

BACK TO THE CAVE

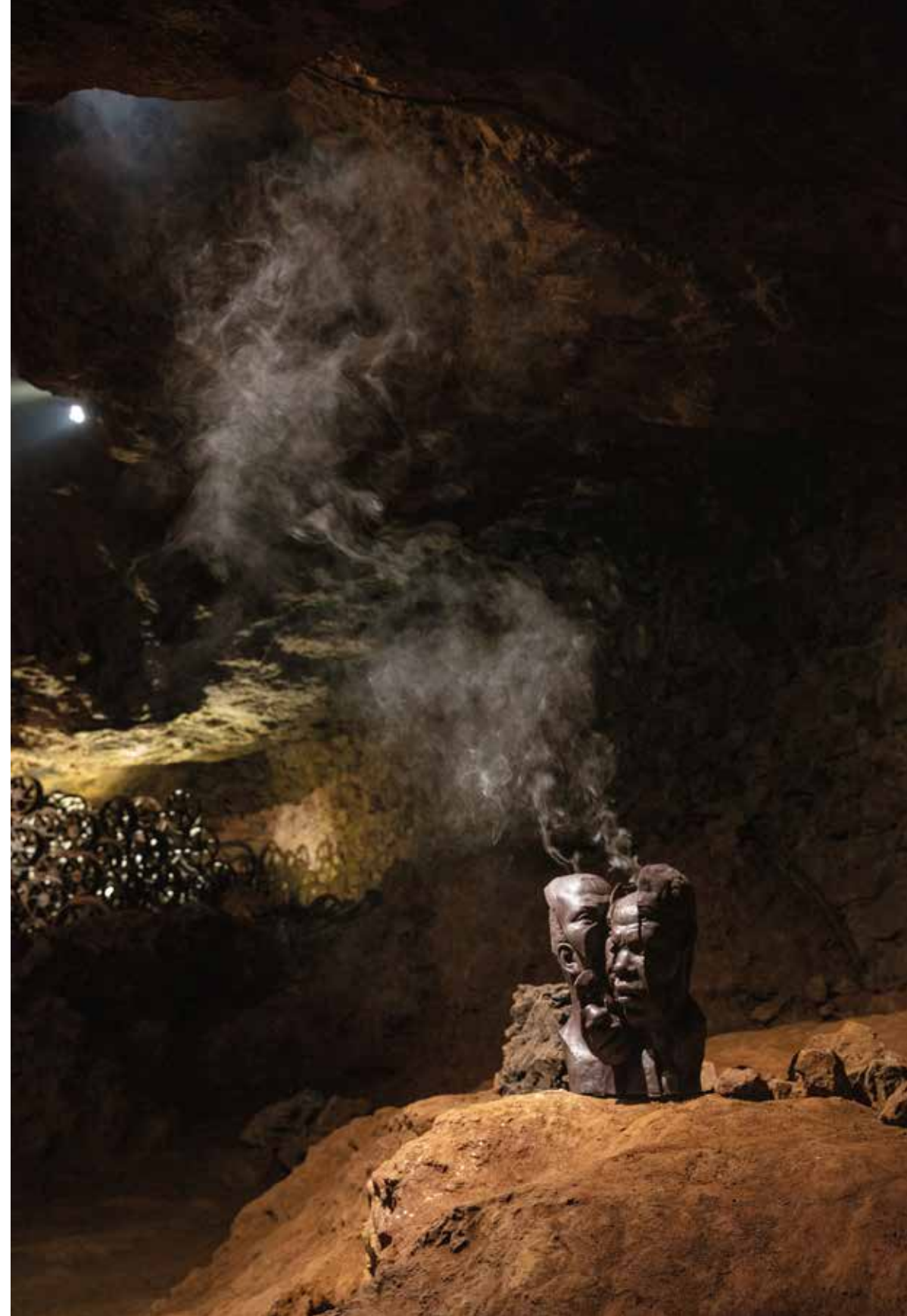
Sculpture goes Underground



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21st May - 17th July 2022



Anthony Abrahams
Kenneth Armitage RA
Bruce Beasley
Nick Bibby
Hamish Black
Ralph Brown RA
Jon Buck
Halima Cassell MBE
Daniel Chadwick
Lynn Chadwick RA
Ann Christopher RA
Geoffrey Clarke RA
Mat Collishaw
Michael Cooper
Terence Coventry
Geoffrey Dashwood
Abigail Fallis
Sue Freeborough
George Fullard ARA
Maggi Hambling CBE
Damien Hirst
John Hoskin
Steve Hurst
Michael Joo
Jonathan Kenworthy
Jonathan Kingdon
Anders Krisar
Sarah Lucas
David Mach RA
Susie MacMurray
Anita Mandl
Charlotte Mayer
Polly Morgan
Eilis O'Connell RHA
Isaac Okwir
Peter Oloya
Eduardo Paolozzi CBE RA
Pangolin Designs
Hans - Ulrich Pauly
Tom Price
Peter Randall-Page RA
STIK
Tavares Strachan
Almuth Tebbenhoff
William Tucker RA
Deborah van der Beek
Jason Wason

BACK TO THE CAVE

Although art certainly has much earlier origins, humanity's story of art begins in caves where for 40,000 years the earliest human made images have been preserved. It allows us, the descendants, to see what our ancestors visualised in their minds eye; to glimpse something of their imaginative journey, for their journey is of course ours.

Living in rock shelters and caves, able to make and control fire was for our antecedents an enormous leap of development. The safety of the shelter and the social collective favoured imagination already inherent in brains no different to our own and in which Art played a crucial role. People's minds grew freer and expanded, sharing and communicating through art.

The communities of cave dwellers would have just like us been astounded by skill and the virtuosity of technical achievement, they would have delighted at the verisimilitude of imitating life, they would have celebrated originality. I believe that the pleasures of both emotional and intellectual aesthetics were the rewards for exercising this power of the mind.



Caves fostered a leap in cerebral ability; in them mental acuity was honed and eventually and inevitably led to a completely new way of life. Pastoral and agrarian means of survival superseded cave living and brought people out into villages. Towns and cities eventually sprang up, social strata were imposed and developed, plants were domesticated as were animals. The harmonious existence with nature as lived by the hunter gatherers was transformed to a battle competing with nature and the previous co-existence was replaced by hierarchies of class and wealth, privilege and subjugation. New places were built to create and display art and new technologies developed to make it. Caves became places of fear and mystery; only outcasts, hermits, the sick or insane would inhabit a cave and the ancient art was forgotten.

During the 18th Century a new surge of interest in geology prompted a few intrepid explorers underground. Strange troglodyte life and weird and wonderful structures of calcite and crystal entranced the romantic sensibilities of the artists, writers, poets and scientists. Eventually subterranean art was rediscovered; this alongside the art of Africa and Oceania sparked a revolution in art influences. The primal sense of line and shape, form and colour was the inspiration for Modernism; a movement that shaped all the arts at the beginning of the 20th Century in a quest for an essential truth, a universal language, a human essence.

We naturally tend to gravitate towards environments that stimulate our imagination and I believe that caves are one of these special places.

I have had profound experiences of caves and three have remained for me deeply memorable. Once whilst helping my father with his research on African mammals, we went deep into a cavern system which provided an important refuge particularly for numerous bat species where they congregate in immense numbers. Equipped with a head torch we descended deep into the network of passages and caverns. All around were sounds, burrs and clicks, the high pitch of bat sonar whilst other creaks and cracks seemed to emanate from the rock walls; were they just in my imagination? In the torchlight the irregular rock surface, their cracks and bulges suggested all manner of heads, figures and animals much like finding images in the drifting shapes of clouds. The otherness of this unknown alien world was tangible. The darkness when the torch was switched off to let the bats settle was total, like a velvety blackness that I instantly tried to feel with my hands. Deprived of sight, the sounds and sense of touch as well as smell grappled with their new prominence in my mind and adrenaline pumped through my body in reaction. A surge of fear gripped me as the leathery flapping flight of hundreds of bats wafted air currents that wrapped around my personal space. The torch switched on after a few minutes and sight reclaimed its dominant place in the order of my senses. I visualised afresh figures and animals suggested in the rock wall formations even more clearly. After an hour or so we resurfaced into blinding tropical light, I was completely exhilarated by the novelty of this experience and the sensations it generated in me.

Years later intent on seeing the ancient Palaeolithic painted caves, I visited Niaux and Altamira. The sense of wonder all great art creates in me was multiplied tenfold by the age, mystery, beauty and the setting of these ancient and exquisite images. Their abstract nature seems ever present. Few of the paintings reveal themselves instantly, they need looking at and thinking about. Their placement on the walls and ceilings is important; a change of angle or height may suddenly expose the image stark and



obvious, vital in the reality that was resurrected, first in the mind's eye of the painter and secondly in mine, the viewers eye. The bosses and bulges, cracks and fissures play an inherent part in the diversity of forms so deftly appropriated into bovine outlines of back, hump or leg. Enigmatic handprints stencilled onto the ancient walls seem to proclaim their humanity, their ownership of both art and cave as a direct and compelling autograph. The making of these wonderful images must have involved detailed planning; they would have needed light, ochres, scaffolds, brushes, they relied on memory and past experiences and encounters. They define our species capacity for creativity and imagination at the dawn of a need for symbols and signs; they helped to supercharge our development, intellectually, emotionally and technologically and thus kick-started humanity's immense creative cultural journey.

My third profound experience happened in a cave on the island of Mauritius, the home of the famous Dodo, pre-eminent symbol of extinction. On an expedition with conservationist Carl Jones in his endeavours to save remaining endemic wildlife of the island, he led Claude and me in an inaccessible area of the Black River Gorges into a cave that still felt inhabited. Monkeys and deer had clearly been in the space very shortly before us but remarkably and with a tingling down the spine we realised that it was the human presence which overcame us. Arranged inside the cave were rocks placed as seats around a long disused campfire which still had in its ashes the charred scutes of extinct giant tortoises and had probably provided the inhabitants of this cave with their last meal. More stones, placed deeper on a gently sloping and smooth floor delineated sleeping areas, whilst outside, stones had been pushed into areas overlooking the landscape beyond. This was a maroons cave, inhabited by people escaping from the slavery of sugar estates on the plains below. I felt an immediate revulsion for the atrocity of slavery and overcome by an overwhelming admiration for the bravery, determination and ingenuity of those who dared escape and live wild with a cave as their only shelter. This was and remains for me an acute emotional experience.

Such personal encounters in caves perhaps reveal something of how important place and space are and how caves can represent a sense of extraordinary otherness. An opportunity such as this one to curate an exhibition in an underground environment was of course irresistible for me and will hopefully take each of us on our own imaginative journey from sculpture to sculpture and cavern to cavern in a way that a pure white gallery cannot. Many of the sculptures have been selected to connect in some way with aspects of caves, their uses, inhabitants, human or animal and their ancient history. If we can let go of our preconceptions of where art is best seen, embrace the novelty of the environment and how it plays with our senses, absorb the images, forms, skill and materials of the sculptures and if it's not too much to suggest we may perhaps re-connect with our primal human impulse in a more direct and intimate way. I hope we can!

It is striking that animals often find shelter in caves and may even exist entirely within them. Some of our exhibits are chosen to populate Clearwell with more than their celebrated population of horseshoe bats. Anita Mandl, Geoffrey Dashwood, Michael Cooper, Nick Bibby, David Mach, Jonathan Kenworthy and Terence Coventry have all made sumptuous renditions of some of the all-important components of the biodiversity of life.

In the not so ancient past, bears, wolves, lynx, lions might have sheltered here whilst bison, aurochs, wild horses, boar, woolly rhinos and mammoths would have grazed and browsed in the surrounding area. Such ancient wildlife was depicted in much of the Palaeolithic cave paintings creating a magical menagerie on the ceilings and walls of the caves and in turn some of our exhibits have taken at least subliminal inspiration from these early images. Lynn Chadwick's bronze Beasts share a vital connection



with the energy emanating from the ancient parietal art. John Hoskin's Horse, cut from plates of steel also draws on the precedent of Palaeolithic equine outlines and Coventry's Boar leans forward in a direct contemporary analogy to the leaping boars and bison of Altamira.

