

TWO AND A HALF  
DIMENSIONS

CURATED BY MARCUS HARVEY



(PREVIOUS PAGE)  
Marcus Harvey  
*Maggie*  
Plaster and acrylic  
on aluminium

(LEFT)  
Marcus Harvey  
*Heroic Head*  
Fired stoneware  
Unique

## TWO AND A HALF DIMENSIONS TO CHARGE WITH REALITY

**T**WO AND A HALF DIMENSIONS is a phrase I use to describe a doorway between wall-based painting and sculpture. The term was first coined by Harry Thubron whom I met at Goldsmiths in the 80's as a catch-all to describe wall-based work from collage to construction. Although slightly tongue in cheek, I think Thubron used the term to defend this territory as an area of practice in its own right. The wall 'construction' had become a prominent method of working after analytical cubism branched into synthetic cubism and collage was properly born. The flat support seemed the appropriate test bed for work that was attempting to physically incorporate what was being described through painterly illusion. This type of wall construction underwent a similar bifurcation; one approach being the carved and modelled, the other, the synthetic version, was collage or assemblage and incorporated the readymade.

All the big beasts of modernist sculpture and beyond have spent time in this intriguing zone, probably because it has the property of conferring a sense of the super real on its constituent parts. An object or a hunk of material that strains its attachment to the picture plain but at the same time defies gravity, not yet emerging into the physical sculptural world, has an arresting position precisely because it exists between the two.

My own approach to painting has often emphasized the use of crude mass to create a presence in the painting. Going beyond paint, I have developed a kind of hybrid mosaic where I can include objects and data from the world that perform as tonal brush marks. The intention was to go beyond the depictive and include parcels and packets of readymade information that can load up the reading of the image.

At this point one might question why I should call this exhibition *Two and a Half Dimensions* when it focuses equally on sculpture and wall-based work? In response, I wanted to use the term notionally, as a touchstone in selecting a group of sculptural paintings and painterly sculpture. The two and a half dimensional idea becoming the gateway or turnstile through which I could contemplate the relationship between painterly and sculptural ideas.

Of all the unlikely sculptors to come onto my radar as being painterly was Anthony Caro whose exhibition *The Barbarians* (Annely Juda 2004) had a real impact on me in terms of the way mass could be wielded, just as a painter can so quickly establish broad mass and structure. I know there are acres of Greenbergian prose about the relationship between the abstract painters and sculptors of that generation but here I found something much more spontaneous than craning in huge chunks of steel.



Combining ceramic, steel and wood, Caro's figures had the property of being wet and spontaneous yet structurally rigid. By throwing enormous blocks of clay together they retained an essential pliability and responsiveness yet also acted as supporting structures for other elements in the work. In addition, the clay elements had a 'toasty' coloration reminiscent of the Mesopotamian ceramics I'd been studying in the British Museum, particularly the *cuneiform stela*. These pudgy little pads of clay nudged with hard tools recorded the earliest form of writing and the 'hard-softness' they possessed was the same quality I felt in Caro's ceramics.

'Hard-softness' or pliable rigidity is a taste or feeling that for me links painting to sculpture. Martin Westwood squeezes clay through a hole to make a sausage, a bit like squeezing a giant tube of oil paint, or toothpaste. It is a process known as extrusion in the ceramics industry, whereby uniformly even tubes of clay are produced to make traditional cup handles. These apertures however are shaped after typical Westwood corporate motifs, doves, or maple leaves, as symbols of transcendence and transience. The results are extruded abstract trunks, organic grooved columns that have become petrified through the process of firing. The sculptures are essentially mass forced through a two dimensional aperture to grow a three dimensional freestanding entity. These structures seem to bear no relation to their original blue print when viewed in the round unless someone were to salami slice through the sculpture and liberate the somewhat beleaguered genetic motif.

(ABOVE)  
*Cuneiform - An Early Administrative Text*  
 Circa 3000BC  
 Clay  
 The British Museum

(RIGHT)  
 Sir Anthony Caro  
*Witness*  
 Stoneware and steel  
 Unique  
 280 cm high





Edward Lipski  
*Yellow Saint*  
Mixed Media  
Unique  
170 cm high

Edward Lipski's contemporary hybrid totems instinctively incorporate paint into the sculpture in much the same way that cultures the world over anoint their idols with pigment, blood and fluids with countless properties and connotations. By the time we get to see fetish idols and functioning Nkisi or voodoo dolls, the accreted liquid matter has dried out to become a coagulation barely separable from its three dimensional support. Lipski purloins this phenomenon and his use of paint is sometimes so extreme it provides enough structural rigidity to create the figure itself.

