Mark Wilsher

Unfinished Business

David Evison
Roger Harmer
Peter Hide
Bernard Schottlander
William Tucker
Brian Wall

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Gallery 4
Henry Moore Institute

Developments in the Sixties and Seventies

Barry Martin

Through sculpture we may **see beyond** our bodily and mental limitations. **When** sculpture is physically still it requires us to move around it thus altering our position from the everyday egocentric position which we are accustomed to and where we figure as the centre of things. We **go out** to sculpture in a non-functional sense and we do not need it as we do food, loved ones, shelter and so on. In this respect sculpture as embodied in material and three-dimensional structure is **different** and commands a position perhaps not fully appreciated or understood in this country. It needs all the senses, the body and the mind, and in its higher form an ability to sense the spiritual if it is to be understood. A knowledge of the terms of reference that contemporary sculptors use is required. A sensitivity to put that knowledge to sensible use is **useful** for its full appraisal.

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Mainstream British sculpture has developed **since** the early sixties and few of the new art activities that have swelled the art ranks in recent years have produced anything radical enough to alter this or strong enough to recommend a reconsideration of sculpture's **supposed** proper course. Caro, King, Tucker, Annesley, Bolus, and Scott began this period and are all represented with recent work in this exhibition, except for William Tucker. Younger sculptors such as Evison, Hide, Gili, Smart, Hewlings and Lowe exhibit tendencies in their work that **might** be linked to the overall style inherent in open steel constructed sculpture developed mainly at the St. Martin's School of Art, London and broadly defined by the older generation already mentioned.

Two considerations **relevant** to the St. Martin's situation centred on the **urge** to redefine the purpose and premise of modern sculpture in order to break **with** the pessimistic fifties mode of figurative quasi-surrealism and the **desire** to profit from the American art of Noland, Louis, Smith, and Stella. In the main it was a commitment to **non-referential** abstraction. This has been modulated by a number of changes in the work habits and consequently the role in which the young sculptor sees himself. The sculptor's turn-table has become the factory floor's overhead crane. He accepts his role conscious of the neglect and lack of understanding shown generally towards his art. The optimism once shown in the sixties has now gone sour and the artist reflects this.

Changes in the twin areas of material and constructional concern since the early sixties have **generally** been accompanied by a different approach by the artist to the role of sculptor. The craft-based idea of pursuing one

'line' for life is no longer **really** credible. Ideas can now be made into form quickly and the artist's ambitions fulfilled without the long drawn out apprenticeship closely associated with sculpture-making in the past.

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Very recent debate about the **state** of sculpture as object and 'thing' divorced from characteristics traceable to other 'things' has led most St. Martin's sculptors to increase the emphasis on the side of the material 'stuff' constituting the sculpture. Thus the **supposed** truth of its statehood as sculpture is measured by the degree of reality obtained through the reading of its material and corporeal presence. This has affected considerations in construction and the formal 'look' of much recent sculpture. Discreet elements now play a **significant** role. Informality has resulted in a swing towards loose assemblages.

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The public's awareness of abstract sculpture was **precipitated** by The New Generation: 1965 exhibition of British sculpture held at the Whitechapel Gallery, London. It **illustrated** a new idea of sculpture that was for the eye and mind alone and which seemed to dispense with notions attached for generations to the sense of touch. This was a **significant** aspect in the appreciation of Moore's and Hepworth's carvings and the modelled figures of Brown, Armitage, Butler, Frink, Meadows and McWilliam.

However, the sense of touch taken further also implies the concept of the hand and its holding ability. The New Generation sculptors had **almost** dispensed not only with tactility but also with the holding and grasping idea which had **informed** sculpture up until cubism. A concept of totality was behind the major sculptural ideas until then and was **bound** in the artists' and public's minds to the empirical experience of being able to encircle the sculpture with the hands, arms and body. Sculpture was **mostly** thought of as being physically contained and the definition of containment was closely linked to the physical properties of the human figure. This was complemented by the literary content or literal resemblances **of** the sculpture, be it a figure from mythology, a recent or past national hero, king or queen. **The** figure was made to read as a whole and only with the advent of the fractured psyche or interest in the body in motion did a reappraisal of this proposition begin.

One significance of Anthony Caro's break with tradition is with his new order of totality for sculpture which **tends not to** allow feelings of empathy to function in the old way. Neither do they simulate in us the physical act of enclosing the object as we once could. The cubist constructions of Picasso and reliefs produced just before the First World War are **possibly** exceptions to this, although these are not truly three-dimensional.

Recently constructed steel sculpture has come more to the fore, replacing the New Generation's fibreglass, plastic and 'light-looking' works. (An empirical approach to sculpture making accompanies this and has largely replaced the 'a priori' code of conduct prevalent in the early to middle sixties.) These were mostly painted or 'covered'. In Annesley's and Bolus's works colour was **often** used to assert the different functions that parts played in the total structure. In King's *And the Birds Began to Sing*, 1964, the orange interior works to distinguish itself from the matt black exterior. The ebullient colours combine with the conic form to establish a strong symbolic unity. Caro (not in the New Generation show) **mostly uses** colour to unify the complex, disparate shapes as in *Red Splash*, 1966. Painted red, the colour **is meant to be** an emotive appeal and provides a particular character and atmosphere to the work. Since then applied colour has been practically abandoned except on occasions when a neutral colour might be used to unify the work. Since the early seventies works by Caro such as *Straight Left*, 1972, steel; King's *Untitled*, 1973, made from steel, aluminium and wood and shaped like a mini-amphitheatre; and Tucker's *Shuttler* series made from semi-rough stained wood have shown the sculptor's desire to reassert material values through which objecthood could be strengthened. This was **in contrast to** the increasing attacks made upon it by conceptual and political artists and writers. It is also linked to the interest in process, discussed below.

The use of the 'natural' colour of the material as part and parcel of the final state of the sculpture has centred mainly on the use of steel. Other materials now play an accompanying role as in the slate and stone (looking) works of King, and the granite, wood and metal pieces of Hewlings.

Anthony Caro's work has been **an** influence on many younger sculptors' works and some of these influential aspects should be outlined here. Caro, like the American sculptor David Smith before him, uses prefabricated steel units. These 'found forms' remain recognised within the sculpture although their role as compositional agents becomes **a** dominant feature. Accordingly it was acknowledged that Caro's art **often** laid bare the 'skeleton' of sculpture and of **some** importance to the late sixties was the fact that it was tuned to showing process in an elemental way. It was process with completeness discovered in **few strokes**. It could be said that Caro's special mission was to uncover the syntax, the formal and the unconventional rules that **can** act in an internal and dynamic way to hold up form and shape. His most recent sculptures such as *Dominion Day Flats* 1974, or *Curtain Road* 1974, although larger than his earliest piece of *Twenty-four Hours* 1960, share similar characteristics in their use of tilted planar zones shielding or cutting into further shaped planes; the frontal elevation is clearly demarcated, and they articulate space without displacing it, unlike most earlier sculpture which occupies space. Moore's work particularly has a **concentration** on volume generated through its

mass and density. By declaring through sculptural means and in a natural manner the **characteristics** peculiar to steel, Caro has **suggested** a new faith in the same way that Rodin did in the final decades of the last century.

