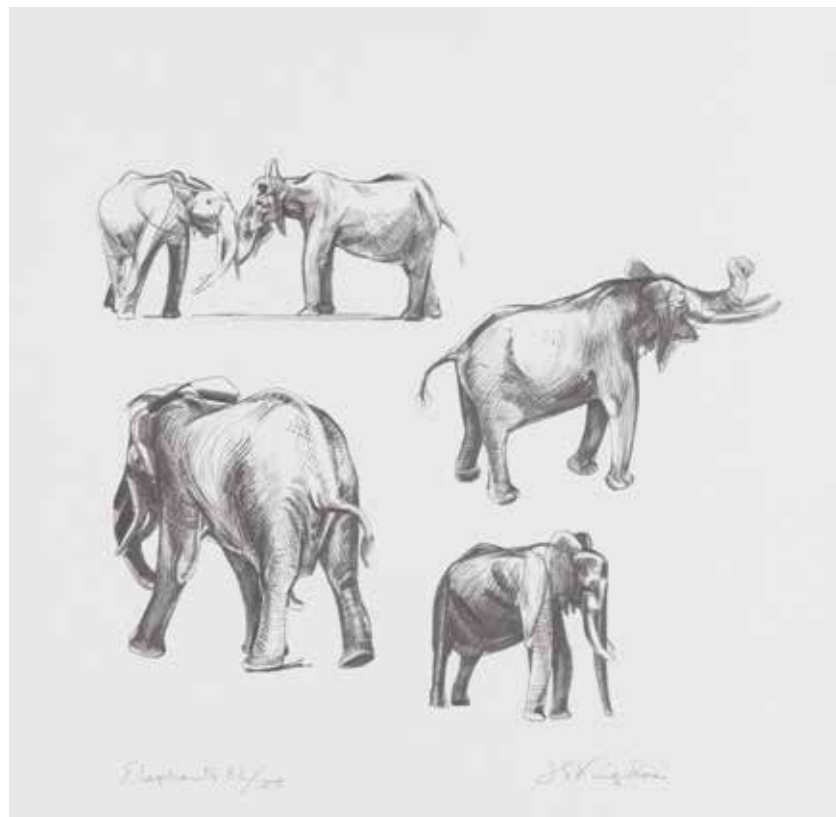
**2025**

Jonathan Kingdon has spent his lifetime looking at the world around him from two rich perspectives. As an artist he is moved and stimulated by the natural world and compelled to explore its colours, patterns, structures and forms through pencil, brush, paint and clay. As a scientist he studies and explores animals and birds with scalpel and microscope whilst he observes and scrutinises their behaviour; he records their relationship to one another and their place in our world – this duality brings the artist's sensibilities to his science and the scientist's inquisitiveness to his art.

Focusing solely on one aspect of Kingdon's enormous output, 'Nature Decoded' explores the way in which drawing is for Kingdon, a way of looking at the natural world and sculpture; a means of expressing ideas generated by such penetrating scrutiny. The exhibition encompasses a whole spectrum of works from shorthand sketches executed swiftly in the field through to refined and precise anatomical studies. This includes detailed, patient enquiry leading to thoughtful expressive sculptures which celebrate the rhythms of biological structures: bones and skulls, feather and skin which are not only formed for the functions they have evidently evolved to perform but are also intrinsically beautiful. Chosen by eyes and sensibilities much like our own, in which beauty itself is selected for by generations, furthering their offsprings chances of survival in becoming more attractive to the opposite sex. This taste for the beautiful in conjunction with the environmental forces of natural selection have produced the world's incredible diversity of animals and birds that Kingdon revels in with abundantly obvious delight.

We very much hope that this exhibition throws new light into Kingdon's world and illustrates his mimetic skills of drawing from nature, through the imaginative process of elaborating selected elements of those drawings, to the organised arrangements of sculptural form, Kingdon treads his own evolutionary path and reveals insights that only an Artist-Scientist could expose. This particular blend of disciplines gives Jonathan Kingdon his very own expressive language.

Gallery Pangolin



African Elephant Sketches  
Facsimile Print  
Edition of 100  
46 x 44.5 cm

"Infant elephant. Baffled and in a panic as he finds the tip of his trunk seemingly trapped beneath the weighty column of his forefoot."