In curating this show, I could have ventured down the purely wet route, selecting the heavy use of paint, starting with Bomberg and ending up with Jason Martin. But because Pangolin London is a sculpture gallery I chose more constructed work. The 'wet route' will have to be another show.

Ever since the phrase 'two and a half dimensions' began rattling around in my mind I have been determined to track down a piece of Harry Thubron's that I had seen at his home in south London when I was a student. *Samurai Diptych* was the name of the piece and it represented the more heavily constructed edge of his two and a half dimensional work. An assemblage of found chunks of wood and collage, it is a surprisingly raw structure for Thubron who is better known for very sensitively arranged collages.

During my foundation course, I remember seeing some of Harry's other wooden carvings and assemblages in the offices of Leeds College of Art. When I was contacted by the college about the inclusion of one of these pieces in this exhibition there was some discussion about a striking piece that had historically been referred to as 'the Thubron'. It later transpired that the work was actually made by Frank Lisle who had taught alongside Harry and had taken over his post when Harry left Leeds. The flower work was made as an homage to Harry by Frank, and reflected Harry's interest in the reconciliation of the circle and the square by creating a shape not quite circular and not quite square in order to keep the eye alert and the brain trying to process the shape as one or the other. Although not by Thubron it is still a welcome addition to the show as it elegantly describes the intrigue of in-between space.

Whilst judging the Marmite Painting Prize this year I came across Tina Jenkins' *Legends of the Fall Series 4*. It was the one piece that judges selected unanimously without recourse to discussion, yet when pushed we found it hard to verbalise our attraction to it. Its formal qualities have antecedents in the hard edge abstractionists of the second generation New York school. The colours recall Kenneth Noland but also Donald Judd and his interest in native American beading and blanket making. The curve described by the peeling paint suggests the edge of a horse's saddle or perhaps the entrance to a Teepee thanks to the 'fringey' drips. It is a flayed painting, and the hanging skin seems to be available for use as an object in some kind of ritual.

Historically, Richard Clegg has been a painter who sticks things to the surface of the canvas. Some years ago he endeavoured to subsume this urge into something more