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The conventional and time-honoured notion of finishing the sculpture, which involved pedestal thinking, has been **largely** suppressed in favour of sculpture which emphasizes process both in the making of the work and in its viewing. If process, which amounts to the decisions, actions and material correspondences undertaken during the construction of the sculpture could be left visible in the final statement, then development to the next sculpture was **quite probably** secured. The history of its becoming could be made visible and thought about. This meant that past actions could be re-appraised in the light of their present circumstances and **might constitute** a criticism and re-evaluation of the conventional sculptural practice in which the making process is considered as the means to an end. The final state of the sculpture represented in this latter sense is a cancelling out 'from sight' of the earlier decisions that the sculptor might have made while working on it. If we observe **many** cast **sculptures** or modelled **figures** we are hard pressed to perceive the changes of form, structure or shape the sculpture might have gone through. The final surface of the modelled form was in fact a 'mask' to hide the sculptor's making practice and conform to what the public acknowledged or had come to accept as the 'right' look for the art of sculpture and more pertinently figurative sculpture. Each new epoch in the arts since the turn of the century, in contradistinction to much that had gone before has been formed by redefining the 'look' of art and consequently society's ways of seeing it. This could be seen to be dependent upon **where** the sculptor 'placed' his surface.

Process has been variously interpreted. Flanagan and Long (not in this exhibition) allow natural processes to operate on their statements over a period of time. Plackman, Neagu, Naylor and Kenny build into their works a series of events which relate to personal and past experiences while other parts of the sculpture **sometimes** allude to philosophical or transient moments often brought about during the course of constructing the work. Process has come to mean for others, not in this show, exposure of anything recorded in time. It was a form of process art which recently caused a fuss at the Institute of Contemporary Art. Performance art, T.V. art and non-object type art has become as common a spectacle in this country as the academic sculptured bust was in the nineteenth century. Some critics have tried to legitimize these new activities by arguing that they constitute an extension of the boundary lines which limit art and argue that artists who use real space and time are the proper extension to object sculpture. Further validation is used to support anti-object thinking especially where this is politically motivated against the right. The object is equated mainly with the middle classes since it can be bought and sold.

This type of thinking, outlined in the briefest way here has had some effect in the institutionalised sections of the art world and in the art colleges. One example might serve to illuminate my point. In the recent Arte Inglese Oggi 1960–76 exhibition in Milan, organised mainly by the British Council, there were as many film-makers (defined as The Artists Film/Avant Garde Film) as sculptors – twelve for each. A further nine representatives occupied a section entitled 'Alternative Developments' – artists who write, take photographs or work in the conceptual area, while three further slots were given over to 'Performance Art'. In all this represented twenty-four of the sixty-four slots given to British art.

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Most works in this present show challenge or occupy space directly. Through material means they display a **certain** degree of honesty in this. Here a **significant** difference exists between the conceptual and sculptural positions. Kant in his infinite wisdom helps us by saying that 'Space is no discursive, or as we say, general conception (*Begriff*) of the relations of things but a pure intuition (*Anschauung*)', further elucidating for us: 'The conception (*Begriff*) is opposed to the intuition, for it is a universal representation, or a representation of that which is common to a plurality of object'. The English sculptor reserves the need to take action in time to particularize the object and possibly change it from its original conception during the making process. It is the anonymity implicit in conceptual art that is in **opposition** to the self-identifying process employed by English object makers. The process is identifiable in the end object for the latter. Minimalist sculpture with its emphasis on the concept had little effect here for this very reason.

Most conceptual art, excepting for performance (although this could be argued to the contrary) and minimalist art, prescribes exactly what form the work will take. As LeWitt, a minimalist, worriedly stated, '. . . in other forms of art the concept may be changed in the process of execution', which is exactly what is preferred by most English sculptors. Although this is not the place to discuss in depth the implications of these ideas one further point of difference **might** be mentioned. Most conceptual art is concerned with space in a literal or literary way. Photographic means are used, for example, to record a charted walk in the countryside; a succession of events are timed, both human or otherwise; a spot is photographed and the image is returned to occupy the actual space. Distortion and the illusion of enclosed space using mirrors and slide projectors are devices recently used. These mimic the original space and through a distortion incurred by the limitations of the medium **frequently** corrupt the former concept.

During the past ten years western society has seen the slowing down and near collapse of the technological explosion that brought it 'live' but very dead pictures of the surfaces of the Moon, Mars and Venus. It saw

McLuhan's 'the medium is the message' outdated as the extrovert sixties gave way to the largely introverted and self-questioning seventies. It also saw in this country a number of large and well-represented sculpture exhibitions such as the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation City Sculpture Project, 1972; British Sculptors 72 at the Royal Academy; the Arts Council's The Condition of Sculpture exhibition in 1975 and the figurative Holland Park show. In America there was Anthony Caro's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1975. The first of these projects intended to publicise recent developments in abstract sculpture by offering them to city councils through a subsidised scheme, openly revealed the immense chasm existing between the public's understanding of contemporary sculpture and the sculptor's real intentions.

This has been partly precipitated by a hostile press steeped in a literary tradition and not **entirely** conversant with the language of sculpture. **One** result of the ascendancy of the written word over the visual arts has been that it is now possible to substitute the one for the other, and receptive critics eager to support non-object type art have shown tremendous enthusiasm in supporting this very distortion, irrespective of quality.

Since much sculpture has been **almost** stripped of any literary or figurative connotations the artist has come more and more to rely on the critic to explain his sculpture to the public. Most contemporary British critics have failed the artist in this respect and are neither willing to create nor **particularly** capable of encouraging creative debate about the subject. It is not surprising that many British artists envy their American counterparts whose activities are monitored, supported and willed to challenging proportions by informed, enthusiastic and sometimes visionary criticism, even if the enthusiasm may be for somebody else's work.

The generous Alistair McAlpine gift of sculpture to the Tate Gallery and shown there in 1971 contained many of the New Generation sculptures seen in 1965 together with other more recent works by the same artists. The McAlpine gift **poses** the **question**: what happens to contemporary sculpture once it has been made? A number of large works in the present show have been lying idle for a number of years.

In claiming individuality sculpture lost its **guaranteed** place in architecture and the urban planner's grand designs. It has remained **mostly** homeless since Rodin pronounced it free, give or take a few public sculptures erected recently. The Victorian age emphasised moral and national duty and its regiments of public sculpture were devoted to educating the public on these points; by contrast we are almost totally lacking in what has been called 'street furniture'. Even the idea that sculpture can act for architecture 'as a distraction from a particularly awkward piece of detailing' has **pretty much** lost its currency. Yet this need not **always** be the case. In Holland and America modern sculpture plays an important part in the everyday look