Baby Elephant  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
26 x 31 x 19 cm





Elephant Sketches  
Pencil  
Unique  
44 x 60.5 cm

"Requiem for the elephants. Bones and ivories as material for human edifices, here resurrected to evoke the rhythm and giant grace of a once-living being."

Elephant Head  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
20 x 12.5 x 19 cm







"Cassowary. Wears his Doge's skullcap with  
bib-badge of heraldic blue and scarlet  
(colors of favored fallen fruit)."

Cassowary  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
55 x 25 x 16 cm





"Blastula. Exploratory sketch (copper).  
Rafts of rapidly differentiating cells as  
manipulated by mind-driven hands."

From Blastula to Gastrula  
Copper  
Unique  
14.5 x 8 x 8 cm

"Blastula (terra cotta). The emergence of complexity from simpler origins. Ceramic model for potentially much-enlarged bronze monument celebrating the revelatory power of evolutionary biology."

From Blastula to Gastrula  
Terra cotta  
Unique  
31 x 16 x 16 cm





Pelican Sketches  
Pencil  
Unique  
40.5 x 51 cm

"The Pelican-in-her-Piety (bronze).  
Concluding piece for a protracted  
series of drawn and modeled versions  
of the Medieval legend of the breast-  
piercing pelican."

Pelican  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
46 x 23 x 18 cm

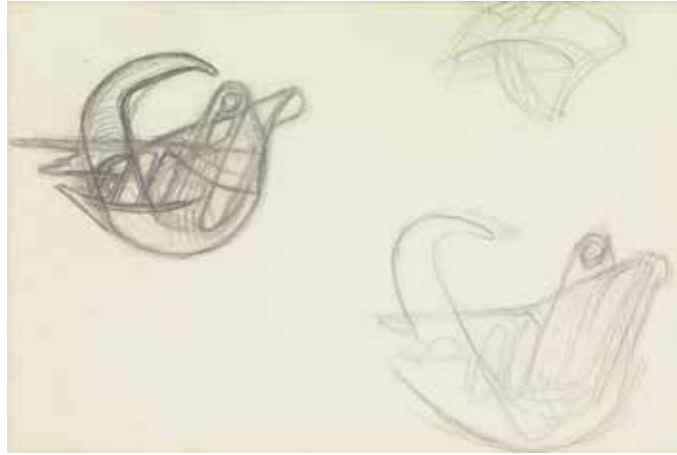




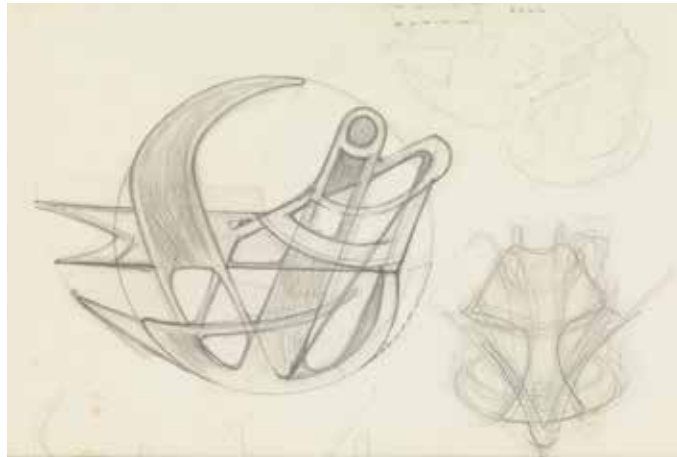


"Origins. Exploratory miniature maquette of Origins/Mammalian Motherhood theme.  
Praise song for the female principle."

Mammalian Maternity Maquette II  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
23 x 12 x 13.5 cm



