

RICHARD HUDSON, ARBS
(b. 1954, U.K.)



Richard Hudson is a sculptor of landscape and the female body. His practice is dominated by the adherence to line and form, two timeless ingredients of sculpture. His compositions are characterised by a sensuality whose allure is universal. Yet his vision is an eclectic one shaped by his personal experience of the treasures and delicacy of nature. He seeks to render volumes that convey the essence of natural form without recourse to direct verisimilitude. He is enthralled by the sensory qualities of his materials, and exploits their technical, tactile and surface qualities to enrich his exploration through sculpture of human society and natural world. Hudson's personal commitment to his media, craftsmanship and subject infuse his work with forceful sincerity. Together with our primeval link to his themes, this ascribes a compelling immediacy to his work. Thus Hudson's sculpture conveys its message to its audience without the need for textual interpretation by artist, curator or critic.

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Introduction: Richard Hudson

It was not until his early forties that Richard Hudson set about establishing his practice as a sculptor. Embarking on an artistic career relatively late in life, he brought to it an exceptionally broad experience as someone who had not only explored some of the most remote areas of the globe, but also involved himself in many different professions. This gave him a unique album of visual recollections and personal insights with which to engage as a sculptor. It also equipped him with the self-belief necessary to meet the challenges at this juncture in his life of learning techniques of craftsmanship, setting up a studio and forming a portfolio of work. Yet an artist's visual curiosity and sensitivity is not acquired through education or experience. Rather it is an innate skill and Hudson has fed his own appetite for beauty, both aesthetic and emotional, since an early age.

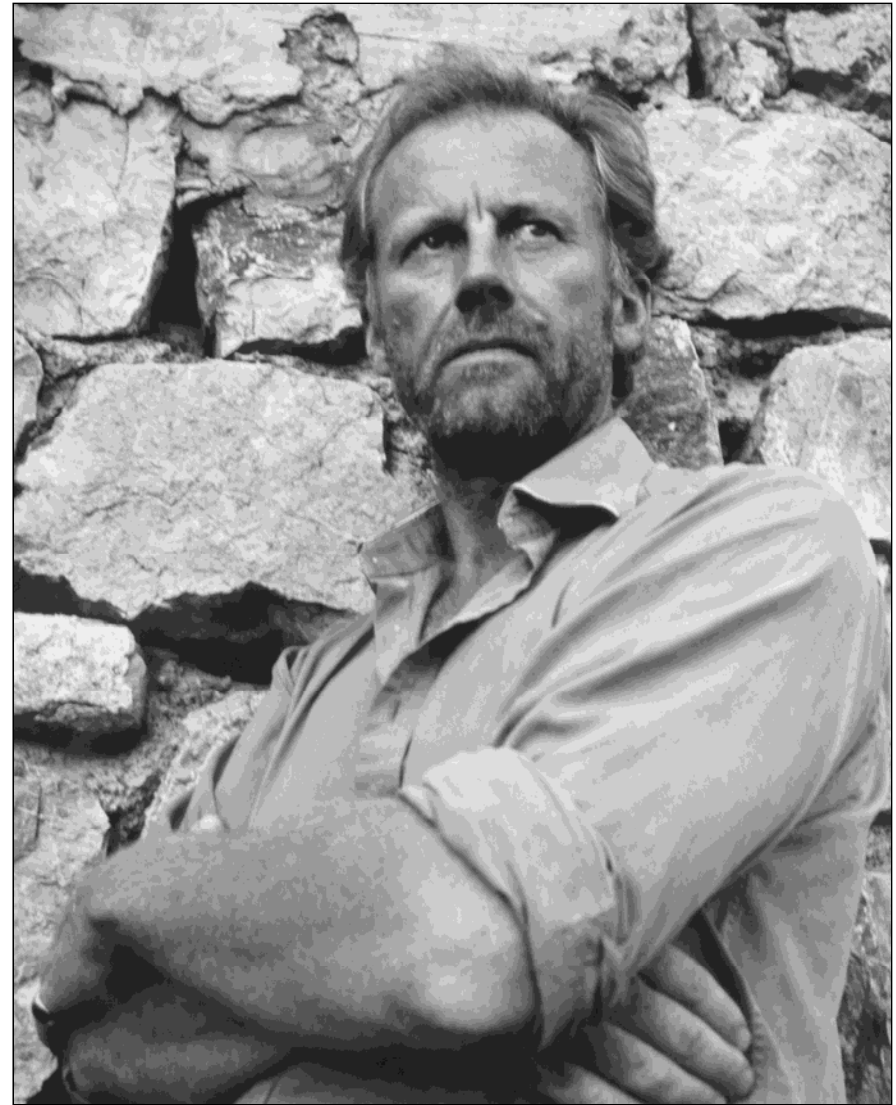
Hudson was born into a farming family in Worcestershire, U.K., in 1954. He identifies strongly with this background, frequently mentioning it in interviews and describing it as 'formative' experience. Growing up on a farm where his father bred prize Hereford cattle meant that he felt close to nature from an early age. He also learnt valuable practical skills, not to mention a respect for the traditions of artisanal labour. His mother was an artist, and there were some possibilities at school for experimenting with art. Acting