Caves are well known not just for preserving humanity's art, they also conserve the actual remains of our ancestors and as a result reveal the story of our evolution from times long before humankind created art. 'Mitochondrial Eve' by Sue Freeborough is a visualisation of the genetic mother of all and everyone of us. Her rendition includes a helix of other life forms spinning around her body. Jonathan Kingdon's 'Skull' with its cranium depicted as an architectural protection of our species defining organ, 'the brain,' alludes to this ancient history; the 'Taung baby,' a hominid fossil with a cracked and broken skull that reveals its petrified brain, that of a juvenile Australopithecus must have proved inspirational. Isaac Okwir chose to imagine an adult of this southern ape as a looming ancestral presence, part gorilla part proto human. Uli Pauly, goes one step further with a carving in pure quartz crystal; his own brain CT scanned and 3D printed as a model from which he made the carving, literally the ultimate 'mind in the cave.'

Humans with their irrepressible sense for symbol and ritual posed skulls on rocks deep underground, most famously the cave bear altar in Chauvet cave. A sense for this continues today and Deborah van der Beek's 'Tyger' skull can be seen as an equally potent contemporary symbol.

In 2006 a complete Dodo skeleton was discovered in a cave in Mauritius, its dry environment provided the ideal conditions and all the bones of a single individual bird were perfectly preserved. Previously discovered Dodo skeletons have all been composites from several individuals the remains of which had

washed down into marshy plains where they were conserved. In this exhibition the Dodo's skeleton now cast in bronze is a symbol of our species capacity to impact other life forms our environment and even the climate since our cave dwelling past.

Deep underground, different forces of nature create unique and beautiful structures. Intense pressure, heat, volcanic activity, plate tectonics cooling and evaporation are contributing factors in the incredible array of crystals; trillions of atoms all connecting in regular patterns dictated by the atomic structure of the constituent elements. These mineral accumulations form amazingly complex crystalline shapes, colours and forms immensely inspiring to artists. The symmetrical facets of Halima Cassell's sculpture, the pyritic forms created by Bruce Beasley and the cubic frames of Almuth Tebbenhoff if not directly influenced, evokes this natural geometry in a quest for organising abstract form much as music arranges aural forms.

Light is a prerequisite for humans to explore the subterranean chasms and passages. Tavares Strachan's cubist portrait of Zumbi functions simultaneously as a candle, illuminating the darkness and also alluding to the role of Zumbi as a pioneer, warrior and leader of the 17th Century African Brazilians who liberated themselves from enslavement and formed their own free states. Caves inevitably were refuges although they soon built their own villages and towns organising their own society.

Numerous people have used caves over the centuries in different ways: hermits and recluses, sadhus and monks, the infectious and the antisocial have all sheltered in caves, whether for penance or isolation, prayer or meditation. Damien Hirst's 'Unknown Penitent' small and precious, cast in silver, emanates its own silvery, calm glow for an age of darkness.

Anthony Abrahams's 'Willendorf Man' is a witty model of the artist at the dawning of artistic creation. The realisation that silent imaginings can be brought out to communicate and engage with others, personalises for him the Palaeolithic age, using as it does the famous so called 'Venus' of Willendorf as his subject. Another Palaeolithic human representation inspired Jon Buck's 'On the Lines of Lascaux,' a scene painted in a deep cavern of the 'Sistine Chapel' of parietal art, Lascaux, features a wounded bison charging a falling bird headed man. This enigmatic painting unique in Palaeolithic art has invited numerous interpretations, Buck adopts and adapts the outline in his own graphic sculptural form referencing and honouring this earliest of human/avian hybrids.

STIK, whose street art graffiti techniques use a single broad outline to describe all manner of characters and emotions much like many of the cave painted figures expands his outline to painting on Clearwell's cave wall with 'The Ochre Man'. He is also represented here with a small bronze version of his universal couple 'Holding Hands.'

With echoes of another element of parietal art, the abstract totemic forms of Ann Christopher can be seen as contemporary descendants of the Palaeolithic renditions of male and female sexual organs. Although Christopher's sculptural concerns are strictly formal, the ancient artists would have been equally concerned with colour, line and form. The human dimension adding humour as well as a visceral, sexual possibly magical connection, even 'raison d'être,' are difficult to dismiss.

Caves have been in the news of late, the concentrated proximity of hundreds of thousands of bats, means they can become an incubator for numerous viruses, the latest of many being Covid. An earlier virulent zoonotic disease was HIV Aids, which Peter Oloya with a witty sense of humour makes reference to in 'No Glove No Love.' The graphic use of a gourd of the cucumber family makes explicit the socially responsible message of what is essentially a readymade conceptual sculpture.



Bringing art technologically into the digital age is the augmented reality creation of Mat Collishaw's 'Echolocation AR'. Visualised on personal mobile phones the cave is co-opted into our own screens as the only way to envisage a ghostly apparition that seems to us as other and magical as the first cave art must have appeared to our Palaeolithic ancestors.

Ochre, iron, coal and stone have all been mined at Clearwell and its surroundings and it feels appropriate to include sculpture made from these minerals.

Sarah Lucas casts her soft amorphous 'nuds,' created first in kapok and nylon tights into the most durable and mechanical of metals, iron, the sinuous forms suggestive of bodies or embryos strangely vulnerable despite their solid rusted materiality.

Tom Price uses carbon to construct his mathematically precise forms that give them a mineral sheen complimented by bright colour.

Peter Randall-Page uses organic pattern to animate the surface of random shaped granite boulders. He has carved interlocking forms to envelop the boulders exterior suggesting a soft and mobile interior. Patterns such as this form naturally when two immiscible liquids are flowed together. The igneous history of the granite means the rock was molten once; separate minerals of quartz, feldspar and mica crystallising as it cooled.

The work of mining minerals underground has a long history and, unique to the Forest of Dean, are the free miners who individually have the right to dig for minerals in the forest. Unlike the organised industrial

mining elsewhere in the country free miners worked on a small scale and valuing their independence refused to be exploited by huge companies. Their way of life was proudly maintained and much of the equipment they developed for extracting the ore to suit the specific caves and mines they worked was also individual to this particular place. That equipment can be seen within and around Clearwell Caves, extraordinary functional forms now slowly eroding and crumbling away their mineral elements so arduously scratched and dug, drilled and blasted out of the ground now gently returning to the earth.

Inspired by the beautiful nature of Clearwell's mined cave, Susie MacMurray has created a site-specific sculpture, a cascade of silver wires falling like the waterfalls of lime-laden water that leave their calcite paths down some of the cave walls. In a second sculpture MacMurray strategically places her serpentine chain mail 'Anaconda' hugging the rock forms and perhaps this is instinctive as snakes love caves much like humans do.

The psychological terror of snakes is also referenced by Polly Morgan's 'Consider the Risk' her knot of cast python hinting at our innate fear but set within the concrete of our constructed urban environment. The study of Psychology has articulated so much of our art for over 100 years now, perhaps in this exhibition nowhere more potently than in Anders Krisar's 'Half Torso 3.' The corporeal perfection of the young bodies sectioned with surgical precision by who knows what accident of life or the compromises of growing up leaving the idyll of childhood and innocence behind.

Steve Hurst has cast a variety of artefacts, suggestive of moments underground, evidence of a meal, books and drinks, originally referencing the meals of soldiers in the First World War trenches, they feel



equally relevant here. Eduardo Paolozzi's maquette for 'London to Paris' uses the form of a railway goods flat wagon with a strange mix of forms the whole assemblage a surreal mechanistic human hybrid, suggestive of the technology that made us what we are.

Several of our exhibits have no direct reference to the cave environment they claim no other relevance other than being the creations of artists who all recognise an historical link to caves both as a special place for the original display of art and as the environment that fostered the brains that 'invented art'. Light, plastic, concrete and resin are all contemporary materials that contribute to the ongoing exploration of visual ideas. The levitating leviathan of Daniel Chadwick's 'Whale' is only possible because of its use of carbon fibre and perspex.

In this exhibition, we might see the enormous technological evolution over 40,000 years, however I believe the art itself would, with a little initiation be just as delightful, intriguing, thought provoking, beautiful and emotional to a Palaeolithic audience, as it is to us. Art, universal from its outset, Africa, Asia, Australia, the Americas and Europe together have an incredible cultural heritage most of which is either directly or indirectly rooted to the art preserved on rocks or in caves all over the world and perhaps because of this, in going back to the cave we can all feel a connection to our ancient mutual history.

Rungwe Kingdon

April 2022

Anthony Abrahams 1926 – 2019

Abrahams' carefully poised and enigmatic figures follow a tradition in British sculpture that began in the 1950's with sculptors such as Armitage, Butler, Chadwick, Frink and Meadows. The exaggeration of some features and the repression of others, unified by formal and textural qualities, give his sculpture a personal and expressive quality as if Prehistoric fertility symbols had been reborn in the contemporary world.



Willendorf Man, 1999
Bronze
Edition of 9
60 x 31 x 39 cm



Kenneth Armitage 1916 – 2002

Armitage's later works, symbolic arms and legs are fully rounded and welcoming. Reach for the Stars, his final work, is both hand and star, supported on an arm that is equally human and architectural. This aspirational piece was inspired by the idea that "If you reach for the stars you might reach the rooftops."



Reach For The Stars (Maquette), 2001
Bronze
Edition of 6
86 x 22 x 28 cm



Bruce Beasley b.1939

Looking into the complexity of the method utilised by Beasley to construct his pyritic forms, the surge of one faceted crystal into another and the way in which edge and surface play a tympanic game of positive and negative, bouncing light and shadow into stark relief, is reminiscent of looking into the quartz crystals within crystals. Beasley controls the way he arranges his component parts to his aesthetic ends; he can stretch them infinitely upwards to a vanishing point or compress them wide and flat as the floor, merging one cubic unit into another.

Abstract glyphs are as ancient as an art form as the more familiar palaeolithic images of bison and mammoths. Alongside the naturalistic depictions in the ancient caves are grids, lines, spots, circles and squares that are an important element of prehistoric art.



Knight's Gambit, 1991
Bronze
Edition of 9
60 x 80 x 61 cm



Nick Bibby b.1960

The 'Bones to Bronze' project was conceived to realise extinct creatures in three-dimensional form using the most thorough archival research combined with forensic techniques to extrapolate from the meagre remains that still exist.

This was the smallest of the fruit bats of the Mascarenes and would have roosted in hollow trees in the forest. A large number could have been easily captured by placing a net over the entrance to a roost and they may have provided an easy source of protein for early inhabitants.

It was a tremendously fat bat with ears completely hidden by thick fur. Its relatively recent extinction around 1860 has meant that several specimens remain in museums and these have been a major source of reference for the reconstruction.



Lesser Mascarene Fruit Bat, 2004
Bronze
Edition of 10
31 x 23 x 20 cm



Hamish Black b.1948

'BLOK' simultaneously plays with containers of undisclosed objects. The containers are hollow, formed from sheet steel and welded construction. The weld lines (painted yellow) connect a virtual horizontal and vertical grid that locks the separate units together and their context. Although empty, the rusted surface makes the objects look heavy, an illusion reinforced by the wire frame supports, allowing them to hover just above the ground.

Hamish Black



BLOK, c. 2002
Steel with rusted and waxed finish
Unique
15m x 10m approx.



Ralph Brown 1928 – 2013

Certainly, the textures and forms of the Yorkshire landscape can be seen in the folds of his sculptural reliefs: the limestone fissures and rocky crags and clefts which Brown climbed as a young man reappear in a range of the wall pieces and figures he made in the 1950s and 60s.