Pig Skull Sketches 1  
Pencil  
Unique  
21.5 x 35.5 cm

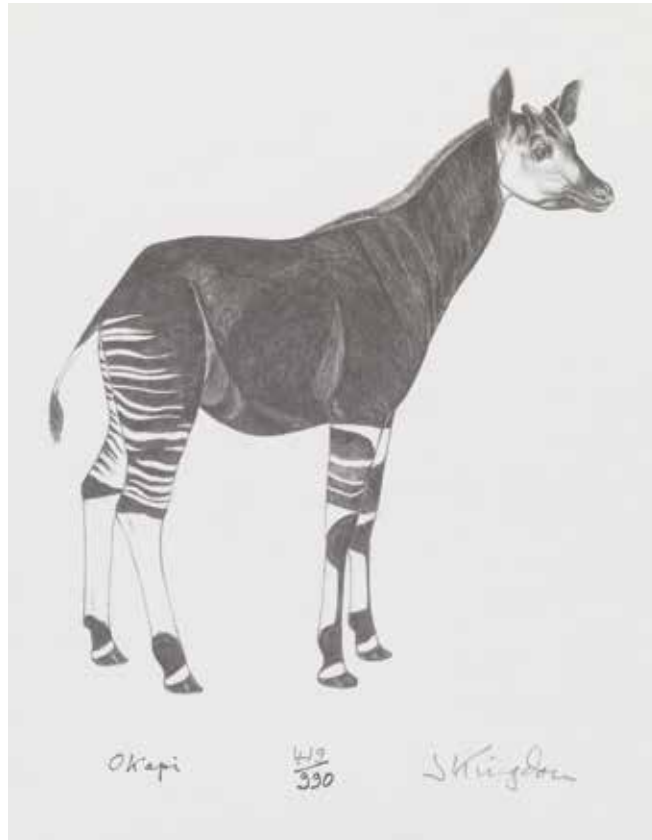


Pig Skull Sketches 2  
Pencil  
Unique  
21.5 x 35.5 cm

"Pleistocene pig. Fossilized giant hog opened up to reveal hidden struts and structures."

Pig Skull  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
30 x 38 x 56 cm





Okapi  
Small Facsimile Print  
Edition of 990  
29 x 22.5 cm

"Sketch of okapi in bronze as fashioned from drawings on paper.  
Spatula as pencil – translating 2-D to 3-D."

Okapi  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
16 x 18.5 x 7.5 cm







"At its simplest, this sculpture resembles an ovoid, pod-like composition opened up to hint at countless potentials within single cells, eggs or seeds.

This mostly microscopic subject retrieves "scale" from some of my many sculptural forebears. Prehistoric carvers represented mothers suckling one or two infants. I have reconfigured such Paleolithic representations of butt, breast and baby into an enlarged, firmly balanced, two-chambered "shared heart" above which ever-more-complex forms bubble out. In its final, monumental form, this piece is dedicated to the intellectual discipline and practice of evolutionary biology."

Mammalian Maternity Maquette  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
48 x 24 x 27 cm







Browse Rhinoceros Head Dissection  
Facsimile Print  
Edition of 100  
46 x 44.5 cm

"Emptied rhino-head. The hollowed-out epidermis of a rhino head emptied by empty human mythology."

Rhino Head  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
14.5 x 9 x 14 cm





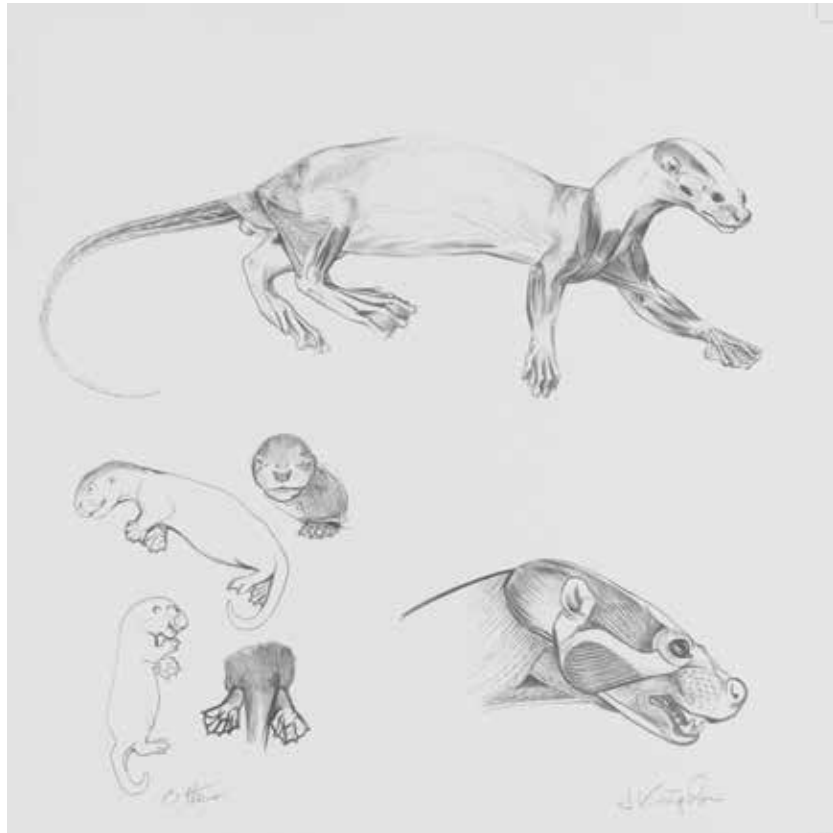
"Blue-footed booby. Booby at peak of its ritual display."