on an early aesthetic awareness, Hudson studied art in his twenties while continuing to work on the family farm. Then began a protracted period in which he experimented with a variety of different professions: he became manager of a rock band, an actor, and a property developer and interior designer in London. Then, in 1990, he began what he has called his 'walkabout'. Leaving Britain, he travelled first of all to Lamu, on the coast of Kenya, where he took the decision to abandon his career in property.

Hudson possesses a traveller's broad-minded conception of his place in the world, and sincerely believes in the importance of interacting with different cultures. This has influenced the broadly humanist focus of his art. Travel and adventure are in Richard Hudson's blood, making it the ideal arena for him to escape the norms of working life and explore different customs and cultures. Among his ancestors are the explorer John Hanning Speke and Lawrence of Arabia. He also cites example of the prolific Victorian explorer, scholar and diplomat, Sir Richard Burton, who led an expedition to east Africa during which Speke discovered Lake Victoria and correctly identified it as the source of the western branch of the Nile. Hudson's own travels took him deep into Africa, but also up the Orinoco into the Brazilian interior. In Asia he visited India and Burma. He crossed the Atlantic

in a sailing boat and drove around the U.S.A. His walkabout lasted about five years, and at the end he fetched up on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca. Here he formed a relationship with a female painter who persuaded him to begin sculpting. He took part of her studio and began, at first by working with ready-made objects. He soon became frustrated by this because he wanted to work with his hands and, he coolly explains, 'it's grown from there'. Hudson subsequently set up a studio in Madrid, which was to be his base for the next twenty years.

Hudson admits he went travelling to 'find himself', and it worked, for during this time he found inspiration that fed his lifelong love of art. Looking back, he regrets that he was not encouraged in the discipline at school: 'I wish to God I'd had somebody standing behind me saying "Richard" – when I was at school, because I loved art – "this is what you should be working at."¹ He attributes the foundations of his artistic outlook to his mother, also an artist. He recollects her 'opening my eyes to the true organic wonders of the world; nature's complexity and its never-ending metamorphosis and yet normally within the structures of beautiful, perfect symmetry.' While he traces his earliest aesthetic awakening to nature to his childhood years, Hudson's years spent travelling around the world afforded plentiful opportunities to explore the visual intricacies of different peoples, their appearance, environment and ways of life. Speaking of his travels in east Africa, for instance, he described how he lived a while with the Maasai and other tribes, 'looking at their shapes and forms'. As an early inspiration he singles out in particular 'watching the



Maasai women washing in Lake Naivasha. It was the juxtaposition between them and the flamingos... the shape got more and more beautiful. When I became a sculptor, it transformed and started to appear in my head.'² The profusion of beauty that he witnessed during his travels seems to have unlocked Hudson's latent vocation. He observes, 'These travels not only opened my eyes, but also taught me to view the beauty that abounds around us in the world, its multitude of colours, objects, and above all how important it is to interact with all the different cultures.'³

The foundations of Hudson's art lie in his belief that a universal sensuality that drives an appetite for beauty is engrained into the human psyche. It is his objective to feed this appetite by creating beautiful sculpture will impart a powerful emotional response in the viewer. The nature of this response will be determined by the history of each individual – by 'our religion or mother and father or whatever' – but Hudson's intention is to communicate with the inner thoughts of each individual that encounters his work. 'I like to try to and bring those thoughts out in people so they feel completely uninhibited'.⁴

Hudson's subject-matter is drawn from the most fundamental elements of human life: above all sexuality, the body, procreation and the environment that sustains us. Manifestly these are themes that will incite a response from any observer. Hudson's mode of communication is to explore a subject through allusive forms that evoke in the viewer the particular idea he wishes to convey at an

almost sub-conscious level. Explaining his approach, Hudson remarked, 'My work is about feeling: what exists before words have been found to describe them.... The titles I use are touchstones, whose resonances I hope give a window of familiarity through which an observer's gaze might enter the country where I want to take them.'⁵

Perhaps the most prominent theme in Hudson's work is the female nude, in which Hudson finds the embodiment of the very foundations of humanity. He upholds woman as a symbol of maternity, and hence of procreation and the survival of mankind; as the repository of sexual desire, a prime factor behind man's competitive and possessive urges; and the archetype of femininity, be it as the Madonna or Venus. Rather than depicting the literal appearance of a woman, he condenses the subject into form that suggests some archetypally feminine part of her body - a hip, stomach or breast - that embodies the essence of his subject. Hudson's stylised, extrapolated renditions of the female form verge on abstraction, yet line and form always retain some allusion to the human figure. Comparison has been drawn with pre-historic depictions of woman such as the Willendorf Venus, a statuette of a naked 'Goddess' that dates from the Palaeolithic era.⁶ This has survived without certain knowledge of context or function, but, like Hudson's work, its carnal overtones are apparent in the exaggerated modelling of sexual regions of the body.