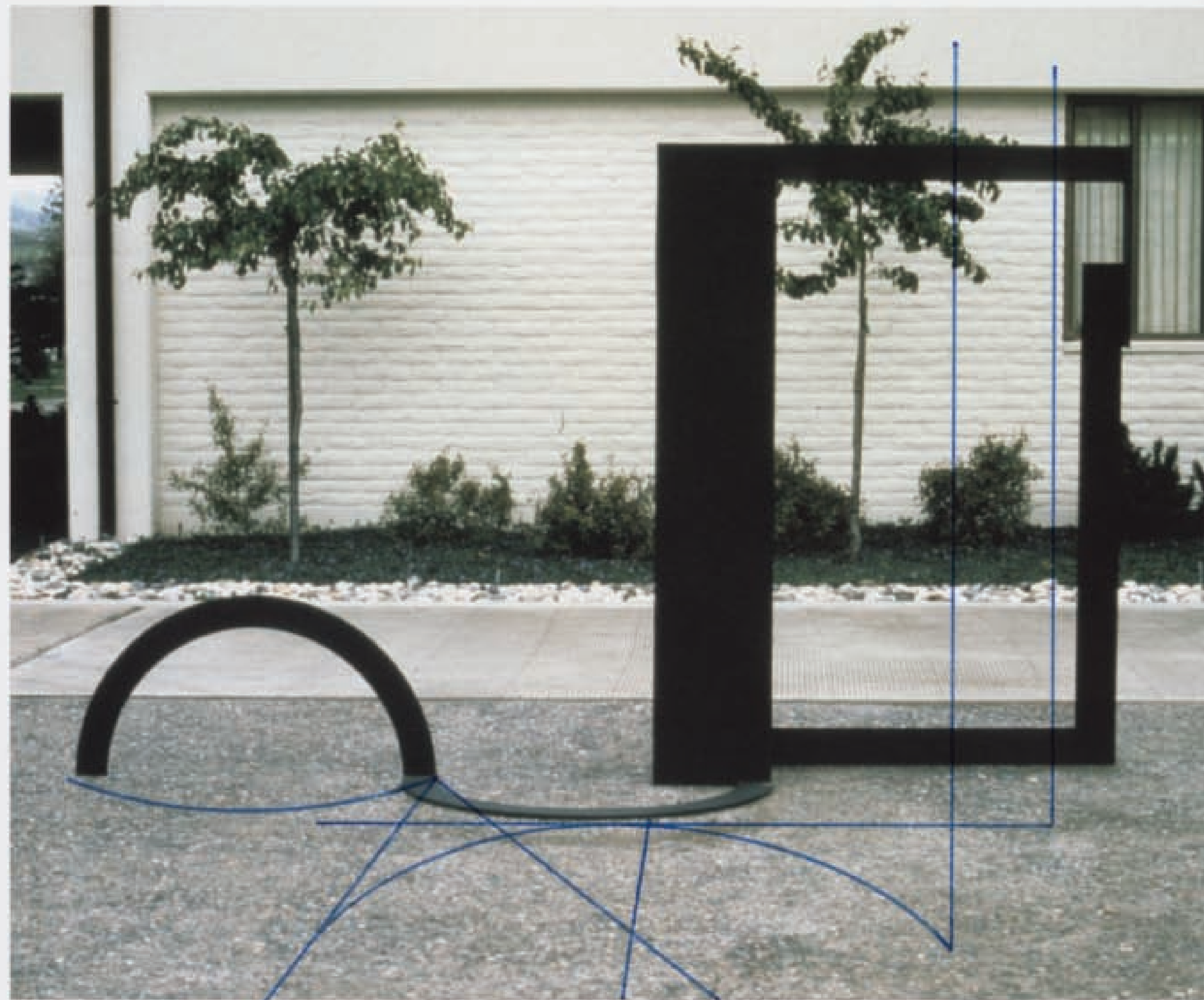
of the street and has become an integral aspect of national thinking about planning. Some recent sculptures have become more architectural in the way they ‘defend’ the space they inhabit and the human scale they exhibit; Tucker’s *Porte* series is an example.

During the last ten years few sculptures have used shape as powerfully and disturbingly as King’s *Ghengis Khan*. Little has been seen to match the formal inventiveness and degree of metaphysical lyricism in Caro’s *Early One Morning* or the compact logical development of form to space in Tucker’s *Anabasis I*. Yet having admitted this I am suggesting that the intention of sculpture has changed. We have yet to see the great spiritual abstract sculpture and this may be the test of open and constructed steel works.

One problem for the sculptor of the eighties will continue to be related to his need to explore space by filling it and by competing with it. By risking himself in vying with it the sculptor seeks an identity.

Some might dispute the proportion of political or social comment contained within these sculptures. With many it would at the most be implied not overt. Yet in the face of much recent intrusive critical and political interference these artists continue the adventure of trying to bring into existence, in a contemporary way, their answers to the metaphysical questions of identity that can be raised by deep space. ‘Who am I?’ ‘How can I relate to the universe?’ ‘In what way might art be part of an evolving consciousness?’