Booby 1  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
24.5 x 13 x 12.5 cm



"Booby symmetry. Anatomical adaptations for aerial, aquatic and terrestrial functions reconfigured into a visual expression of tectonic symmetry."

Booby 2  
Bronze  
Editio of 10  
27 x 16 x 11 cm



Spot-necked Otter Dissection &  
Neonates  
Facsimile Print  
Edition of 100  
46 x 44.5 cm

"Clam-cracker. Sea Otter head—opened up. Three-dimensional rendering of some of the forces at work in this clam-cracking dental dedoodah."

Otter Skull  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
27 x 34 x 28 cm





"Hand. Both servants and masters of thought, hands drove human evolution (and manipulated/created the artifacts in this exhibit)."

Servant, Agent or Master  
of Thought?  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
19 x 12.5 x 10 cm





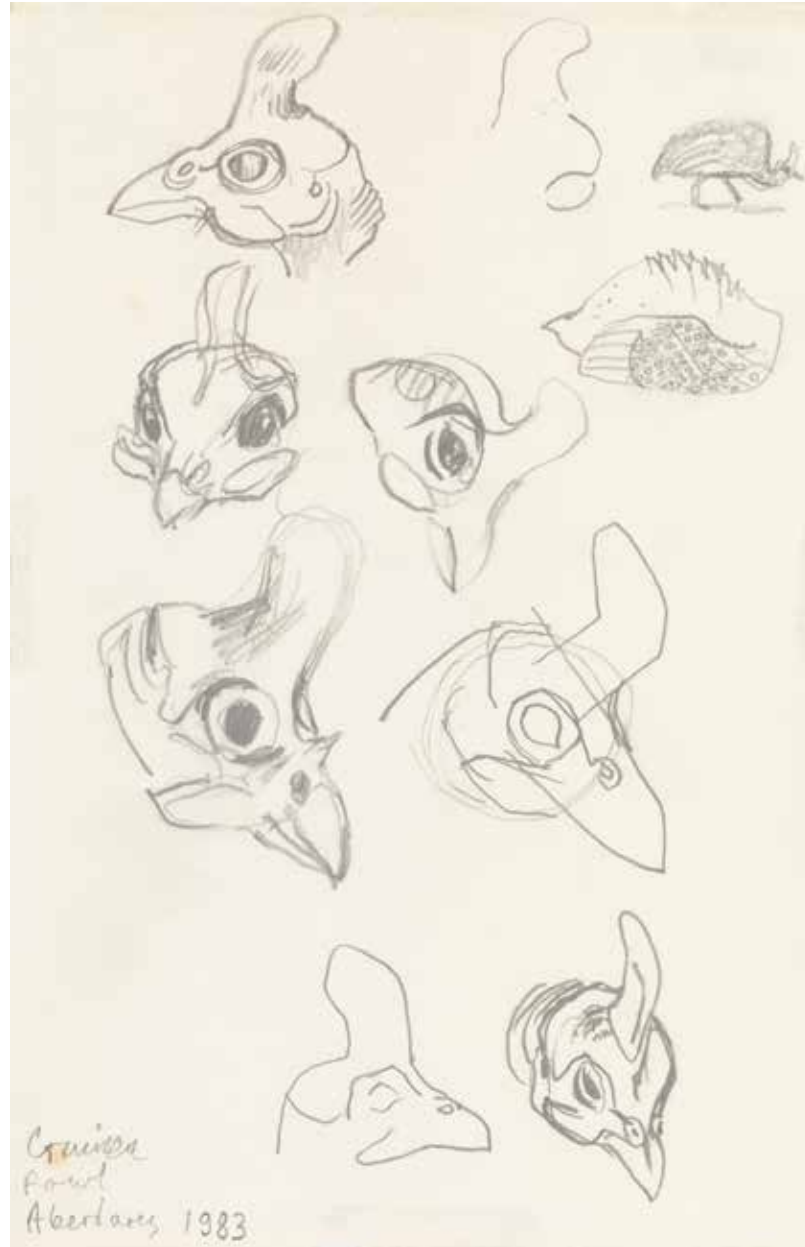


Skull  
Charcoal  
Unique  
27 x 33 cm

"Skull (human). Model that emerged from a Makerere University class in drawing. Skull suspended in space, spun slowly, in this case, suggesting an opened-up 3-D rendering."

Skull (Human)  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
35 x 50 x 30 cm





Helmeted Guinea Fowl sketches  
Pencil  
Unique  
21 x 13.5 cm



"Helmeted guinea fowl. A lump of clay modeled into a heraldic head for the cameras of a BBC natural history program entitled, "From Aardvark to Zebra: A Kilimanjaro sketchbook".

Helmeted Guinea Fowl  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
16.5 x 16.5 x 10 cm



"Gianbologna's giant monument in the Loggia of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence flings the limbs and bodies of three entwined figures along the trajectory of a double helix."

Gianbologna's DNA  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
41.5 x 12.5 x 13 cm





"Eagle owl. Product of a class exploring the sculptural potential in symbols. In this case, an ancient Egyptian hieroglyph for the letter (and sound) of M."

Eagle Owl Sketch  
Pencil  
Unique  
28 x 17 cm

Owl  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
27 x 12 x 16 cm







"Copper skull maquette. Death-size."