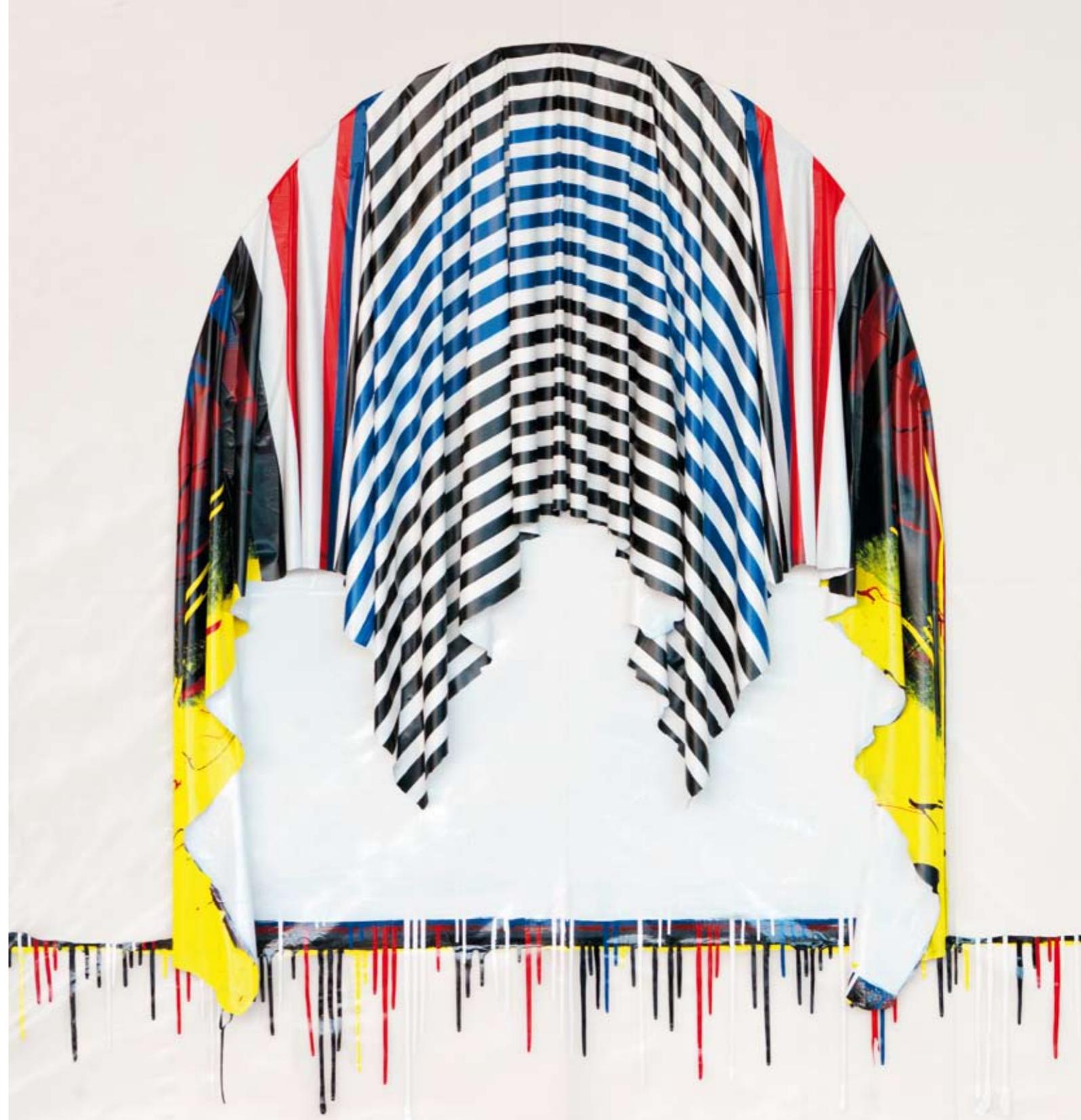
sexy and minimal by creating a canvas in a transparent material. After months of careful research and experimentation Richard created transparent stretcher bars and corner wedges and tacked transparent silicon canvas over the assembled stretcher using little transparent nails to fix the canvas. There was no reinforcement in the stretcher bars and the tension in the canvas was unexpectedly too much for the whole structure. The beautiful, mute, translucent object started to warp, slowly and horribly and when exhibited in a department store window in New York its unrelenting contortions bequeathed a strange performance to the piece that was entirely unintentional.

After this interesting detour, Richard cast the canvas whole, along with easel fragments and painters 'stuff.' The actual 'paint' was incorporated into the coloration of the casting material. I think these are very interesting works because they achieve a meta commentary on painting. They allude to the astral aspirations of painting as well as the frustration and sadness of its elusive successes. To contemplate the unused canvas as an object, a readymade sometimes attached to parts of an easel, sometimes slashed or buckled, allows us to see it through time or moving through history. Here Richard has been able to manipulate the mood in which we absorb this idea by the introduction of colour into the canvas, the pigment floating in, not on the picture surface so we still catch the warp and weft of the virgin structure.

The gently undulating white tondo that Jeremy Butler has created keeps company with Ben Nicholson and Harry Thubron and another little seen English collager and recycler Francis Davidson. This piece has the feel of one of Thubron's bleached

(ABOVE)  
Harry Thubron  
*White Wood*  
1969, wood  
Tate, London

(RIGHT)  
Tina Jenkins  
*Legends of the Fall, Series 4*  
Mixed media  
Unique  
213 cm high





monochrome collages, chewing into the support and swelling upward with a focus on a tightly reined but happened-upon palette. Here is an interesting game of reflexive recycling that separates Jeremy's relief. The surface objects are tiny models of the detritus found in landfill sites, cookers, basins freezers, 'gone off' bags of grey cement and white refuse sacks. The miniature models are manufactured from other discarded materials and as the eye roves over the surface it alights on a particular object and attempts to unpick its story.

In a similar way, Hew Locke often uses *bricolage* to plump out and invigorate two dimensional photographs and heraldic symbols. In the *House of Windsor* works, Locke uses a plethora of gaudy baubles and mass produced tat to create a shimmering tropicalia that thrusts out bushels of plastic daggers, scimitars, bayonets and shiny religious knick-knacks. The objects create the lustre appropriate to the formality of a portrait of Queen Elizabeth but the game is on when the image oscillates between its very effective layers of three dimensionality and dissolving into its shameful constituent parts.