March 1977

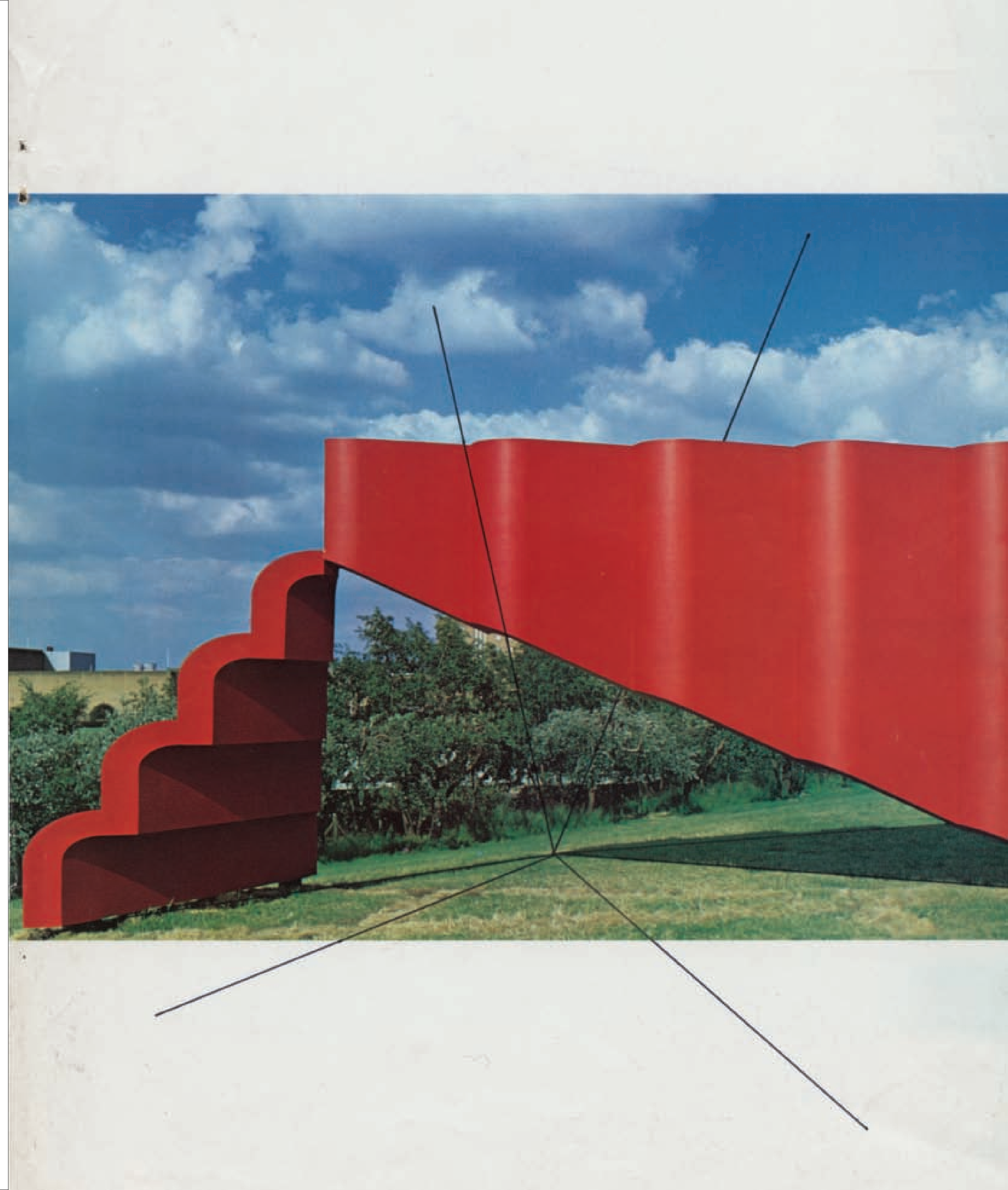


above:
Cal IV 1969

Painted steel
91.4 x 304.8 x 243.8 cm
36 x 120 x 96 in

opposite page:
Cal III 1969

Painted steel
182.9 x 152.4 x 121.9 cm
72 x 60 x 48 in



Angel 1974

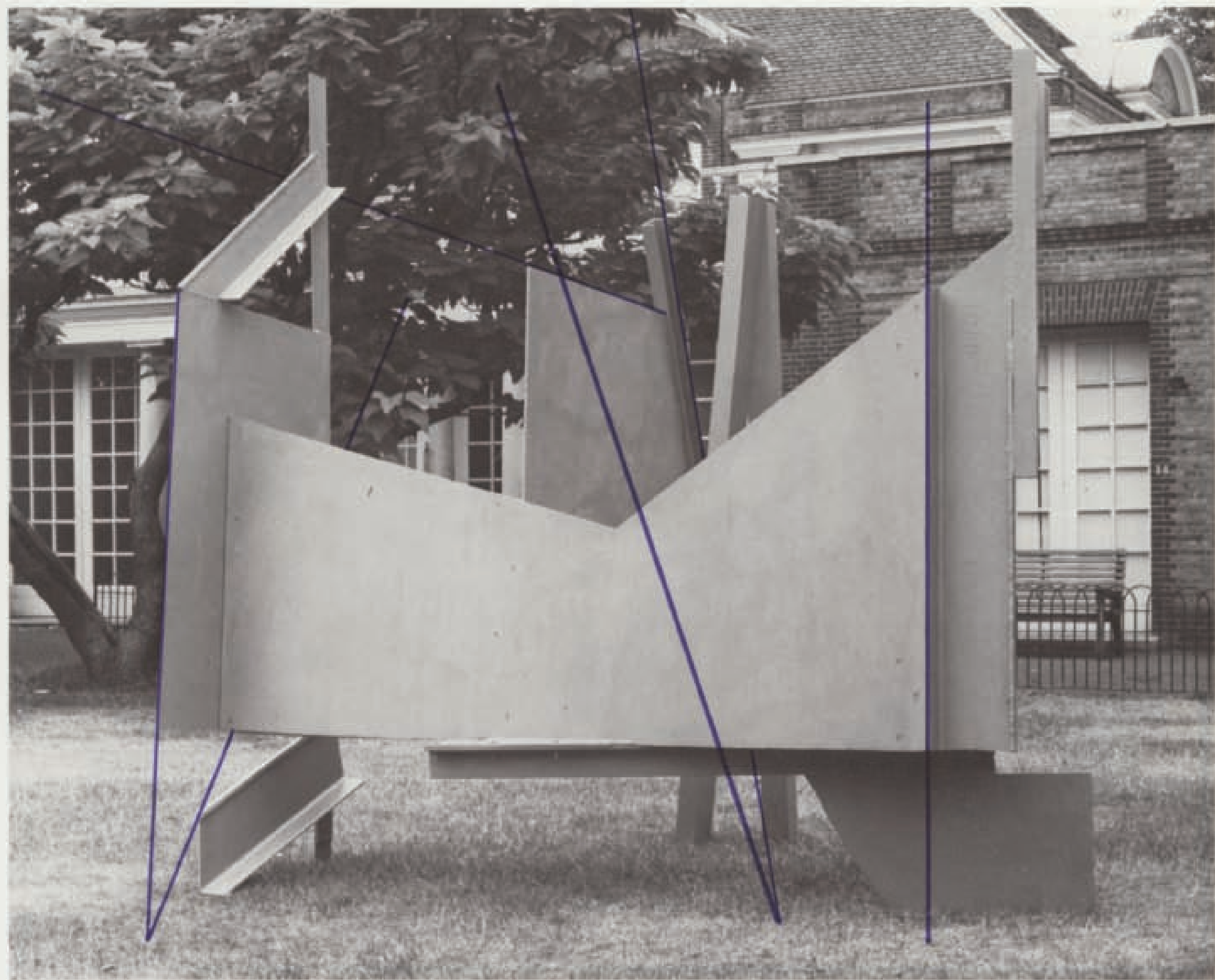
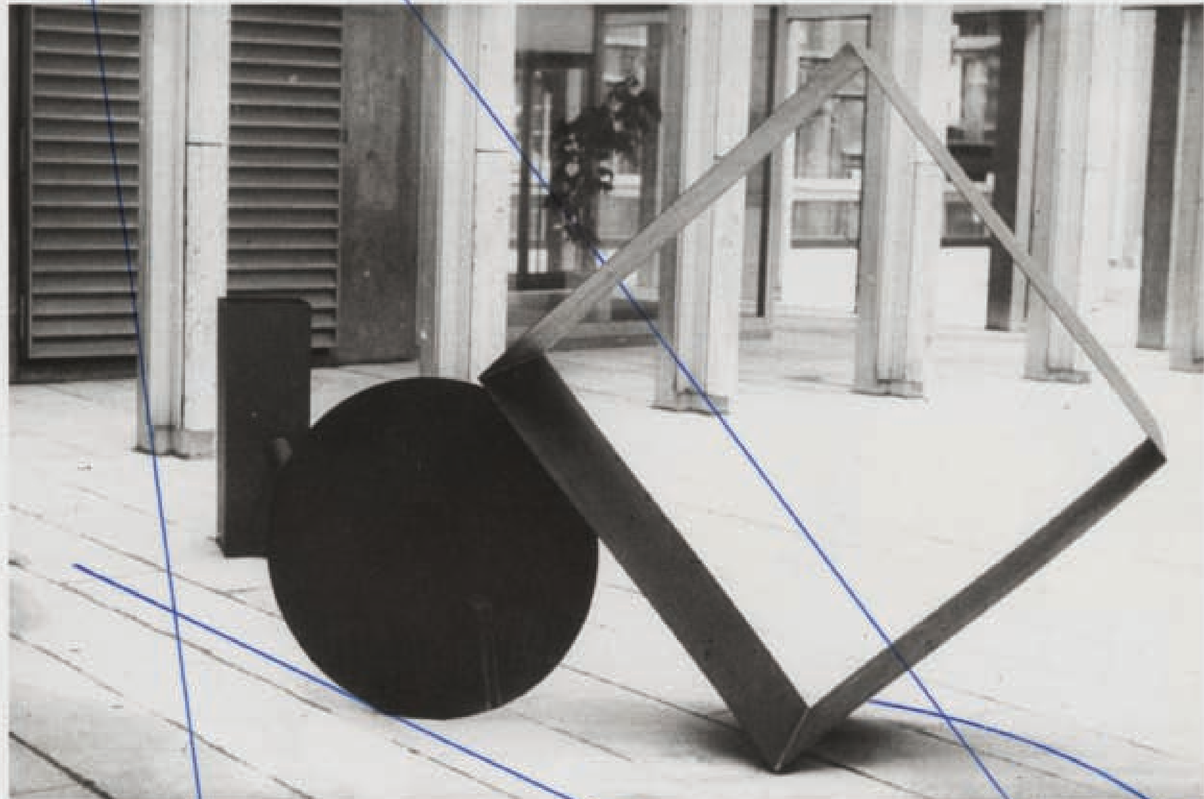
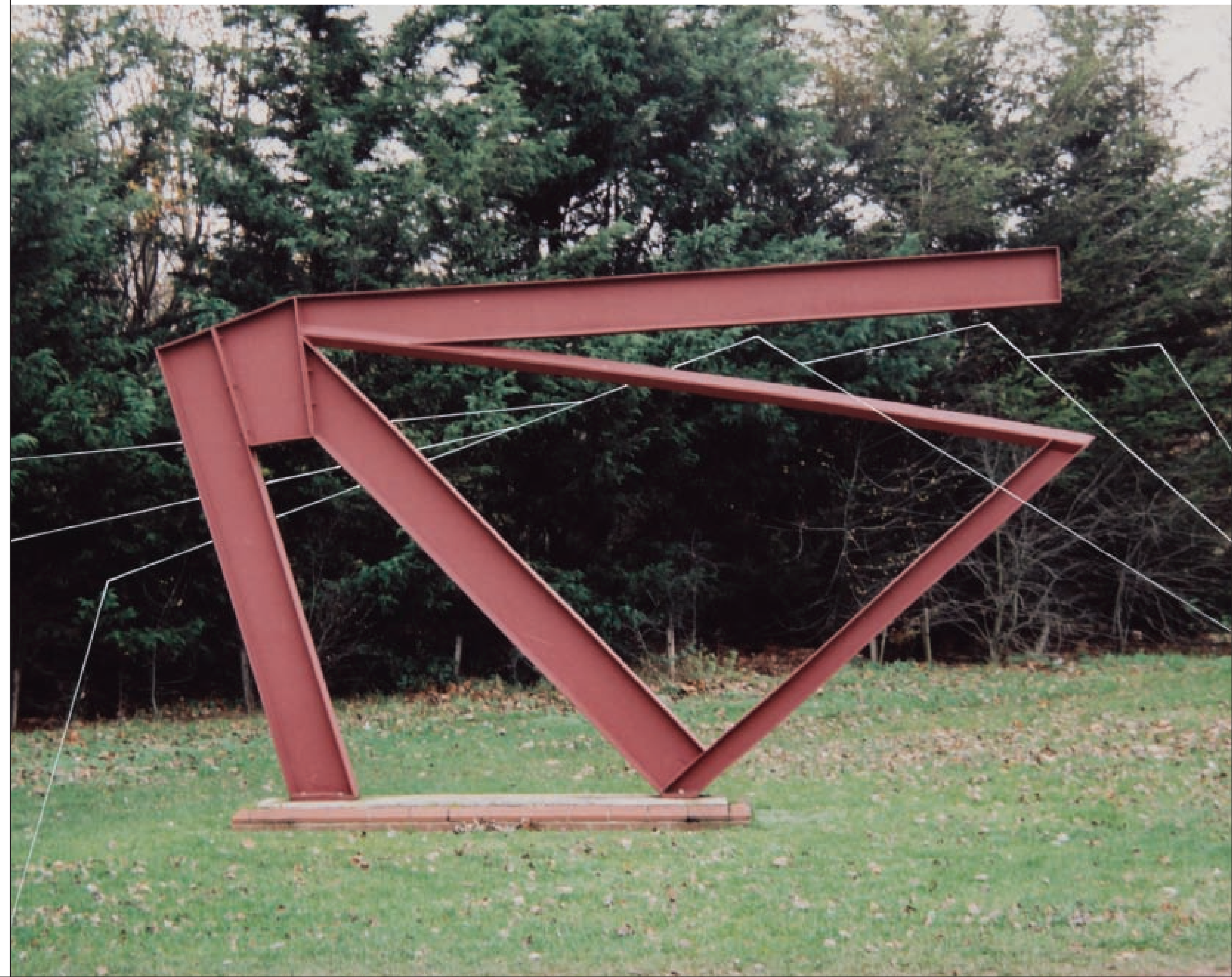