Gillian Whiteley



Turning Woman, 1962
Bronze
Edition of 4
153 x 57 x 48 cm



Jon Buck b.1951

Our collective response to certain abstractions of shape, form and colour is perhaps a result of the way our neurological networks process information. Since Neolithic times, rather than slavishly copying nature, artists have striven to distil its essence. By concentrating on this simplicity their images are still able to evoke a powerful emotional response to this day.

Longdog is the simple primitive dog of childhood. It is derived from the flattened-out archetypal drawing that a child might make but equally it has a universal formal geometry which has been the language of art since prehistory.

Raimond Gaita in his book 'The Philosopher's Dog', rather appropriately, quotes Virginia Wolf:

"Art is not a copy of the real world, one of the damn things is enough!"

Jon Buck

Longdog, 2005
Bronze
Edition of 5
143 x 173 x 25.5 cm





Longdog, 2005
Jon Buck
Bronze
Edition of 5
143 x 173 x 25.5 cm

Jon Buck b.1951

Deep inside the caves at Lascaux there is a single drawing of a figure, alone amongst a pantheon of animal images. A bird-headed man, probably a shaman, lies in a trance-like state with his bird staff fallen from his grasp. I, like many others, have been fascinated by the drawings on the walls of neolithic caves which must be some of the first images to explore our relationship with the natural world. My sculpture catches a Birdman in the act of falling and could be seen to epitomise our current dilemma in our relationship to the rest of the natural world. This long and intimate connection now seems to be in danger of failing.

Jon Buck



On the Lines of Lascaux, 2009
Bronze
Edition of 10
48 x 70 x 6 cm



Halima Cassell b.1975

“Colony”, three hand carved concrete forms, represents the importance of togetherness, belonging, and a sense of community. The grouped rigid upright design has been created to give the sense of confidence, which comes from standing together in life.

Halima Cassell



Colony, 2014
Hand Carved Concrete
Unique
60 x 27 x 27 cm



Daniel Chadwick b.1965

Is it a fish skeleton? A whale? An eel? I don't know what it is.
Now it reminds me of other things, now it is underground in a cave above a lake. In the underworld, in a hidden world, an X ray.
A microscopic organism? Tomopteris? Pennatula phosphorea? Ancient markings on a wall, something tribal or ...Tri-lobal?
Whatever it is it has never looked better or made more sense than it does here.

Daniel Chadwick



Whale, 2003
Acrylic
Unique
12 metres long





Lynn Chadwick 1914 – 2003

“It seems to me that art must be the manifestation of some vital force coming from the dark, caught by the imagination and translated by the artist's ability and skill.... Whatever the final shape, the force behind it is...indivisible”

Lynn Chadwick

Lion, 1960
Bronze
Edition of 4
84 x 192 x 48 cm





Lynn Chadwick 1914 – 2003

There is a unique painting of a bison in the Altamira painted cave; head held vertically upwards, pointed hooves straight down and its tail also vertical above its back. This striking image once seen is never forgotten. In its stance Chadwick's 'Beast IX' stands like an echo of this primal painting, its 20th Century incarnation bringing a fundamental hint of recognition to the modernist aesthetic and bestial vitality of the world regenerating post WWII.

Rungwe Kingdon

Beast IX, 1956
Bronze
Edition of 6
95 x 78 x 28 cm

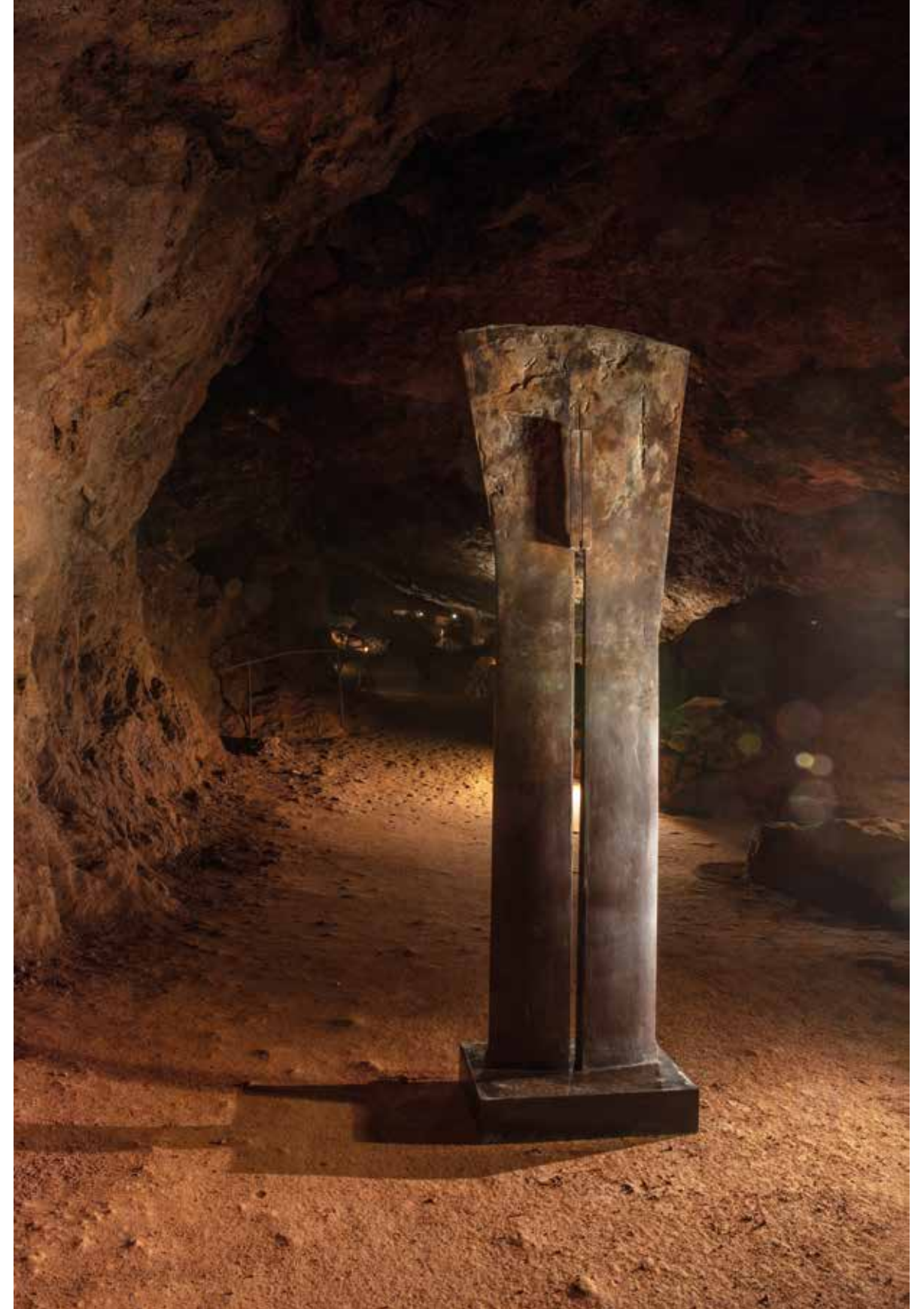


Ann Christopher b.1947

It stands to attention quietly watching the world – allowing a glimpse of beyond through a controlled split.
Face-on presenting a solid facade – from its sides a spare thin line is punctured by two projecting straps as if unpeeling from the space between.
It is saying I stand here in peaceful silence.

Ann Christopher

Line of Silence, 1991
Bronze
Edition of 5
193 x 60.5 x 35.5 cm





Line of Silence, 1991
Ann Christopher
Bronze
Edition of 5
193 x 60.5 x 35.5 cm

Geoffrey Clarke 1924 -2010

In 1952, the year he created 'Figure', Clarke was one of the emerging sculptors selected to represent Great Britain at the Venice Biennale. Alongside his contemporaries Reg Butler and Lynn Chadwick, Clarke's work was described in 1952 by the influential art critic Herbert Read as evoking the 'geometry of fear'. In this way Clarke's early works such as 'Figure' were to be characterised by their battered or tortured appearance. With its innovative use of iron as material 'Figure' radically reframed what figurative sculpture could be in what Read termed 'Britain's New Iron Age' (1953).



Figure, 1952
Welded Iron
Unique
151 x 56 x 56 cm



Mat Collishaw b. 1966

Bats navigate using echolocation, a mysterious facility that has evolved in the shadows of human comprehension. Our phones now employ gyroscopes and geolocation functions which track every nuanced movement we make.

This augmented reality bat attempts to illustrate the quasi mystical dimensions new technologies give us access to. A world beyond human perception, a realm that exists on the periphery of our consciousness.

Mat Collishaw



Echolocation AR, 2022
Augmented Reality
Unique
Dimensions variable

Michael Cooper b.1944

I wanted to convey the power and bulk of the American Bison at rest. This was cast from a carving in Kilkenny limestone.

Michael Cooper

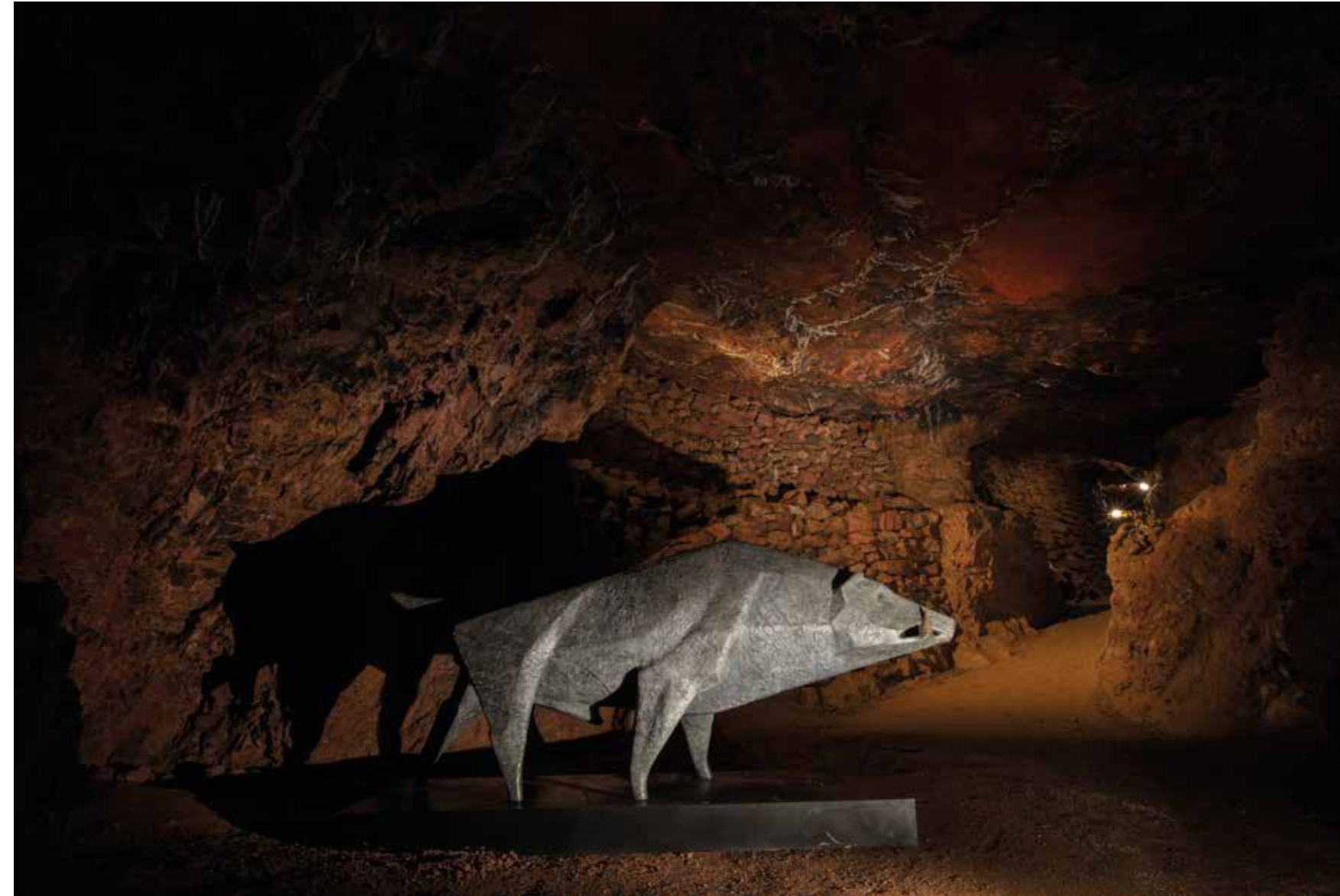


Bison, 2017
Bronze
Edition of 9
23 x 55 x 31 cm

Terence Coventry 1938 - 2017

The power behind Coventry's sculpture is his strong affinity with the subjects he creates and his work is rooted in a strong figurative tradition. His sculpture explores the animals familiar to him from his years of farming; birds, bulls, cows and boars, which eloquently capture their ruggedness and gentleness, their movement and behaviour.