The surfaces of these pieces are gardenized with painterly tension by using loops and straps of beading linking and unifying the surface, much as Jackson Pollock's paint does in his large canvases. In Locke's *Coat of Arms* series there is an interesting relationship between three dimensionality becoming flat and then becoming reanimated in the two and a half dimensional. The animals and objects in the Queen's Coat of Arms as printed



on UK passports are depicted as having been carved in stone so that they are one step removed from their real selves. These images have had to become simplified and flatter through their ubiquitous use as stamps and seals. Locke teases out the character of these beasts and grows them three dimensionally much as we used to grow cress on flat wads of cotton wool when we were children.

Heraldic images supposedly evolved from an ancient Greek custom where victors in battle would arrange their spoils on a tree, hence the helmets, breastplates and radiating swords and spears. This symbolic gesture became an actual symbol of power within architectural vocabulary and formed a model for grouping images in an imaginary space. Sophie Newell has explored this territory in a contemporary incarnation using modern building materials. Her baroque assemblages of cement grey 'fasces', flags and hard hats reference classical architecture as much as the everyday building site.

With her wall based sculpture *Club* all the sophisticated trappings of power are strained out and we go beyond the ancient Greeks and Egyptians to the stone age, to Fred Flintstone's home or perhaps to a more contemporary post apocalyptic era where this ultimately primitive weapon, although humourous, offers us the sober, blunt symbol of how a human will defend their family and their home.

As an artist who continues to explore different media I have all kinds of work that I want to make, filed away on a mental roladex. One of the ideas that presents itself as a recurrent 'itch' is the idea of a painting that acts as the landscape or contextualizing

(LEFT)  
Hew Locke  
*All That Glitters*  
(*The Coat of Arms of the City of London*)  
2004, Mixed media

(ABOVE)  
Sophie Newell  
*Spoils*  
Mixed media

background to a free standing sculpture. The two would make up a single artwork and to bind them further I want to carry the language of the painting and its colouration onto the sculpture. I haven't seen many obvious examples of this but Edward Lipski does this in a way that I find very satisfying although the separate entities are usually more integrated in the same piece of work. These 'landscape canvases' are flat and shiny, modern and industrial and the paint ritualistic and ceremonial even if splashed and sprayed in a vandalistic manner.

Another artist operating in this region but without reference to a wider culture is Adam Walker. He is a recent graduate and the first work I saw of his was a large canvas that had been brutalized with a hammer and bound with a rope to distort the structure to the point where it could almost stand. This is not a new idea but it had sufficient vigour for me to see it anew. He further explored the idea of the tension between flat and round, canvas and sculpture with a two-part structure: a canvas whose guts had been sliced out and crushed into a Perspex box displayed just in front.

The canvas had been attacked with dark paint that had splattered onto the wall and a window viciously ripped leaving a yawning white square. The Perspex box appears to well up with the dark paint as one is pondering the negative white space on the wall, you are left with a sense of the two dimensional rematerializing in three dimensional space.

One artist I would have loved to have included in the exhibition would have been a Georg Baselitz. Unfortunately for the moment even Baselitz can't get a Baselitz as he is struggling to get work returned for a retrospective of his three dimensional work in Paris later this year.

Corin Johnson trained as a stone mason after completing his BA in Fine Art at City and Guilds. He regularly executes monuments for churches and stately homes as well as scaling up marble work in the mining towns at Carara for contemporary artists. His 'own work', not that he doesn't commit himself to his craft, is given freer reign and a lighter subject - more often than not it is polychrome wood carving.

His figures are not bogged down by artiness and have the wide eyed naïve feel of Kirchner as opposed to Balkenhol or Baselitz. He may feel the piece in the exhibition is not finished by his usual definition of what a completed sculpture should look like but to me it has arrived. 'Finish it off and you finish it off' as Herbert Read said of many contemporary artists attitudes to completing a work.

*Wheelbarrow* speaks very eloquently of the painterly nature of this kind of 'openly worked' carving, an irresistible throb of potentiality to be precise. The lower figure, still very blocky but beginning to follow the easily applied contours of the drawing conveys a feeling that the forms could flow in so many different directions if the artist were to apply his imagination there.