Photo: Nicholas MacKenzie

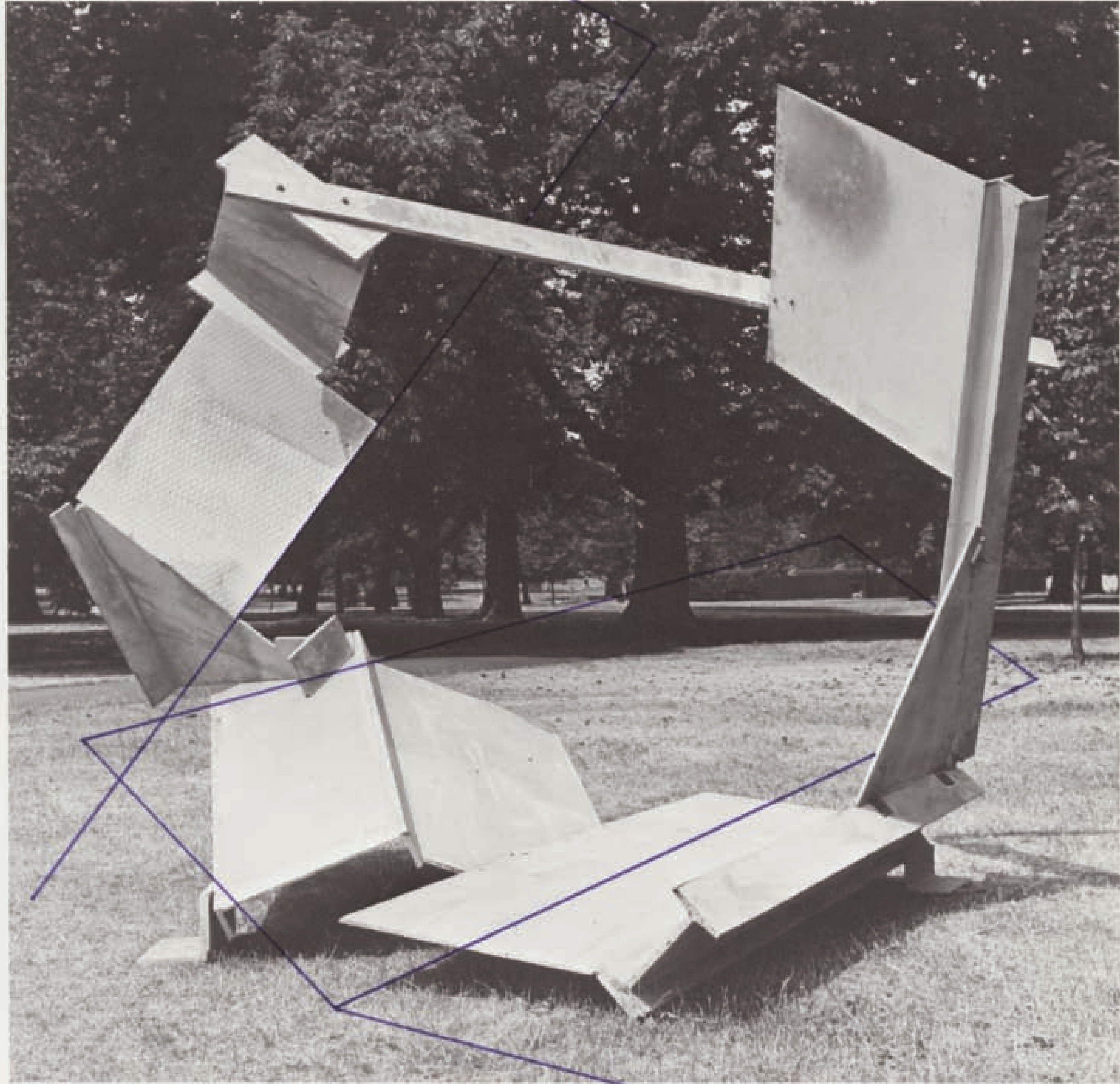
Exhibit **15**
BALTIC 1976
steel painted blue and green
274 × 269 × 183 cms