Boar II, 1999
Bronze
Edition of 5
100 x 260 x 65 cm





Terence Coventry 1938 - 2017

When I'm walking I'll often stumble over something stupid because I'm looking at birds and taking in the things that you see naturally but observing them more precisely as well.

With ravens you see how they interact with each other and the way they respond in the perched attitudes, the way they tilt and acknowledge each other sometimes in threat stances, its fascinating and its all going into my work somehow.

Terence Coventry



Bird I, 2010
Bronze
Edition of 5
103 x 126 x 157 cm



Geoffrey Dashwood b. 1947

Birds have been a personal passion since childhood and I am constantly and inextricably drawn back to them for inspiration. They are incredibly diverse in their evolutionary forms and characteristics; they embody the voluptuous curves of wildfowl, the sleekness of raptors and the delicate elegance of waders.

I wish to remain true to the idiosyncrasies of individual species yet I am aware that simplification and abstraction strengthens and clarifies. Anatomy is resolved into forms which communicate essential physiological and psychological properties. The emphasis is thereby placed on the aesthetic rather than the mere descriptive aspects of sculpture. This, to me at least, is a timeless and universal visual language.

Geoffrey Dashwood

Barn Owl, 1994
Bronze
Edition of 12
37 x 22 x 22 cm



Abigail Fallis b.1968

This strange fish is believed to have come from the Ark of God. Records show that Dagon, a half fish/ half man deity was worshipped as far back as the Philistines and Babylonians, and was visually depicted in painting and sculpture in Nineveh Assyria. Our predecessors worshipped this Hybrid Idol specifically because they depended on making a living from the sea and the Earth. Food for thought indeed.

Abigail Fallis

Dagon, 2017
Bronze
Unique
54 x 61 x 72 cm



Sue Freeborough b.1941

Through the Mitochondrial DNA of women in East Africa, scientists in the 80's discovered that Africa was the seat of all humanity. This mDNA is only passed down to the next generation by the mother and so a line can be traced from people of today, through their mDNA, to a single woman who lived about 150,000 years ago in East Africa, and named by the scientists as Mitochondrial Eve. Mitochondria exist in every cell of the body as a vital energy source and are in all living things. My sculpture is a totem object symbolising the unity of human evolution through the female body and acknowledges our kinship with all living creatures.

Sue Freeborough



Mitochondrial Eve, 2011
Bronze
Edition of 5
166 x 31 x 31 cm





George Fullard 1923 -1973

Constructed from table and carving forks, a kettle, lock plates and spanners salvaged from a house fire, *Phoenix* - one of only three metal assemblages Fullard made - is a rebarbative mythical bird forged from the instruments of domestic zombiedom.

Michael Bird - George Fullard *Sculpture and Survival*



Phoenix, 1960
Metal Assemblage
Unique
27.3 x 38 x 28 cm



George Fullard 1923 -1973

...fragments seem to have flown together instantaneously and temporary, like a figure seen in the clouds. This piece could almost have been achieved as a flat collage, except that its free-standing presence gives it a quality of arrival - of coming from somewhere, rather than having been drawn from diverse sources...

Michael Bird - George Fullard *Sculpture and Survival*



Striding Woman and Child, 1959
Bronze
Edition of 2
80 x 31 x 24 cm



Maggi Hambling b. 1945

While known for her portraits of people and the sea, in recent years Hambling has been preoccupied with mankind's relationship with the planet. The artist confronted the destructive forces of nature in her *Walls of Water* shown at the National Gallery, London (2014/15), CAFA, Beijing (2019) and New York (2022).

She turned in 2016 to the opposite: man's abuse of nature and the disappearing polar ice-caps in her continuing series of *Edge* paintings and, together with Chris Watson, the installation *RELIC* at Snape Maltings (2021).

Hambling's work continues to search for the truth of human identity in a world of uncertainty. In this new series of sculpture in painted bronze, *Relic*, the artist responds to the vulnerability of the natural world in a state of flux.

Marlborough Gallery

Relic I, II and III, 2020
Bronze
Edition of 3
29 x 25 x 29cm
27 x 36 x 27cm
27 x 48 x 31cm



Damien Hirst b.1965

Cast in sterling silver, *The Unknown Penitent* is a kneeling figure wearing the hooded cloak of a Benedictine monk. Its posture is suggestive of ancient votive statuettes placed on altars to pray on behalf of a supplicant in their absence. By removing the figure from a traditional place of worship, Hirst makes public the private moment between penitent and the divine. Indicative of 'Hirst's preference for asking questions over providing answers' [1], the figure is unknown to both the viewer and God.

[1] Michael Bracewell and Amie Corry, *Damien Hirst: The Complete Psalm Paintings* (Other Criteria, London, 2014)



The Unknown Penitent, 2016
Sterling Silver
Edition of 3
32.5 x 27.5 x 19.5 cm
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John Hoskin 1921-1990

Almost all of the sculptures John Hoskin made are unique, mild steel structures constructed using his own very individual and readily recognisable technique; shiny, curved geometric surfaces combined with black and intensely organic welded forms. In texture these can be reminiscent of woven or pleated textile as he described in his own words:

“Welding is like knitting with fire.”

Horse, c. 1957
Welded Steel
Unique
58 x 80 x 17cm



Steve Hurst b.1932

During a tour of the Somme battlefields in the early 60's, whilst researching his family ancestry, Steve Hurst witnessed the corroding artillery fragments, barbed-wire and other metallic detritus strewn in the trenches of Northern France.

Hurst was attracted by the 'domestic' objects unearthed by local farmers and road builders. These finds demonstrated the common humanity of ordinary men caught up in an industrialised war, objects that gave no clue to uniform, race or national identity: a broken aluminium mug, wine bottles, knife and fork or a tin of sardines.

Many years later Hurst cast his Somme Series in bronze as a lasting tribute to the average man.

Aftermath I, 2004
Aftermath II, 2004
Bronze
Unique
9 x 27 x 24 cm
10 x 27 x 25 cm

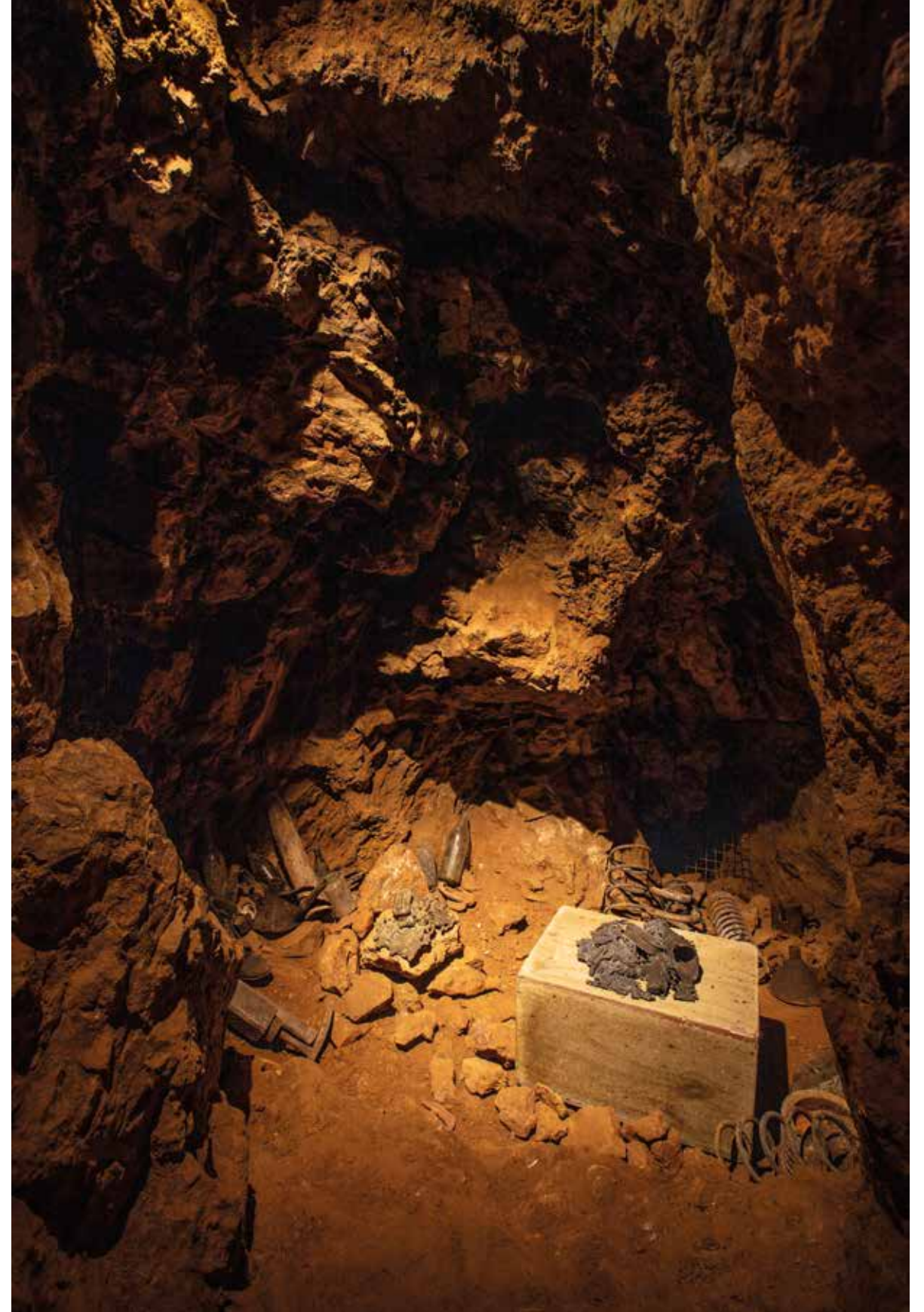


Steve Hurst b.1932

The WW1 battle at the village of La Boisselle is renowned as the worst day ever in British military history. Years later during a historical excavation of the area a farmer exposed a patch of soil with a JCB. Measuring just one metre by two metres it revealed part of the German Front Line of 1st July 1916. The crude archaeology uncovered inspired a series of reliefs formed in wax and combustible debris later cast into bronze.



Ikon, 2004
Debris, 2004
Bronze
Unique
9 x 33 x 27 cm
10 x 40 x 40 cm



Michael Joo b. 1966

'Fall Break' was first commissioned for one of Pangolin London's inaugural exhibitions which brought together over fifty sculptures cast in sterling silver. Beautifully made and detailed 'Fall Break' shows a cast of the artist's son's arm held in a grid of silver bars with the speed at which his son fell and the calories used in the fall inscribed on the cast.



Fall Break, c.2002
Sterling Silver
Edition of 8
50 x 50 x 50 cm

Jonathan Kenworthy b. 1943

On a misty morning in 1977, deep in the Nepalese jungle, film maker Mike Price introduced me to my first tiger footprint. It was on the path right in front of us, and it was large, clear and, of most concern to me, fresh.