It occurs to me that perhaps I should define what I mean by 'painterly' because that might throw light on what for me constitutes a painterly piece of sculpture or a painterly painting for that matter. My key word is 'transmutability,' a feeling that the

cloud of activity, be that brush marks or chisel slices or an arrangement of objects, are imbued with an energy that could quickly dissolve and reconfigure into different forms, even if this were technically not the truth of how an object were constructed. I am sure this taps into the transubstantiation of matter, although wistful sounding, I'm sure it has to do with humanity's dimly perceived goings on at a subatomic level.

Ian Dawson has explored the relationship between three dimensional form and colour over his entire career. Works that quickly sprang to mind in the context of a painterly exploration of sculpture were the works he made a decade ago, the large melted plastic sculptures, huge bouquets of softened canoes, garden furniture and garish elephant and crocodile shaped dustbins, the kind you find in urban playgrounds.

These pieces were very reminiscent of John Chamberlain's crushed automobile sculptures, they had a brash confidence that trickled down from the New York school, the kind of energy you see in Frank Stella when he cuts into and folds sheets of three dimensional colour. In his piece *Yon Yonson* Ian refers to the riddish childhood rhyme of the same name:

*My name is Yon Yonson  
And I work in Wisconsin  
I work in a lumber mill there.  
When I walk down the street  
And someone says hey  
What's your name  
And I say...(repeat)*

Reminiscent of my favourite Bruce Nauman *Clown Torture* video, this feedback loop describes Ian's process of endlessly reconfiguring, stopping mid-cycle at an almost arbitrary point to winkle out a work to exhibit, he explains:

*Like Yon Yonson the response is always the same, cut, replace, repaint. ...The Yon Yonson recursive cycle is my current way of how I deal with a problem, how does one create identity? Perhaps by not having one and then by restating that endlessly, maybe then like Yon Yonson one becomes Yon Yonson.*

I am unable to see a Baselitz wood sculpture or a DeKooning bronze without my knees knocking together with excitement. It is the same excitement when paint starts to lift off the canvas and demands to zoom around the studio and stick to the physically materialized entity that was conjured on the canvas. It represents the quintessential animal force in painting and 'two and a half dimensions' is a phrase or a space, rightly or wrongly applied, that best houses this spirit.

MARCUS HARVEY

September 2011



JEREMY BUTLER

*United Nation*  
Mixed Media  
Unique  
180 cm diameter





JEREMY BUTLER  
*United Nation* (detail)  
Mixed Media  
Unique  
180 cm diameter