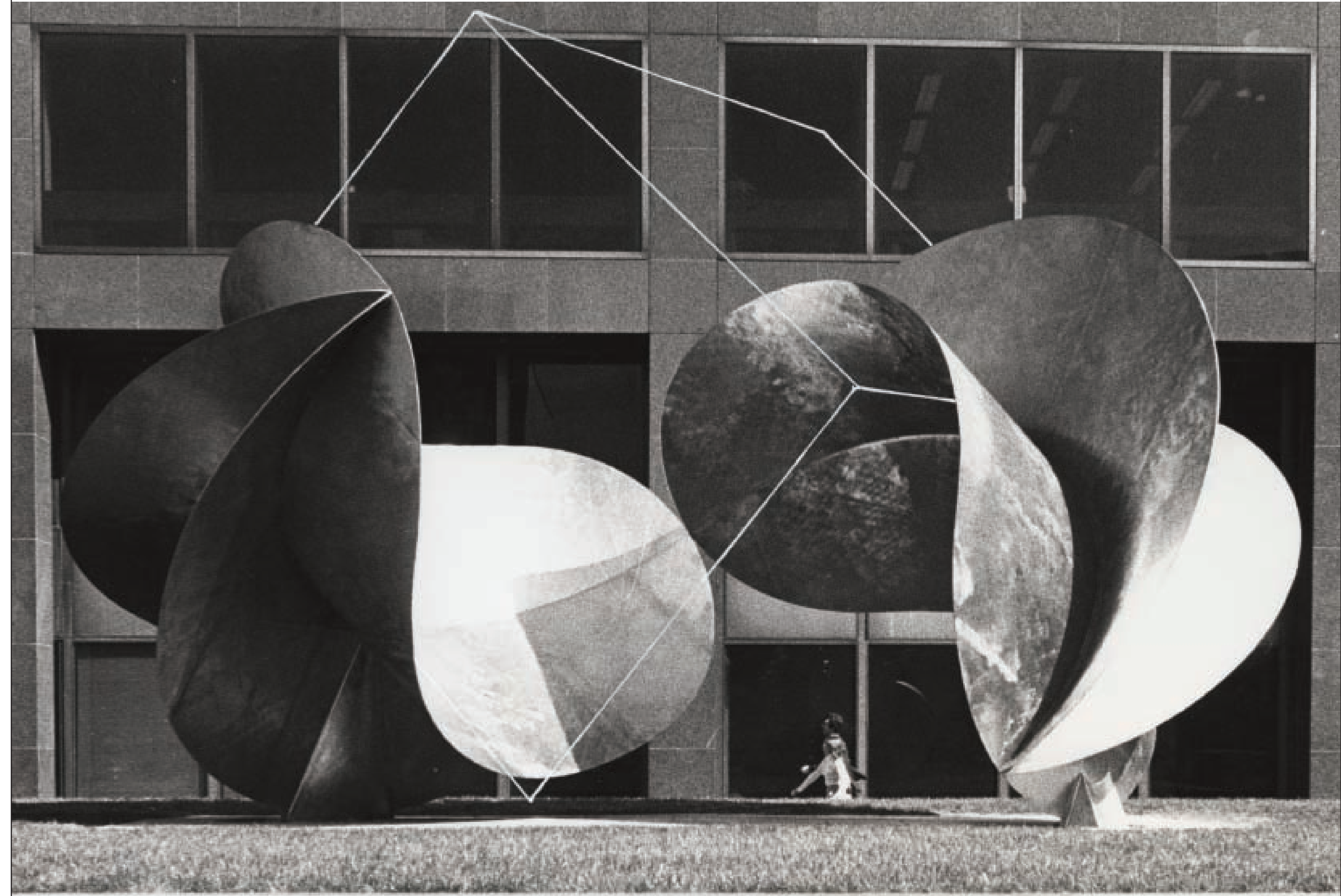


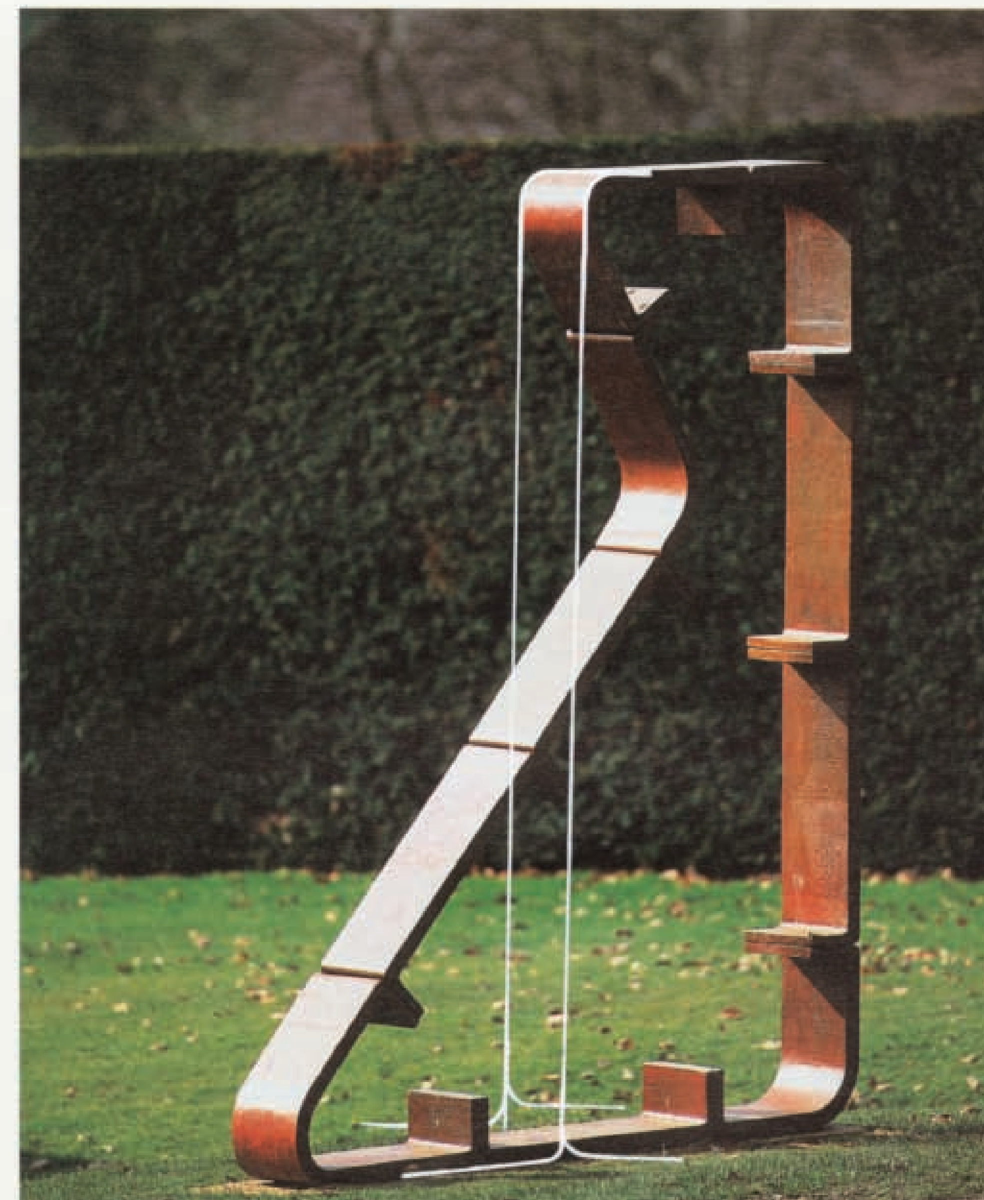


Window 1971

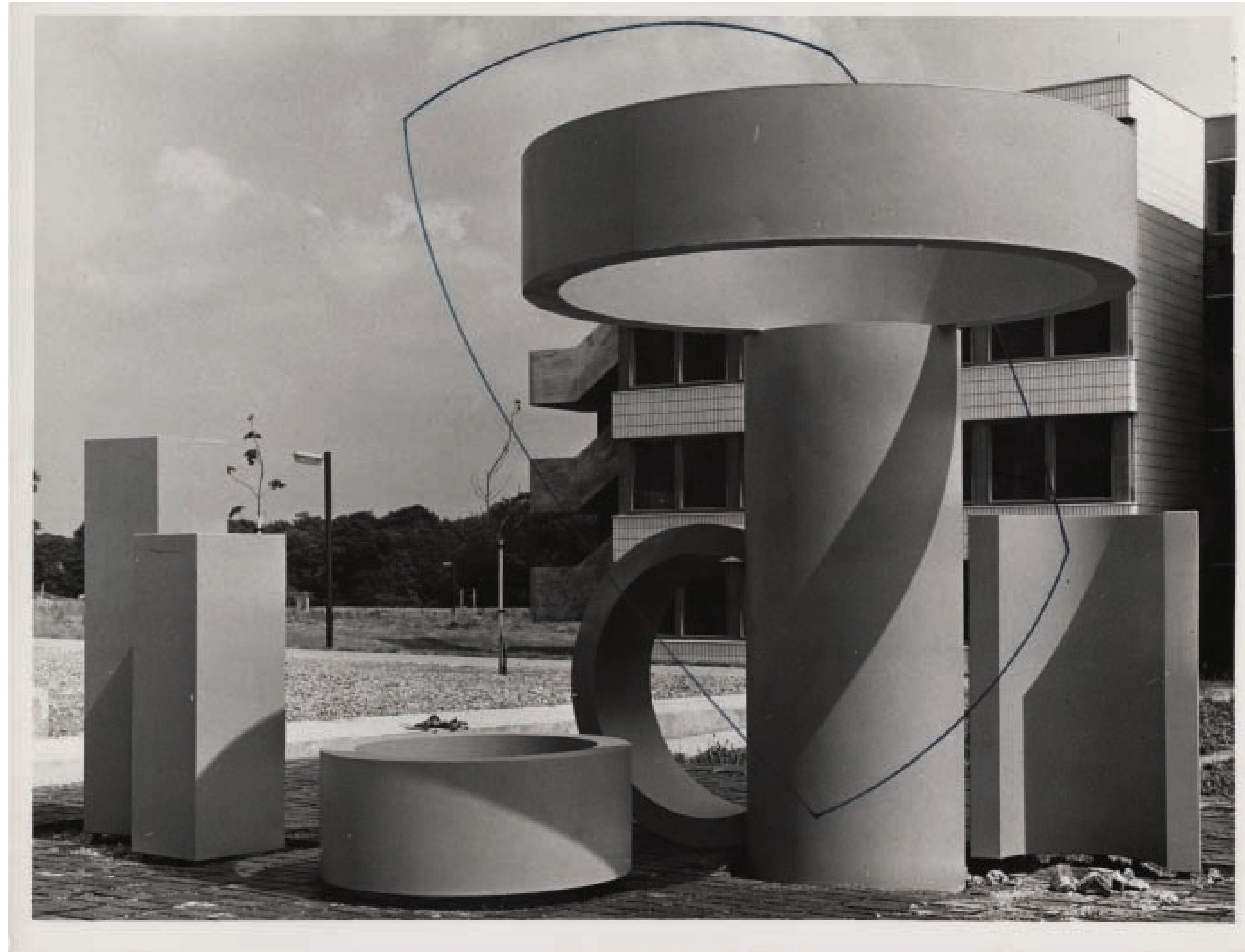
Painted steel
609.6 x 411.5 x 248.9 cm
240 x 162 x 98 in
Collection: Berkeley Art Museum







Building a Wall in the Air 1978



References

Images of David Evison's *Baltic* 1976 (p.16), Peter Hide's *High and Over* 1975–76 (p.26), and Barry Martin's essay were originally published in Bryan Kneale's *A Silver Jubilee Exhibition of Contemporary British Sculpture*, GLC 1977.

Images of Brian Wall's *Cal IV* 1969 (p.11), *Window* 1971 (p.24), and *Four Elements* 1965 (p.21), were taken from Chris Stephens *Brian Wall*, Momentum 2006.

Images of William Tucker's *Angel* 1974 (p.15) and *Building A Wall In The Air* 1978 (p.31) were taken from Dore Ashton *William Tucker*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park 2001.

Images of Bernard Schottlander's *South of the River* 1976 (p.29) and *3B Series no.1* (p.32) were original photographs taken from the Henry Moore Institute archive.

The image of Bernard Schottlander's *Untitled* 1973 (p.13) was taken from *Architecture Plus* magazine, from the Henry Moore Institute archive.

Images of Roger Harmer's *Untitled* 1975 (p.18) and Peter Hide's *Untitled* 1969 (p.23) were taken by Mark Wilsher.

Interview

Jon Wood: Perhaps I can start our discussion by asking you to tell me a bit about how this body of work started. Did the books and magazines that you were finding generate these over-drawings, or did you go out and find them with the drawing in mind, for example?

Mark Wilsher: For the previous few years I had been working almost exclusively with a vocabulary of found objects, but a mixture of things conspired to lead me to use photographic imagery. I think there was a desire to make some work that was more accessible on a purely visual level, that didn't require a lot of fore-knowledge from the audience. I found that almost no one was reading my found objects in the way that I had hoped, whereas representational images are very well understood and accessible to almost everyone. So in that sense using a variety of found archival photographs was a good solution. It also means that it is possible to bring almost anything into your work in terms of content.

JW: How did you hope that these earlier found objects of yours would be read?

MW: I had been trying to address several questions through found objects. I wanted to talk about, say, the way that prior knowledge influences your own preferences as you try to make decisions. Or the way that once contingent compositions can accrue significance as they are repeated and remade, like a melody that becomes familiar. I had used an old table frame and a hula-hoop chewed by a dog to make a kind of pastiche of a Richard Deacon sculpture, with a little china figurine to suggest it could be a model for a larger monument. But I found that even with quite savvy art audiences the objects I was using just made people think about institutional critique and the power of the white cube, which was not really interesting to me as a subject.