In the following weeks we saw a wide variety of spectacular wildlife, often from elephant back, but also on the footpaths where there were always signs of the tigers' nocturnal prowling. But the cat remained elusively out of sight. Then, late one evening, watching from a hide, we saw a massive male tiger stalk and despatch a buffalo calf with one audible bite to the nape of the neck.

The next morning I was able to look closely at the carcass and fully comprehend the brute strength of this powerful predator. The sculpture of the yawning tigress partners one of a male, also stretching and demonstrating the sheer power of the animal as it awakes and readies itself for the night ahead.

Jonathan Kenworthy

Yawning Tigress, 2005
Bronze
Edition of 5
35.5 x 80 x 23 cm



Longdog, 2005
Jon Buck
Bronze
Edition of 5
143 x 173 x 25.5 cm

Yawning Tigress, 2005
Jonathan Kenworthy
Bronze
Edition of 5
35.5 x 80 x 23 cm



Jonathan Kingdon b. 1935

This sculpture developed as a 3D amplification of an earlier drawing by Kingdon. In addition to an accidental evolutionary encryption, both the drawing and bronze imply a peculiar sort of transparency.

What is it that inhabits the spaces in between bone and tissue of a living being? Kingdon was trying to imagine or suggest that invisible amalgam of vitality, personality and behaviour that we call spirit or soul.

A skull can indeed invoke a name or summon the ghost of an ancestor, but true souls and spirits belong to life alone and are only visible in the actions of the living. The artist says he would like to think of his skull as less about death than a reminder to nurture the felicities of life.

Francesco Rovero, Ex Africa exhibition catalogue



Skull, 1963
Bronze
Edition of 10
35 x 50 x 30 cm



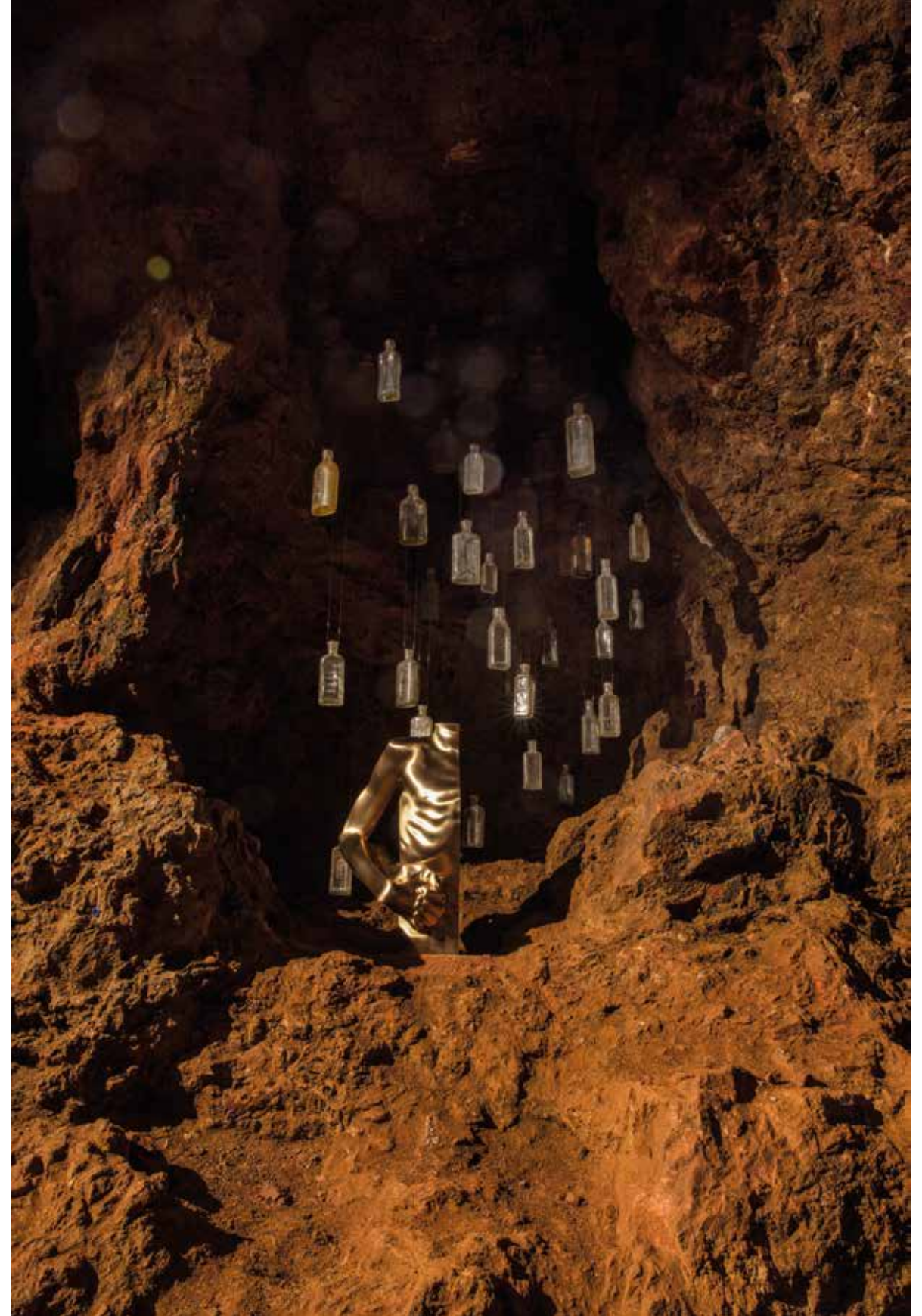
Anders Krisar b. 1973

"That's the good thing about being halved. One understands the sorrow of every person and thing in the world at its own incompleteness. I was whole and did not understand, and moved about deaf and unfeeling amid the pain and sorrow all round us, in places where as a whole person one would least think to find it. It's not only me, Pamela, who am a split being, but you and everyone else too."

Italo Calvino, *The Cloven Viscount*



Half Torso 3, 2021
Bronze
Edition of 3
48.8 x 24.3 x 19.4 cm



Sarah Lucas b.1962

Sarah Lucas's *HARD NUD*, 2012, is part of an ongoing series in which Lucas has cast her soft *NUD* sculptures on a small-scale, in this case in cast iron. Originally rendered as supple, bodily forms of nylon tights lined with fluff, Lucas has remoulded the curvaceous and entangled ligatures as static, impenetrable forms. The sensuous biomorphism of their softer counterparts has been transposed to resemble ossified bodies or fragments of ancient sculpture unearthed over time.

Reformulated in this way, the *NUD*'s original fleshiness is concretised, their indeterminate shapes redolent of the sensuous contours of the British Modernist sculpture of Henry Moore. Likewise, connections with other canonical figures, notably the dolls of Hans Bellmer and Louise Bourgeois, are manifest in the bulbous suggestion of breasts, limbs, orifices, and other corporeal fragments – reflecting Lucas's interest in abjectness and the auto-erotic, that is dually poignant and irreverently humorous. Comparatively, Lucas's *HARD NUD*'s newly embody a sort of audacious permanence that might be associated with classical statues; and yet they maintain the lack of pretentiousness of their earlier counterparts. Elevated on an improvisatory plinth of four upturned bricks, the sculpture's material rendering acts as democratising force, mediating between those found in industrial production and public sculpture.

Sadie Coles HQ

HARD NUD, 2012
Cast Iron with Four Bricks
Edition 5 of 6 + 1 a/p
41 x 17 x 21 cm
© Sarah Lucas, courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London



David Mach b.1956

“Cheetah in a Cave”

Sounds like a sculptural cocktail.

The cheetah itself, Spike, is a classic Coathanger piece for me. You know what it is, it has form and markings and patterns to recognise. Like almost everything else I make it has movement too. Imminent movement. It could be ready to take off, ready to run. The material, and their method of construction, as slow as that is, thousands of coat hangers welded together thousands of times, you would think would cancel out that movement. In fact they seem to have the opposite effect. I like the suggestion they leave, the proposal they make and the evidence left in the manufacture.”

David Mach

Spike, 2011
Coat Hangers
Unique
105 x 228.5 x 85 cm



Susie MacMurray b. 1959

Anaconda is a precursor to Susie MacMurray's 2014 work Medusa. It is constructed from layers of chainmail, handmade from aluminium wire. Anaconda is a playful exploration in turning a hard, rigid material into something sinuous, fluid and flexible. The piece takes the form of a möbius strip and can be draped and displayed in an infinite number of ways.



Anaconda, 2013
Handmade Aluminium Rings
Unique
65 x 55 x 35 cm



Susie MacMurray b. 1959

When I visited Clearwell Caves I was particularly struck by the spot where people have thrown coins into a pool of water. Instead of remaining pristine and glittering they quickly become ossified by the minerals present, and are gradually absorbed back into the rock. This made me think about the ritual practices stretching back across many cultures of tossing coins, and making offerings for good luck, wealth and health.

There is a poetic irony in toiled for wealth extracted from the earth being ultimately reclaimed, fossilised and absorbed back into the rock. Before long it is as if it never existed. It made me think about the length of a human life in relation to geological time. On that scale the glittering mirage of the pursuit of wealth, power over others and permanence could seem a fool's errand.

Susie MacMurray

Mirage, 2022
Silver Plated Copper Wire
Unique
200 x 180 x 100 cm approx.





Anaconda, 2013
Susie MacMurray
Handmade Aluminium Rings
Unique
65 x 55 x 35 cm

Mirage, 2022
Susie MacMurray
Silver Plated Copper Wire
Unique
200 x 180 x 100 cm approx.

Anita Mandl b.1926

Mandl initially trained as a zoologist and her deep knowledge of animal anatomy and behaviour informs her sculptures which are skilfully pared down to convey the very nature of a species.



Otter and Cub, 2018
Bronze
Edition of 5
30 x 67 x 58 cm



Charlotte Mayer b.1929

Mayer's balanced and fragile sculptures are inspired by nature. She is particularly drawn to spiral forms, symbolising movement, growth and the duality of life.



Turning, 2015
Bronze
Edition of 5
100 x 120 x 104 cm



Polly Morgan b. 1980

Social media and the COVID-19 pandemic provide the context for new abstract sculptures that use the highly decorative hides of snakes and the trompe l'oeil designs in nail artistry to comment on the disparity between surface and reality. In an age where our digital selves are experienced by more people than our physical selves, Morgan uses veneers as a metaphor to examine our need to contain, control and conceal. In her juxtapositions of animal forms constrained within man-made structures, the artist highlights the unavoidable creep of nature in our lives and the impossibility of absolute restraint. Corset-like cast polystyrene structures struggle to contain taxidermy snakes that contort and spill from openings, alluding to the distorting effect that social media has on our physical selves.

Polly Morgan

Consider the Risk, 2020
Painted Polyurethane
Unique
83 x 30 x 18 cm



Eilis O'Connell b.1953

This is a series of works that began with gourds that I got at the local market when I lived in Brixton. As a child I collected gourds from the African Missions, a church in Cork that sold African goods to raise money. Later I grew a contorted willow tree that grew so fast I had to prune it. I kept the branches that I liked, they had a randomness and urgency of line that I later combined with the fullness of the gourd.