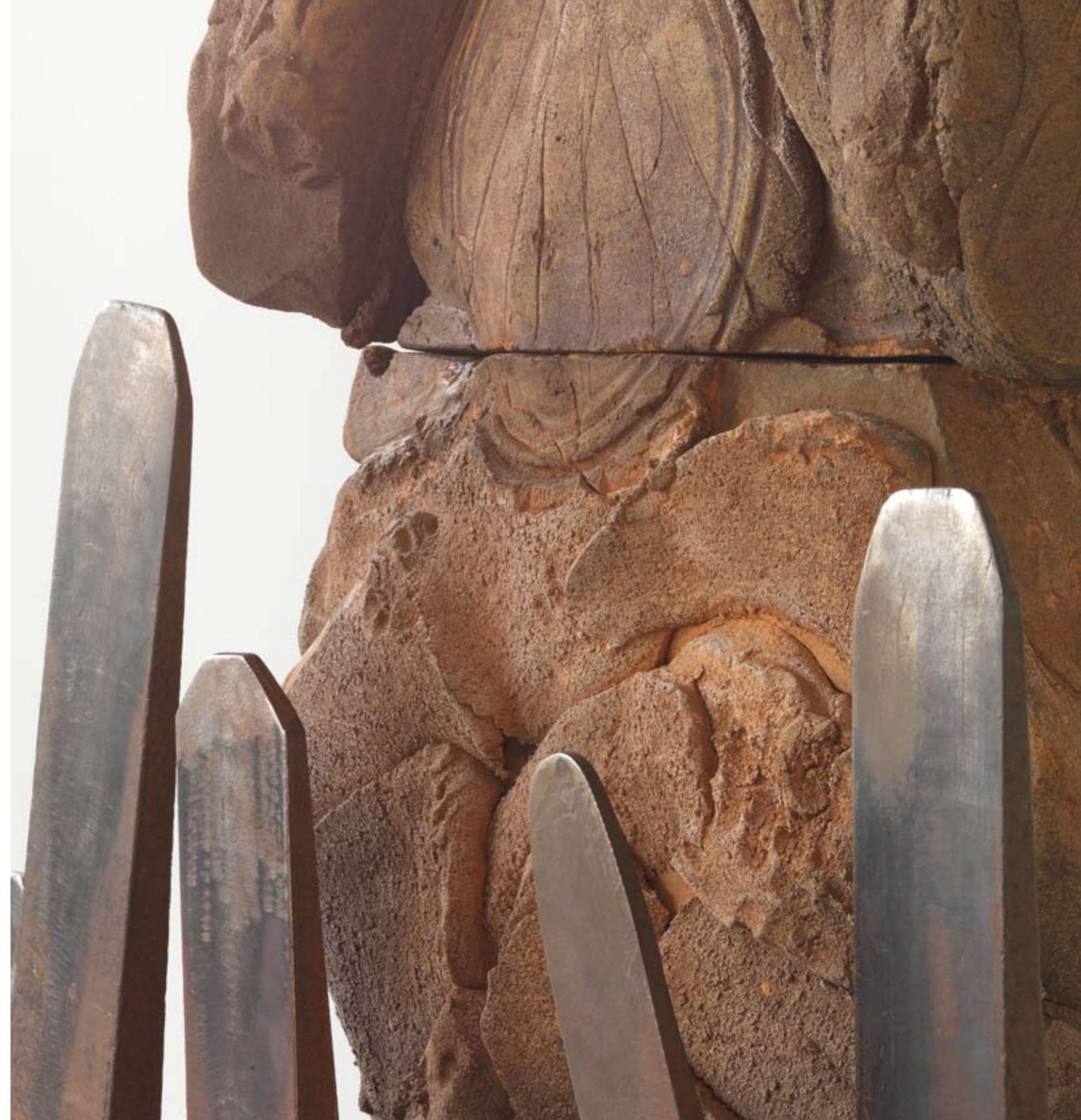
SIR ANTHONY CARO

*Witness* (detail)  
2004-2004  
Stoneware & steel  
Unique  
280cm high





SIR ANTHONY CARO  
*Witness*  
2004-2004  
Stoneware & steel  
Unique  
280cm high



RICHARD CLEGG

*Alias*  
Polyester resin  
Unique  
126 cm high





RICHARD CLEGG  
*Alias*  
Polyester Resin  
Unique  
126 cm high

IAN DAWSON

*Yon Yonson (detail)*  
Oil, steel & clay  
Unique  
244 cm high





IAN DAWSON  
*Yon Yonson*  
Oil, steel & clay  
Unique  
244 cm high



MARCUS HARVEY

*Heroic Head*  
Fired Stoneware  
Unique  
65 cm high ex plinth





MARCUS HARVEY  
*Heroic Head* (detail)  
Fired Stoneware  
Unique  
65 cm high ex plinth

TINA JENKINS

*Legends of The Fall, Series 4*

Gloss Paint & plastic

Unique

213 cm high





TINA JENKINS  
*Legends of The Fall, Series 4*  
Gloss Paint & plastic  
Unique  
213 cm high