JW: It is interesting to learn how this body of photo-drawings came out of your three-dimensional work. Why and how exactly did you decide to turn to photographs to explore these accrued layers of significance? Why not stick to making these sculpture-referencing found object sculptures, which might offer a more immediate and less removed account of the issues you were exploring?

MW: Well, as your question implies, I had hoped that the object-nature of these sculptures would offer a more immediate way into these issues. But from the experiences I had exhibiting them it became pretty clear that people found it hard to see beyond their art historical status as 'found objects'. Paradoxically (to me at least), representational images turned out

to be a more direct medium. As the work developed and I became interested in the idea of public sculpture as part of everyone's subliminal aesthetics it seemed more appropriate to cut straight to the chase and present images of this kind of object.

JW: I would like to ask you about the kind of sculptures that were catching your eye in these magazines. It is interesting that with your found object you were referencing a Richard Deacon sculpture, but these drawings are over photographs of earlier abstract sculpture from the 1960s and 1970s. What is it about this kind of sculpture – when reproduced in magazines of the time – that interests you today?

MW: Initially I was looking for images of big abstract outdoor sculpture. It seemed to me that these things were very much a part of the fabric of urban life and must be having some kind of effect on the aesthetic tastes of the people who lived with them every day. For instance, there was a pair of grey steel triangles outside the college where I did my foundation which I walked past a dozen times a week. I've often wondered if that sculpture influenced my own taste for linear forms somehow. The big construction boom in the 60s created many new urban plazas and anonymous public spaces, and it coincided with the emergence of a type of large scale, metal sculpture that could be used to create an instant identity for a place. They have a bad reputation these days but you can see why it happened, they were weatherproof, hardwearing, highly-visible, modern-looking and fairly inoffensive. Plus they enabled the artists to make some money. My intention was to go back and re-examine what I considered to be a rather bland genre to see if I could understand where those artists were coming from. That way I could perhaps get closer to the visual culture that had contributed to influencing my own tastes.