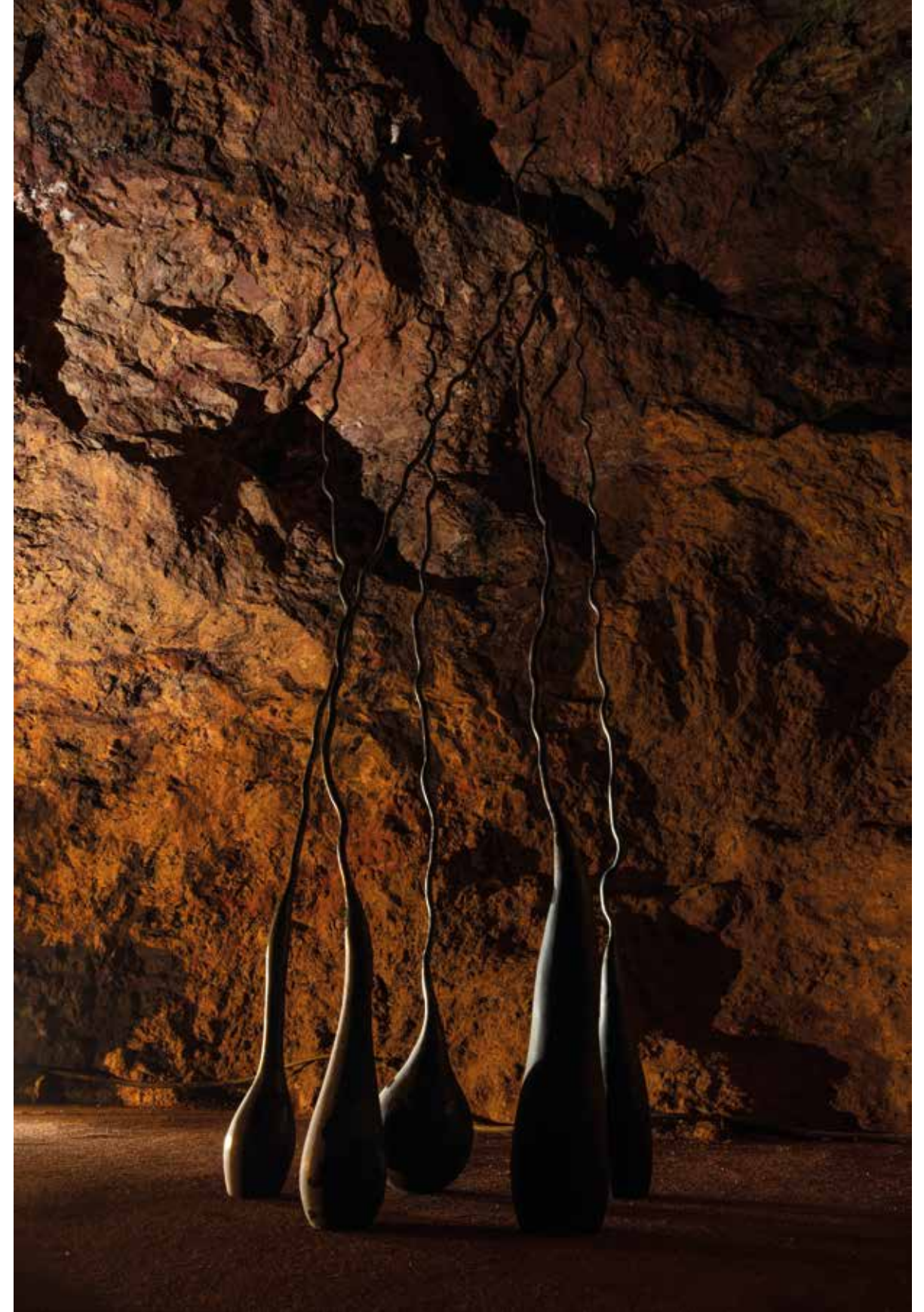
Things that I collect lie around the studio and through constant looking, placing and moving things ideas emerge.

I had them cast into bronze to preserve them, the originals are very delicate.

Permanence for me is really important, a bronze can be buried for thousands of years and when unearthed it will have an even better patina.

Eilis O'Connell

Grown / Made, 2012
Bronze
Edition of 3
186 x 80 x 80 cm approx.



Eilis O'Connell b.1953

I have always been interested in geology and landscape and this seeps into my work. Concretion is carved in white carrara marble and is a direct response to the geometric order inherent in the natural world.

Concretions and coagulates are geological formations found in various locations all over the world, I have seen them in Finland, Crete and California, they are mainly spherical and ovoid in form and attach to each other like bubbles, some even have edges but they all have this wonderful biomorphic three dimensional quality that I am very drawn to especially when I carve into material. Because of their geometric order they have been mistaken for fossils or dinosaur eggs, they vary in size they can be as small as a pebble of ten feet wide. There are some great examples of small Imatra stones from Finland in the Museum of Natural History, London.

Eilis O'Connell

Concretion, 2019
Portuguese Pink Marble
Edition of 3
26 x 28 x 35 cm



Isaac Okwir b. 1983

Australopithecus africanus was an early hominid, living between 3 and 2 million years ago - in the late Pliocene and early Pleistocene. It shared with its older *Australopithecus afarensis* a slender build. Unlike *Australopithecus afarensis* however, it had a larger brain and more humanoid facial features. It is thought to be a direct ancestor of modern humans.

Isaac Okwir



Australopithecus, 2022
Bronze
Unique
38 x 26 x 18 cm



Peter Oloya b. 1973

With a witty sense of humour Oloya makes reference to HIV Aids in 'No Glove No Love'. The graphic use of a gourd of the cucumber family makes explicit the socially responsible message of what is essentially a readymade conceptual sculpture.



No Glove No Love, 2007
Bronze
Edition of 9
75 x 25 x 25 cm

Eduardo Paolozzi 1924 - 2005

Eduardo Paolozzi's maquette for 'London to Paris' uses the structure of a railway goods flat wagon along with a strange mix of forms; the whole assemblage a surreal mechanistic human hybrid, suggestive of the technology that made us what we are.

'The plasters from the 1990's were not often cast in any other material. He was very keen that the medium of plaster should have a higher status as a sculptural medium than it previously enjoyed in the 20th century.'

Robin Spencer



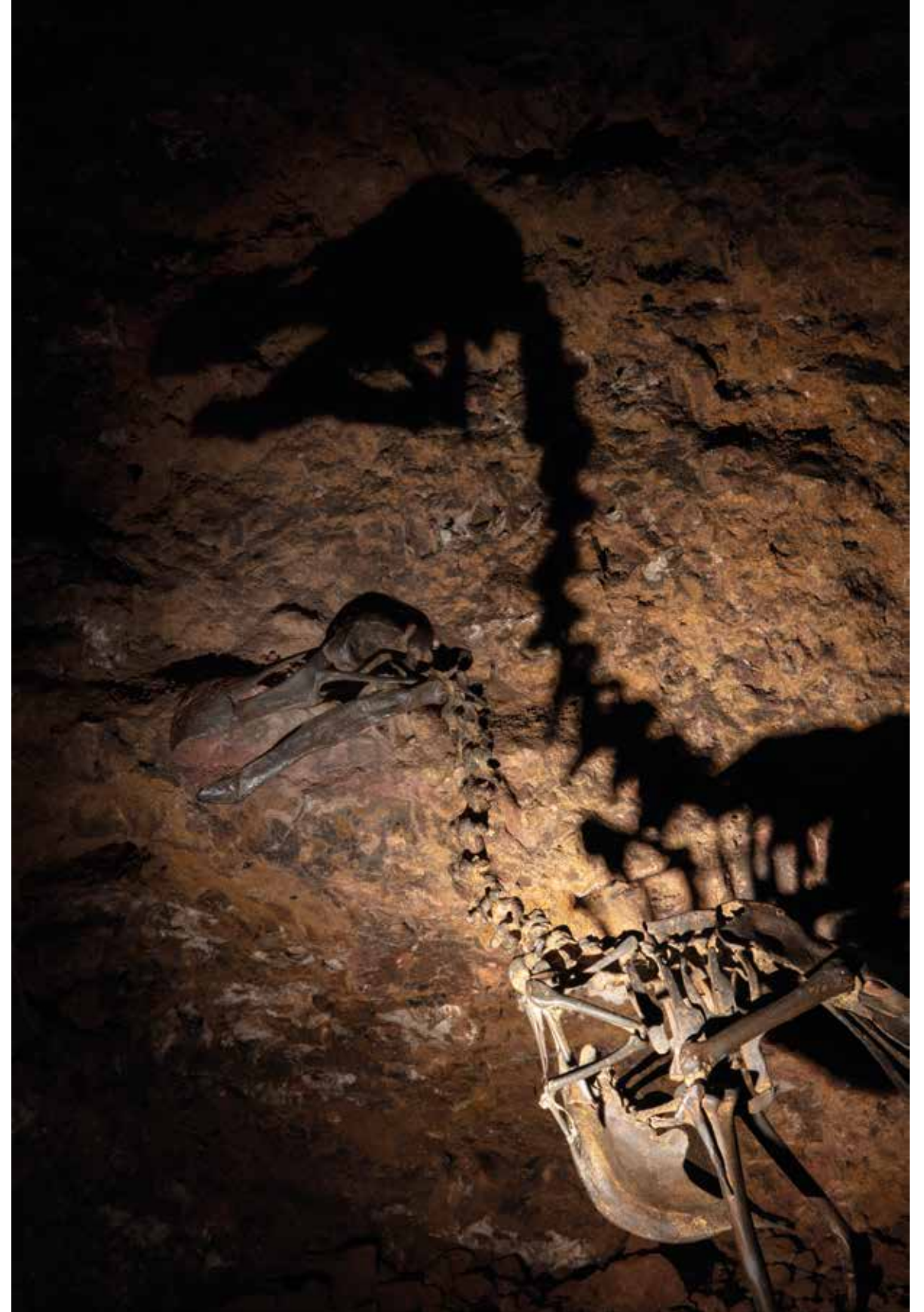
London to Paris, 1999
Plaster
Unique
25 x 76 x 24 cm

Pangolin Designs

In 2006 a complete Dodo skeleton was discovered in a cave in Mauritius, its dry environment provided the ideal conditions and all the bones of a single individual bird were perfectly preserved. Previously discovered Dodo skeletons have all been composites from several individuals, the remains of which had washed down into marshy plains where they survived. In this exhibition the Dodo's skeleton now cast in bronze is a symbol of our species capacity to impact our environment, other life forms and even the climate since our cave dwelling past.



Dodo Skeleton, 2003
Bronze
Edition of 2
71 x 62 x 30.5 cm



Hans – Ulrich Pauly b. 1954

In early 2018 out of the blue Uli Pauly had a stroke and had a scan of his brain which confirmed it. He sent us the scans and our digital team translated this 2D data into a 3D model of his brain.

'This sculpture is my reverence to the limitless possibilities that a human brain can achieve.