CORIN JOHNSON

*Wheelbarrow* (detail)  
Painted oak  
Unique  
210 cm high





CORIN JOHNSON  
*Wheelbarrow*  
Painted oak  
Unique  
210 cm high

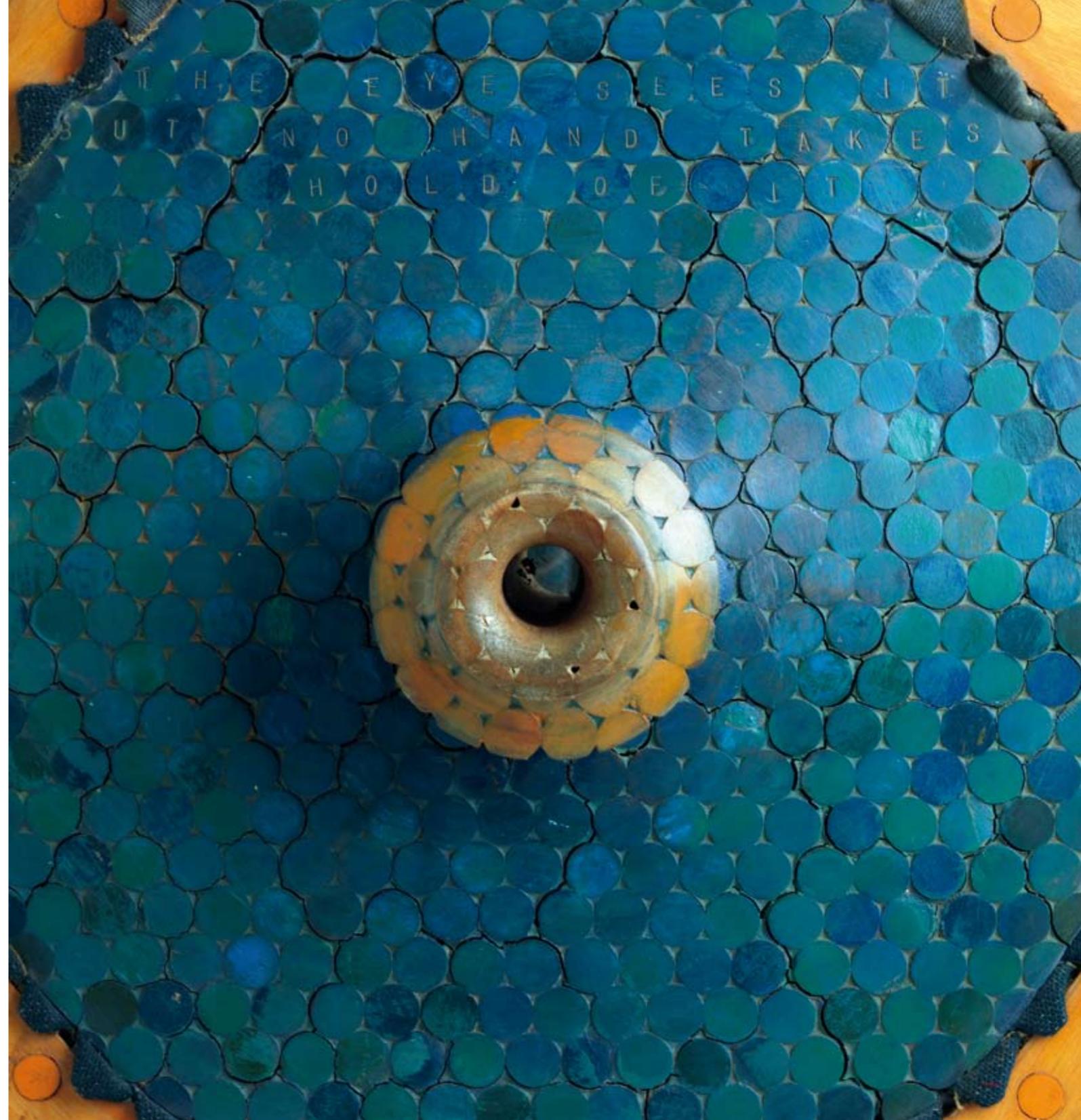
FRANK LISLE

*Homage to Harry Thubron*

Mixed media

60 cm diameter

Leeds College of Art





FRANK LISLE  
*Homage to Harry Thubron*  
Mixed media  
60 cm diameter  
Leeds College of Art

EDWARD LIPSKI

*Yellow Saint*  
Mixed Media  
Unique  
170 cm high





EDWARD LIPSKI  
*Yellow Saint* (detail)  
Mixed Media  
Unique  
170 cm high

HEW LOCKE

*Golden Horde No. 5 (detail)*

Mixed media

Unique

203 cm high





HEW LOCKE  
*Golden Horde No. 5*  
Mixed media  
Unique  
203 cm high





SOPHIE NEWELL

*Club*  
Mixed media  
Unique  
160 cm long



SOPHIE NEWELL  
*Club* (detail)  
Mixed media  
Unique  
160 cm long

HARRY THUBRON

*Samurai Diptych* (detail)

Mixed media

Unique

250 cm long overall





HARRY THUBRON  
*Samurai Diptych*  
Mixed media  
Unique  
250 cm long overall

ADAM WALKER

*Malevich*  
Oil, acrylic & gloss on canvas, perspex, latex  
Unique  
200 cm high





ADAM WALKER  
*Malevich* (detail)  
Oil, acrylic & gloss on canvas, perspex, latex  
Unique  
200 cm high

MARTIN WESTWOOD

*False Plane 3*  
Fired Clay and paper  
Unique  
45 cm high





MARTIN WESTWOOD  
*False Plane 3* (detail)  
Fired clay and paper  
Unique  
45 cm high

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## CREDITS

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