Skull Maquette  
Copper  
Unique  
17 x 12 x 21 cm



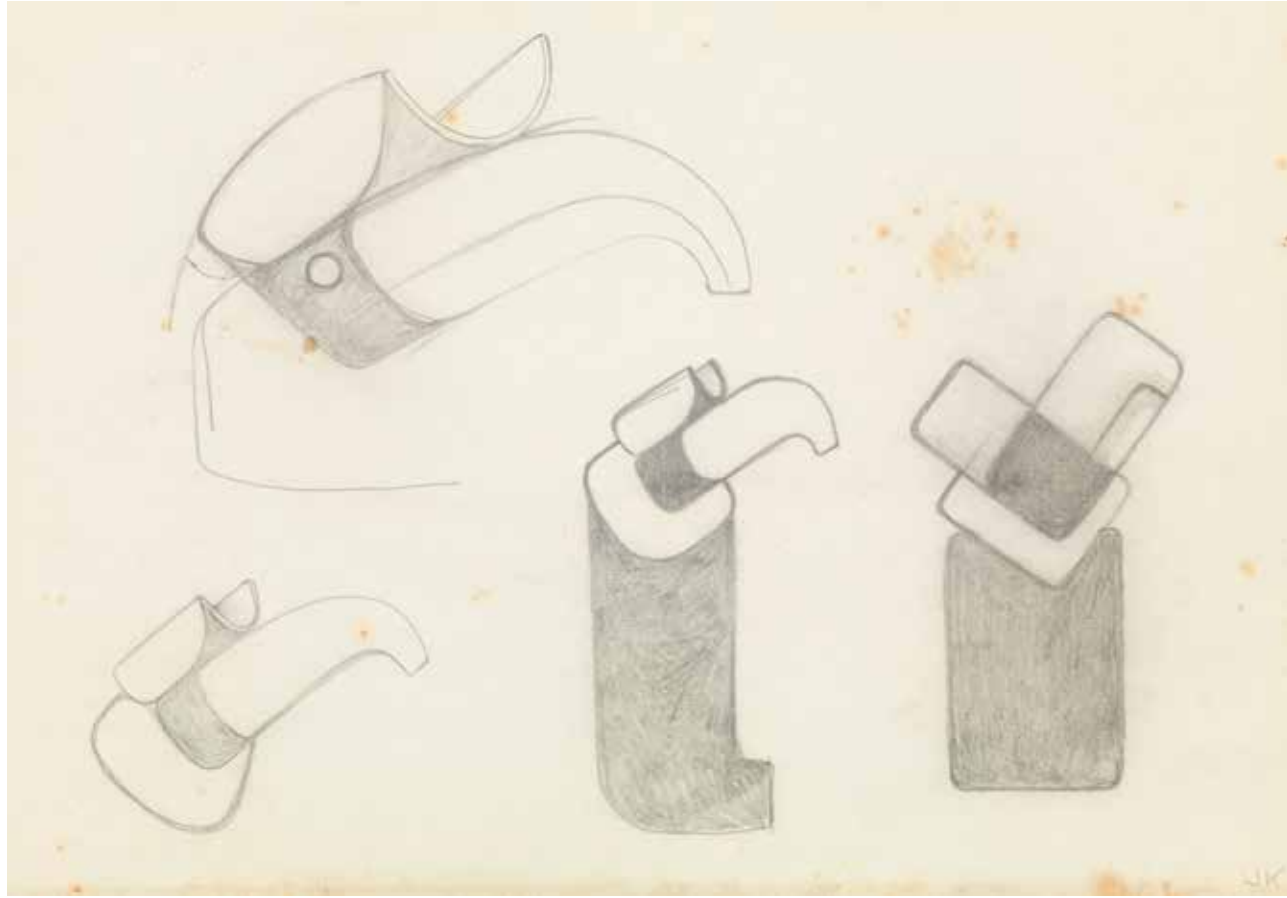


" 'The Last Quagga' explores and combines two ancient traditions in sculpture – Horse and Dance. In this instance, an equid "breakdance", it recalls that casual, mindless moment in which some boy fells the last of an ancient evolved lineage."

Quagga  
Pencil, Watercolour & Coloured  
Pencil  
Unique

Quagga  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
63 x 34 x 25.5 cm





Hornbill Sketches  
Pencil  
Unique  
25.5 x 35.5 cm

"Miniature model of oriental hornbill as explored for its monumental potential."

Hornbill  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
25 x 11.5 x 7cm







"An arc of mane  
and flap of dewlap  
as evolved in Equus  
zebra. Pied stripes as a  
response to the intrinsic  
susceptibilities of eyes –  
Dazzled?"

Hartmann's  
Mountain Zebra  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
65 x 22 x 50 cm

"Identical cast of Equus  
zebra mount sans stripes -  
Dazzled?"



Hartmann's  
Mountain Zebra  
Bronze  
Edition of 10  
65 x 22 x 50 cm



"The bronze sculpture I am offering could elicit several potential titles. Among them, "Origins" or "Mammalian Madonna" might hint at the role I have in mind, however, I made this piece with the following concepts in mind.

At its simplest, this sculpture resembles an ovoid, seed-like form opened up to reveal, or hint at the countless potentials within a single cell, seed, egg, sperm or blastula.

I have "humanized" and enlarged this (mostly microscopic) subject by borrowing certain elements from prehistoric carvings of a seated female figure suckling one or two infants.

I have reconfigured these ancient representations so that the Palaeolithic artists' conception of knees, lap and seated buttocks under babes and bulbous breasts becomes a firmly balanced, two-chambered, heart-like base for the still seed-like, pod-like, womb-like composition above it.

Here, actively differentiating, ever more complex forms bubble out above the "shared-heart" form below.

Linking to the base by an umbilicus-like cord are a tightly integrated set of forms that can be read as foetus, nursing, breast, even foetal "peas in a pod".

Resembling a sort of spill-over from egg, womb or shell, all these elements shelter under an "umbrella" that serves to contain or seal the complex of forms below, (or within) it.

This arch can be reminiscent of some vestigial, abraded Palaeolithic mother's head or, more simply, serve to cap or contain the complexities within the imaginary membranes and potentialities that this bronze artefact infers.

I am offering this sculpture to celebrate and make manifest a redefinition of our established mission and achievements in leading education and research within our disciplines, within our University and within the larger world beyond."

Working model for bronze Oxford University Biology department  
200 cm high  
Unique





Catalogue Design: Gallery Pangolin  
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Captions by Jonathan Kingdon

Sculpture measurements are height x width x depth  
Works on paper measurements unframed are height x width

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