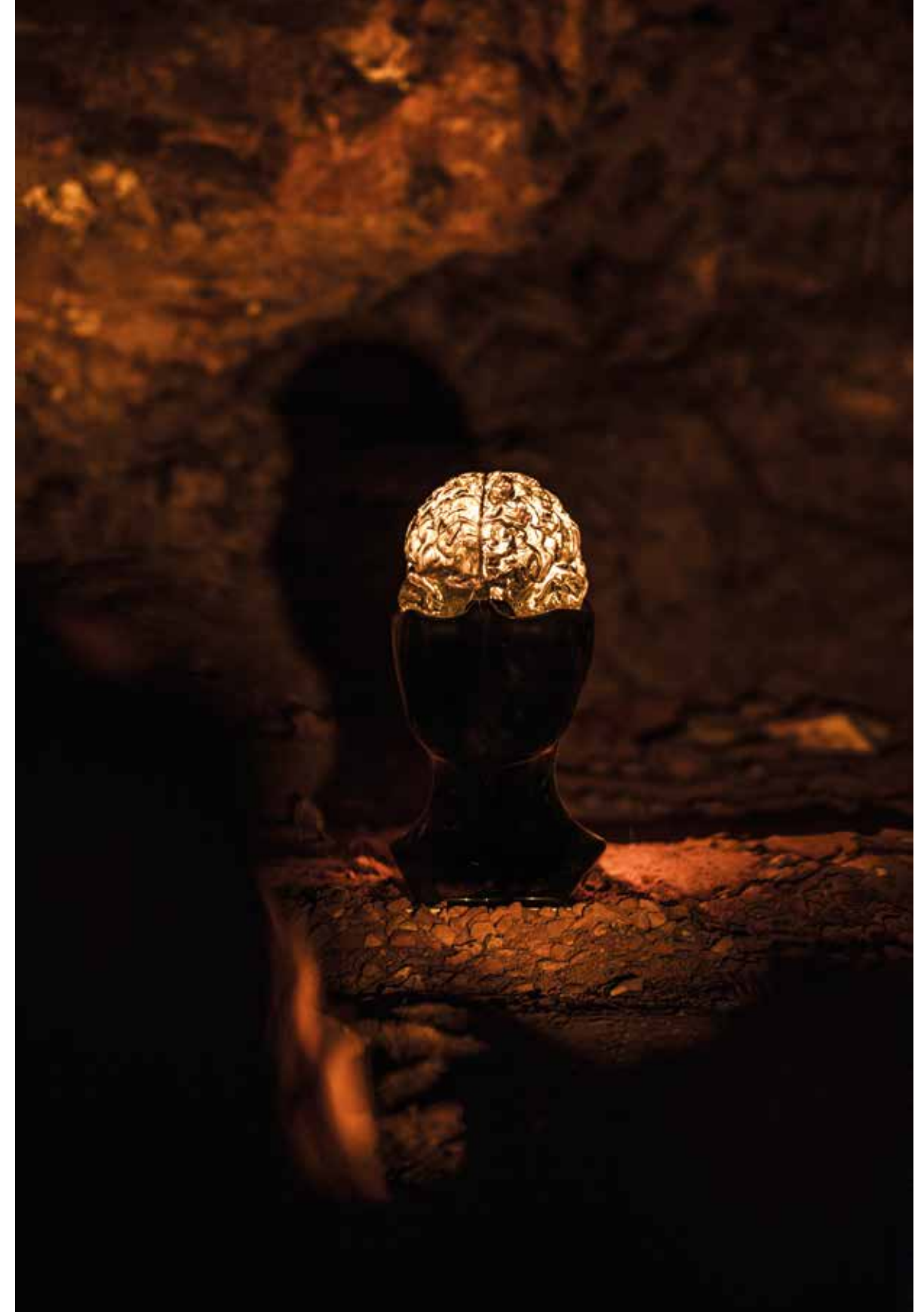
I started looking for some rock crystal raw material – clean and large enough to carve the two brain halves, and black marble to make the face.

Polishing all the twists and turns of the crystal was quite a challenge and took many months. But with the support and excitement of my team members Sissi and Sylvia I was able to complete the work.

When we leave our physical body, we leave behind skulls and bones, but one of the most precious links to life on earth – the brain – is gone very soon.'

Hans - Ulrich Pauly

Brain, 2020
Crystal and Black Marble
Unique
17 x 12.5 x 7.5 cm



Tom Price b. 1973

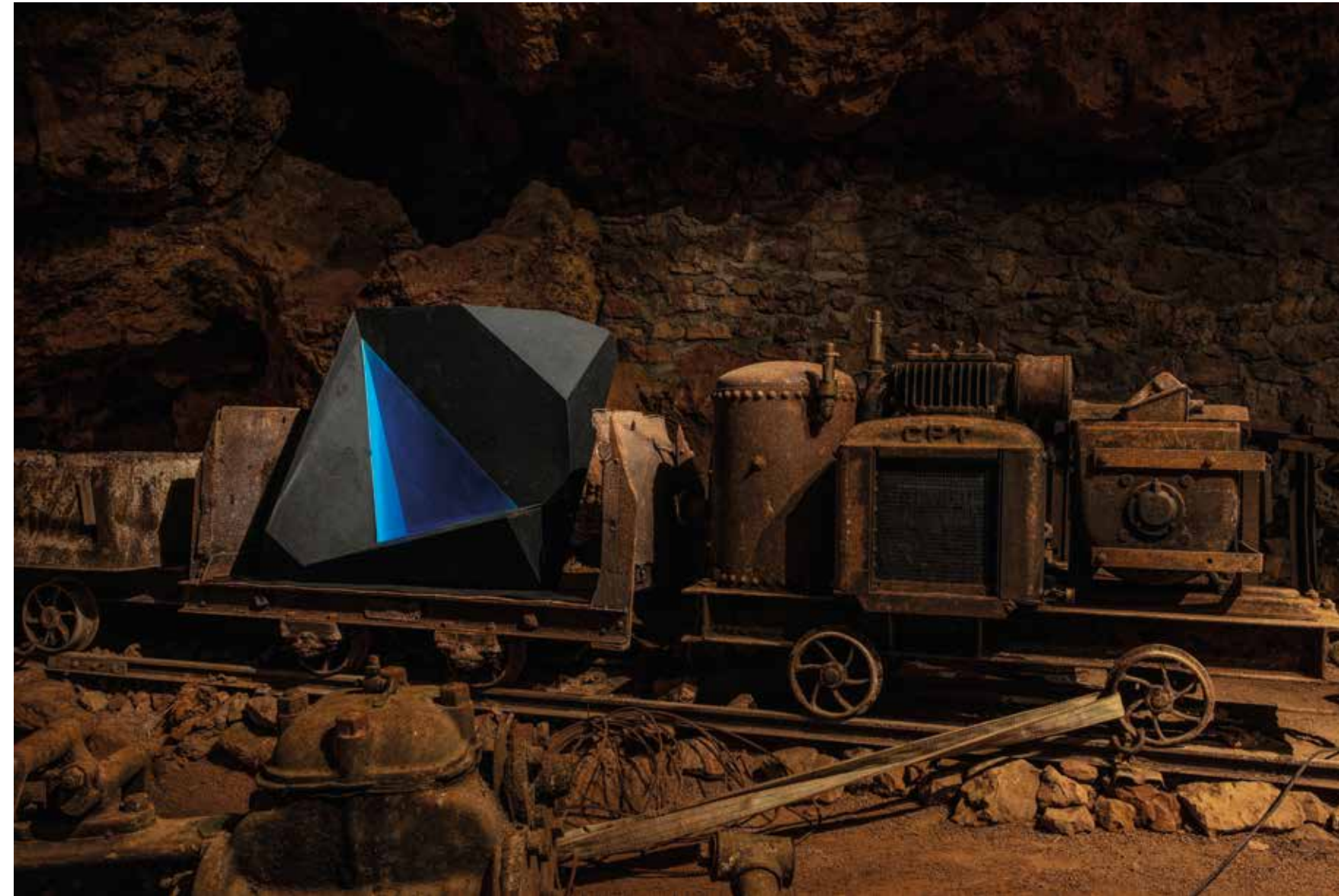
I started working with coal eight years ago when looking for a material from which to make a series of sculptures that focused on the fragility of human existence. Part of my research focused on Pompeii and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. I was struck by a passage I read describing how people from Herculaneum (a town closer in proximity to the volcano) were “instantly carbonised” by the heat of the blast. Whilst horrific to contemplate it made me consider the cyclical nature of carbon and the role it plays in the duality of life. It is the fundamental building block of all organic life and ultimately what we return to.

Coal, one of the purest forms of carbon, is fraught with conflicting attributes. Throughout history it has been at the centre of huge social and political turmoil. It powered the industrial revolution, generating heat, wealth, employment and technology, but it is now mostly viewed as a problematic material for its contribution to carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, which poses a serious threat to the habitability of our planet.

For me it is a seductive and fascinating material. The techniques I have developed to mould and shape it enable me to create a broad diversity of forms and textures. Exhibiting this sculpture, made from coal, in a place where coal mining has played a significant role for millennia helps to contextualise my sculpture and the profound significance of the material from which it is made.

Tom Price

Carbon Void Blue, 2014
Coal, Resin and Jesmonite
Unique
100 x 100 x 100 cm



Peter Randall-Page b.1954

Twixt Line and Form is part of an ongoing preoccupation with the idea of a single line circumnavigating a form.

Of course, there are an infinite number of ways to traverse any given form with a line. And in this particular piece the endless line is deeply incised on each stone creating two interlocking 'territories' of bulging form.

For me, an endless line on a boundless surface is a kind of microcosm, like a little bit of infinity.

Peter Randall-Page



Twixt Line and Form, 2013

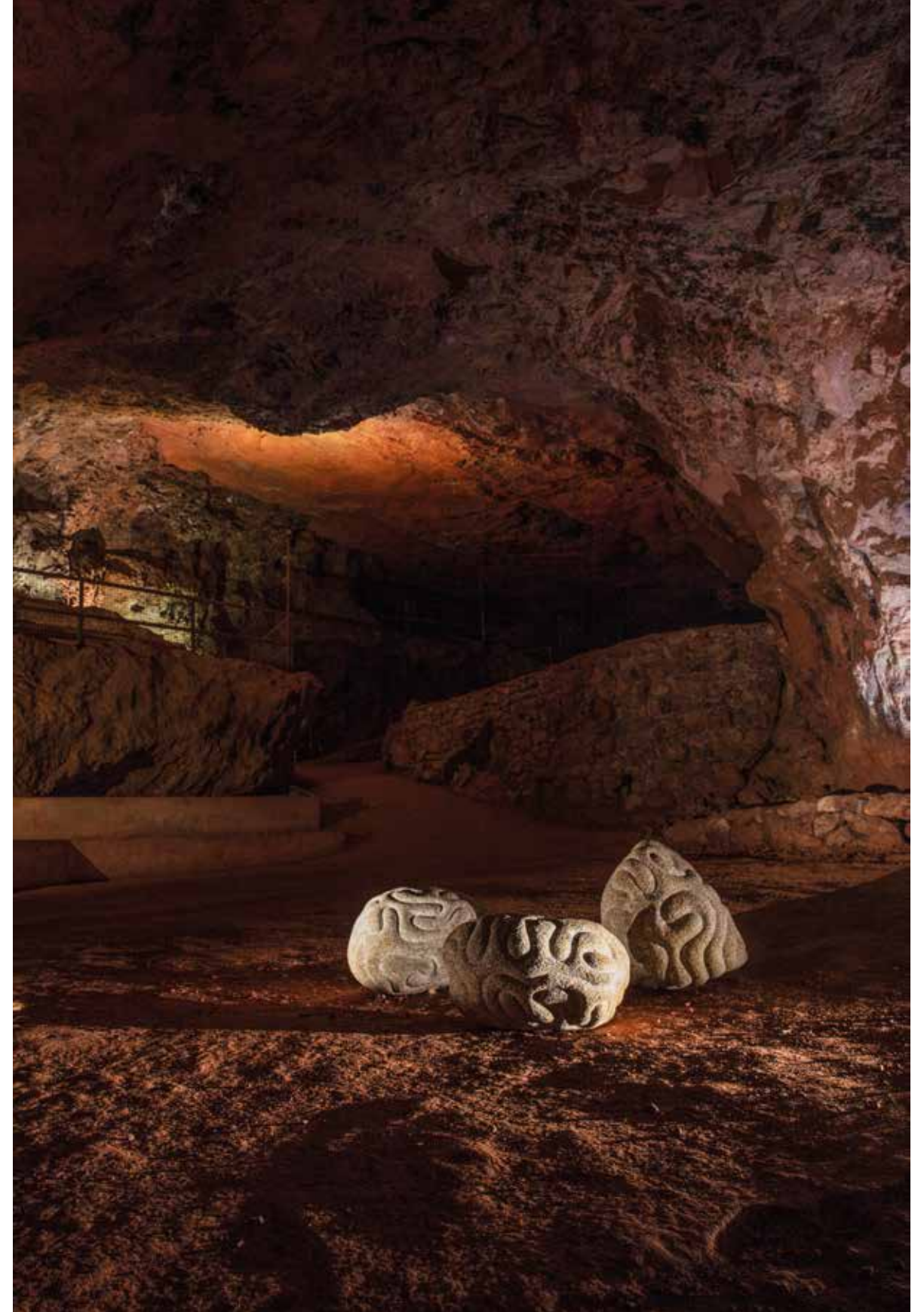
Granite

Unique

41 x 57 x 48 cm

31 x 61 x 57 cm

60 x 54 x 51 cm



STIK b. 1979

'Holding Hands' shows two people moving in opposite directions but unable to let go of each other. The two figures are gender neutral but have subtly opposing movements to show the polarity between them. It is a small version of the permanent 4 metre sculpture in London's Hoxton Square which was installed in 2020.