One other aspect was the idea that this generation was pretty much the last that was able to get away with a purely formal composition. I went through art school in the 90s and the dogma was that formalism was essentially just meaningless decoration. Conceptual art was the root of everything and certainly the starting point for most of the art I personally enjoy. So I was intrigued by the idea that these guys felt able to just 'compose' a form without any angst about it, and I wanted to know what that felt like. My research on the fellowship has been really interesting on this aspect, especially the rhetorical battles that were fought over Conceptualism as it reached Britain, and it has certainly had the effect of opening up my own processes and practice somewhat.

JW: So if drawing on photographs helped you to know what such composing felt like, what did it feel like?

MW: It was very liberating for me. Of course there are still limits to what it felt responsible to do. I tried in each instance to make the drawing I added

sympathetic to the sculpture in the image, based on my research or just on the look of each piece. But still it felt incredibly liberating to give myself the permission to simply 'make it up' as these artists had been doing.

What's funny is that for me this was a process of being freed up from a conceptualist orthodoxy that wants everything to be part of a neatly completed jigsaw puzzle, while for the sculptors at St. Martins in the mid-60s the new techniques of welding and cutting steel offered freedom from the processes of sketching, making maquettes and scaling up in order to make sculpture. Both approaches are very immediate and hands-on.

JW: Do you mean your overdrawing and their metal work is hands-on? ie. that conceptual art isn't or hasn't been seen as being 'hands-on' and that idea is what you were trying to break out of, or liberate yourself from?

MW: The big distinction for these artists was 'perceptual' rather than 'conceptual' making. The important idea was that you would look at what was in front of you and work with that, chopping off a corner, turning it upside down, welding a bit on. It's liberating in one sense although I think you come up against problems pretty quickly. The work that I have been making seemed to clear a conceptual space within which I could play with this kind of hands-on tinkering.

JW: Can I ask you to talk through the kinds of specific interventions that you are making?

MW: There are features common to many of the drawings: illusionistic plays within the perspectival space of the photograph, lines that disappear behind parts of the sculptures, paradoxical elements that bring you back to the picture plane. I'm a bit wary of describing what I've been doing because in a way with this project I've been creating a space of freedom for myself and to talk through it runs the risk of making this protected space collapse in on itself.

Nevertheless, to take William Tucker's 'Angel' for instance, which is one of his really important sculptures from the early 70s. I found this black and white image in a catalogue from the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, which was on sale at a reduced price in their shop due to water damage to one corner. So you already have this sense that I'm involved in a process of salvaging or saving something, and also that this particular printed image is a real object, which is all too rare in this contemporary age of digital reproduction. I think I was aware that this sculpture demanded some respect from me, so after some trial and error I came upon the idea of just framing the image with a gold pen. Very simple. But that's not enough, so as the line hits the lower corner of the image it spills out into illusionistic space and creates a plane jutting out across the floor in front of the piece. This came I think from reading an interview with Tucker in an early issue of *Artscribe* where

he talks about the way this piece creates a sense of spatial planes spinning off from its centre. So now I had the start of a kind of spiral form, semi-illusionistic, and the next logical step was to continue that along the lower side of the sculpture, only this time the line disappears behind each of the struts as if it were really there inside the image. It's so simple but I really like the result and I do feel that there is some connection with the original piece.

Other drawings try to pick up on the style or characteristics of each work, for instance a kind of busy angular thing with David Evison, or big geometric solids with Bernard Schottlander. I sometimes try to pick up on a particular detail and expand on it, for instance the way a sculpture sits on the ground or implies movement etc.

JW: Can you say more about the way you like to juggle your own artistic interests and your imaginary understanding of those of these earlier sculptors? One the one hand you talk about 'saving and salvaging' overlooked sculptures, respectfully empathising with them and enhancing them through your later over-drawing; and on the other, it seems to be about creating a protected and liberated space for yourself within photographic images of other people's work, reinventing and perhaps misrepresenting them on your own terms.

MW: You're right – this seems like a bit of a contradiction. But I have found that apparent contradictions like this can produce a really productive friction. Rather than take one position or another I try to take both, to open up the dichotomy and allow a space for negotiation and dialogue. With this project I developed a real respect for this mostly forgotten generation of sculptors, who by various accidents of history and fashion found themselves suddenly superfluous to the orthodox narrative of British art history. Meeting Peter Hide really brought home to me the fact that these were real people we are talking about, who have dedicated their whole lives to art, often with considerable success at the time. And yet now all that comes down to is a few pamphlets or sheets of sketches in the archive. I was really struck by the fragility of that knowledge and I see part of what I am doing both with the images and the texts as a kind of archaeological restoration that I hope will get people to look again at this period. At the same time, as you suggest, I reserve the right to wilfully misinterpret the material, to treat it disrespectfully and superimpose my own narrative as someone from a later generation. As I described earlier, the process of making a drawing involves a kind of ventriloquised conversation with the past, with me taking the other role based on my understanding of the time. That's only possible if I try to sustain both points of view at once.

JW: It is interesting that you make reference to ventriloquism since another strand to your *Unfinished Business* project is a textual one – arguably even more ventriloquial – that involves you taking pre-existent and mainly historical pieces of art criticism (like Greenberg's 'The New Sculpture' or Tucker's 'The Condition of Sculpture') and tampering with them, adding new words and also modifying the language used. What kinds of texts do you choose, for what reasons and what kinds of textual interventions and modifications do you tend to carry out?

MW: I was really surprised when I started my research to discover how little writing there actually was around these sculptures. We are used to the huge profusion of magazines, catalogues and scholarly writing that marks the contemporary art moment, but in a way that itself was born out of the rise of conceptual, theoretical art that was influenced by so called French theory. These artists, with the notable exception of William Tucker, were really against that kind of language based conceptualisation of their practices. I picked catalogue introductions and statements that seemed to represent a certain rhetorical position. My interventions were to simply make these texts a little more propositional and a little less certain of themselves by adding qualifiers to some of their assertions. I want people to be uncertain about the writing, so that they are made to really stop and think about what they are reading. I think they will be surprised by both the concerns and blind spots of the various selections.

JW: Are you in a way suggesting that fortune might have looked more kindly on this kind of abstract sculpture had it been written about in less dogmatic formalist, high modernist terms? And do you see your project, pointedly entitled *Unfinished Business*, as part of broader contemporary interest returning to modernist sculpture, cutting through the stereotype and reinvestigating its meaning and potential through a more imaginative and sympathetic re-reading of its life as image and text?

MW: I don't think that being written about in a less dogmatic way could have saved this work. The problem was that this particular set of 'sculptural' concerns were simply absorbed into a larger set of post-medium issues. They were outflanked and made to look parochial. I think, and this is often borne out by conversations with students, that we have had to re-learn what Modernism was and what it stood for because we have had no real experience of it in our lives. Anyone who grew up through the 1980s or later grew up in a totally Post-Modern environment in terms of culture, consumer products, politics and so on. It doesn't seem particularly strange or radical to us because it's all we know. There is therefore quite an attraction to idealistic qualities like abstraction and formalism, as well as simple curiosity. I mean the title *Unfinished Business* to be equivocal. It's actually a quote from David Evison, who is saying that modernist sculpture still has a lot of formal questions to work out, but obviously there's a slightly confrontational element to it as well. I thought it summed up my position well.

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