STIK



Holding Hands, 2022
Bronze
Edition of 3
49 x 17.5 x 17.5 cm



STIK b. 1979

The Ochre Man represents the first art emerging from the cave. The figure is painted in raw, red ochre from deep within the cave, mixed only with water and applied by hand as humans have done since the beginning of time. The body is formed of the natural cracks and contours of the rugged limestone bringing the cave itself to life. The ceiling of the cave is illuminated to show the warm red glow of the natural ochre deposits formed there when the earth was still young.

The artwork was made with the blessing of the family who own the cave and carry the ancient tradition of 'free mining' to produce small batches of red, orange, yellow and purple ochre for artists. No artificial binders or colourants were used, great care was taken to avoid historical markings and no natural habitats were disturbed in the production of this piece.

STIK

The Ochre Man, 2022
Red Ochre on Limestone
Unique
800 x 800 cm



Tavares Strachan b. 1979

The title “Burning spear” is a reference to Jamaican roots reggae artist from the 1970s who is known for his eloquent word play and socially conscious lyrics. Burning spear also harks back to the ancient African fire keepers, whose jobs were to mind the fire for an entire village. If the fire went out then the village was without its light, fuel and soul. This work is an homage to Zumbi dos Palamares, a leader against slavery, a king, a freedom fighter but most importantly a keeper of the fire.

Tavares Strachan



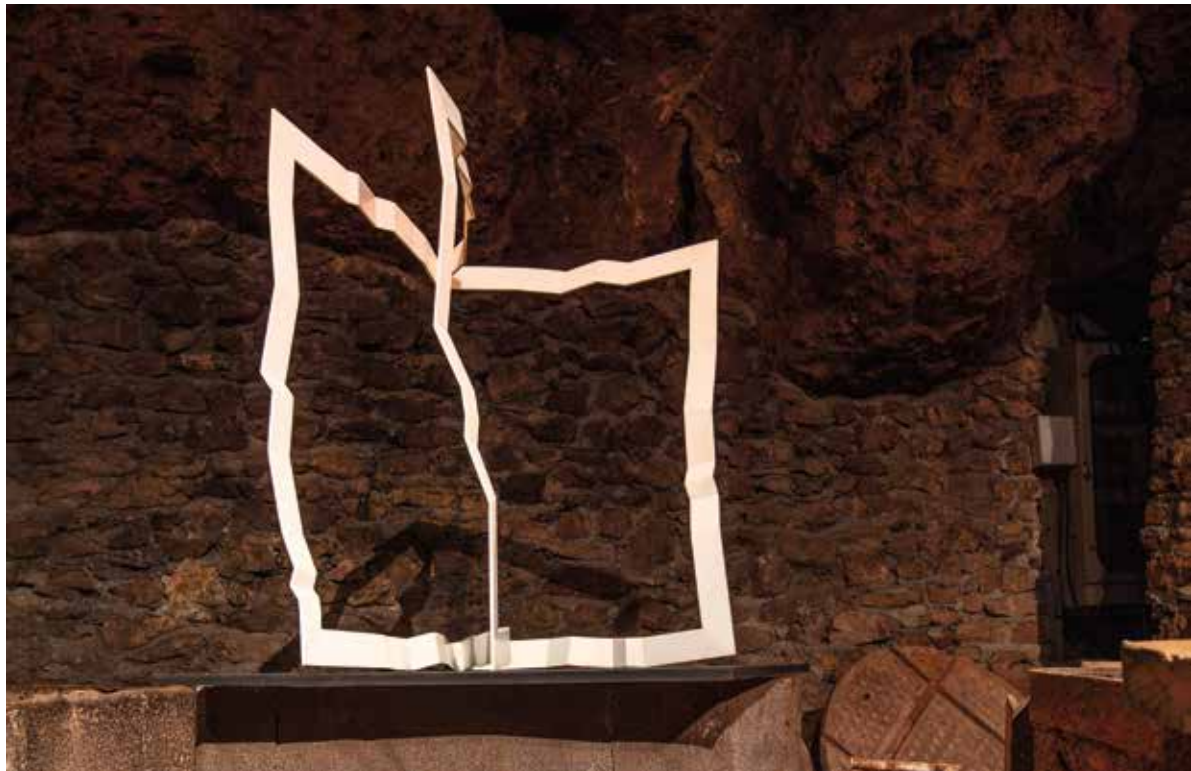
Burning Spear, 2021
Wax
Unique
43 x 26 x 30 cm



Almuth Tebbenhoff b.1949

The Empty Book was my response to a friend giving me the 'The Book of the Book', by Idries Shah. On page ten it reads: 'When you realise the difference between the container and the content then you will have knowledge.' This book was quite a challenge so I reminded myself by making this sculpture. It followed on from the suspended steel sculpture I made for the library of Leicester University.

Almuth Tebbenhoff



Empty Book, 2008
Fabricated Steel and Paint
Unique
120 x 120 x 95 cm



Almuth Tebbenhoff b.1949

The 'Portable Sigh' followed the 7 m tall 'Sunset Stack' I made for a private collection in 2018/9 in London. The irregular crumpled looking lines are a counterpoint to big smooth shiny sculptures that seem to dominate sections of the art world and make me feel for the vulnerable underrepresented parts of ourselves. The shy, a little bit tired maybe, sides of us which have never been celebrated, well, this is for those of us who collapse in a heap after a days' hard work. Imploded but with just enough humour left to know that nothing lasts forever.

Almuth Tebbenhoff

Portable Sigh, 2008
Fabricated Steel and Paint
Unique
120 x 100 x 100 cm



William Tucker b.1935

This study for Tucker's powerful bronze 'Void', shows the artist's unique way of abstracting the figure. Tucker finds balance in forms that aim to fragment and distort, and which present themselves as an organic state, as with the natural human body, rather than as a refined and finished product. The ambiguity of reference to the human figure brings the possibility of a new kind of figuration in sculpture in which the image emerges from both an inner perception of the body and an outer perception of volume and surface.



Void, 2005
Bronze
Edition of 4
68 x 68 x 102 cm



Deborah van der Beek b.1952

'Tyger' is a direct reference to the poem by William Blake. I wanted him to gleam like fire when light is shone onto the golden polished interior of the skull; the slits cut into it giving tiger-stripe patterns as you move around. For me 'Tyger' is about the excitement of observation and creativity.

Deborah van der Beek



Tyger, 2011
Bronze
Edition of 9
31 x 45 x 31 cm



Jason Wason b. 1946

Amphorae have been around since the Neolithic period. Vast numbers were shipped around the Mediterranean carrying olive oil and wine. This wonderful form represents cultural exchange, peace and prosperity. An ancient vessel, which in my mind's eye has an anthropomorphic quality, with it's upright stance and it's vestigial arms as handles.

As such I wanted this bronze amphora to stand, as if, from those early days of our cultural inheritance, to have stood quietly, watching the myriad of changes, and upheavals, and still to remain as an impartial, focussed, and poised witness to the ever unfolding drama of the political, cultural and social events that surround us.

Jason Wason

Silent Witness, 2011
Bronze
Edition of 5
165 x 24 x 24 cm



Silent Witness, 2011
Jason Wason
Bronze
Edition of 5
165 x 24 x 24 cm





AFTERWORD

Clearwell Caves have been part of our family for more than 50 years. The rock, the darkness and the endless comforting drips of water have become our everyday life. The pigment which blankets the rock has penetrated our clothing and skin and even our dogs, like Jon Buck's *Longdog*, are often tinged with a pleasant red oxide hue. The mycelium of tunnels and caverns which weave their way beneath the hillside of Clearwell Meend are constantly in our minds. We are forever trying to think of new ways for people to experience and be inspired by this extraordinary space and, when we visited an exhibition by Gallery Pangolin in 2014, we could not help but imagine the possibilities of a collaboration in the Caves.

Aptly to be held in the centenary year of Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun, we wanted *Back to the Cave* to instil a similar feeling of intrepid exploration, with every artwork presenting a cultural encounter as one ventures through the caves. In Gallery Pangolin, we could not have hoped for better curators to realise the project. From the beginning, Claude, Rungwe and their incredible team displayed the vision and determination needed to undertake a project in such a challenging environment as the caves. It has been a privilege to work with them and their unfailing instinct for selection and placement has given us a renewed appreciation of our space. The exhibition was an act of faith on the part of everyone involved, not least the artists, who have participated with such enthusiasm, contributing to a show which we hope will be the first of many such events in the future.

Clearwell Caves are a small part of a network of caves that cover a combined area of more than 1,000 acres of the Forest of Dean in West Gloucestershire. They comprise 21 miles of passageways which reach down 600 feet before disappearing into inaccessible waters. The Carboniferous oolitic limestone of the cave walls was formed more than 300 million years ago by the teeth, bones and shells of animals who lived and died in the warm shallows of the Paleo-Tethys Sea. Over time, the continents shifted and the area that is now the Forest of Dean turned to desert. Then came tropical rainstorms, far heavier and more prolonged than anything experienced today, which dissolved the iron minerals from the arid surface and the coal measures that had recently formed above the limestone. The acid solution eroded the rock, forming hollows through which a mineral-rich river flowed. As the water snaked through the earth, it embellished the crease limestone with myriad crystalline structures as well as a crust of iron ore up to two metres thick and bright seams of iron oxide. The earliest evidence we have of mining in the area is a collection of tools made from stone and animal bones, dated to around 2,500 BCE. The people who made them were extracting and refining iron oxide ochre using processes almost identical to those still practiced by us today. For 4,500 years, first the ochre, then the iron was extracted from the rock, carefully and skilfully carved out by hand with minimal waste, following the seams until the tunnels were transformed into spacious, undulating caverns, perfectly evoked by the gently concaving hand-form of William Tucker's *Void*. Indeed, the caves are a sculpture in their own right and they have been curated like any other artwork in the exhibition. The pick-marks and shot-holes, tracks and spoil that pepper the caves tell a story of human determination, resourcefulness and ingenuity that cannot fail to be recognised in the creative and intellectual journey behind each of the sculptures that stand amongst them.

Clearwell Caves are made up of several of the many Free Mines of the Forest and, as such, are part of a local custom, the earliest records of which are 13th Century Crown documents demonstrating that the Dean miners were, at this time, already exercising their right to dig for minerals within the Royal Forest. In the 21st Century, this time immemorial tradition is still upheld in the area by those who qualify as Free Miners. However, although we still mine ochre pigments on a very small scale, the cave system has been left largely undisturbed. Clearwell Caves are now a Site of Special Scientific Interest, as they are the largest hibernaculum of lesser horseshoe bats in Europe, as well as housing nationally significant colonies of greater horseshoe, natterer's and brown long-eared bats. Nick Bibby's rendition of the extinct *Lesser Mascarene Fruit Bat* hangs quietly in a dark corner of the exhibition, a poignant reminder of the importance of these fragile habitats, as bat species become increasingly under threat from industrial agricultural practices. This subtle warning is echoed in the penultimate cavern by Maggi Hambling's *Relics*, which suggest polar icecaps melting to become waves, charting the effects of global warming; a sculptural reimagining of her celebrated *Edge* paintings. However, in the context of the caves, the painted bronze peaks of Hambling's sculptures also offer a message of hope, evoking the delicate calcite formations which are, with every drip of water, slowly returning to the caves, like pale scar tissue healing over the wounds of our industrial past.

Clearwell Caves remain a living part of the Forest of Dean. STIK's monumental cave painting, *The Ochre Man*, is a marriage of ancient and modern which stimulates a conversation about the value we place on contemporary interventions in heritage environments, of which there have been a great deal in the caves, from 18th Century initials painted in candle soot, to the ochre handprints of school children on the exit wall. *The Ochre Man* will be a lasting reminder of this landmark exhibition and we hope that he will embrace visitors to Clearwell for millennia to come.

The Wright family

May 2022



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