Hudson openly acknowledges the erotic dimension in his art, and has identified his past girlfriends as artistic influences. He describes his

fascination for the female form candidly: 'I love the way it looks, especially when a woman is lying down – you get the curves, like a continuous landscape.'¹⁷ Yet such sexual overtones also impinge upon a woman's fertility, the very source of the survival of humanity. Hudson's farming background has left him with a respect for biological realities of life: 'The creation of life is fascinating. A lot of the world disrespects it, which I find mind-bogglingly stupid'.⁸ The forms through which Hudson captures the essence of the female form have a decidedly organic quality that seem to celebrate the generative potency of the female anatomy, while in turn emphasising our unassailable link with the Earth. Likewise, when drawing on our natural environment for subject matter, he renders component parts of the landscape, in decidedly anthropomorphic terms. The ultimate outcome is that his work sets up a dialogue between mankind and its natural environment.

Hudson's reverential attitude to Woman invites comparison with that of Henry Moore, whom he acknowledges as an inspiration for his sculpture. Apart from the thematic connection with Moore, there are also parallels in the swollen forms and the unctuous lines that course unendingly about his sculpture. Hudson has frequently emphasised the network of unbroken lines that characterise his sculpture. He intends that the observer's eye and hand will trace the curving volumes as they ebb and flow through the intricate courses of his compositions. Through these unbroken lines, Hudson pursues harmonious curves, formal unity and a sense of constant movement like the ceaseless jostling of the surface of the sea. 'If you follow [my

work]', he explains, 'you'll find that it is a long process of smooth curves. You start at the beginning and go all the way to the end, and then you start again. There is never any break; the view is never fractured. It doesn't matter what angle you look at it from. There is always a nice angle that is smooth, a continuous line, which I think is important.'¹⁹ Hudson's Statement underlines exactly how important this is for him. The continuous line symbolises the order that nature imposes on what otherwise would be a chaos of billions of particles. He sees this as forming the foundation of the symmetry of the natural world, the basis of worldly beauty: 'nature's complexity and its never ending metamorphosis... the structures of beautiful, perfect symmetry.'

Asked about other sculptors he admires, Hudson brings up Rodin, Giacometti, Arp and Brancusi. It is telling that all of these figures were, to a greater or lesser degree, figurative sculptors. Like Moore and Arp, Hudson pursues in his depiction of essential form that pay homage to the grace female form without directly mimicking it. Like Brancusi, Hudson condenses his subject to such a degree that it verges on, yet stops just short of, an abstract realisation. There is a direct line of visual ancestry between Hudson's sculpture and his subject-matter. This defines him as a figurative artist, which is a label he would embrace. Hudson began his career as a sculptor with conceptual work, but he quickly became frustrated that this rejected long traditions of beautiful line, while introducing the necessity of wordy explanations of the thematic content to accompany the work. Henceforth he would produce pieces that could be appreciated for

their harmonious lines and forms without further explanation from the artist. Turning his back on this self-consciously contemporary form of sculpture, Hudson now joins a long and distinguished line of artists who have sought to explore the human condition through three-dimensional representations of its physical form.

While a lesser artist might be daunted by such a single-minded rejection of contemporary currents, Hudson is dedicated to an art-form in which he has the greatest faith. His crusade is for a sculpture that is beautiful, predominantly figurative and exists on a scale that encompasses the monumental. He plans to create landmark public sculpture, envisaging amongst other projects a modular tower formed from his signature *Heart* motif surely inspired by Brancusi's *Endless Column* in Romania. Hudson also values the permanence of sculptural media, and he is drawn to the hardness and durability of bronze and steel. He seeks to push these materials to new extremes, exploiting their inherent tensile strength to create extravagantly curved and elongated compositions. He has a strong sense that he is creating work that will endure and that will serve audiences now and in the future, identifying in himself, 'a need to interact with a solid material and create an "original form" for others to view and question in its moment in time and for history to judge'.¹⁰

Underlying Hudson's enthusiasm for the materials he uses is his passion for working directly with his media. Scorning the *atelier* practice, in which studio assistants produce sculpture in accordance with a concept handed down by the master, Hudson takes pride in the

fact that personally handles the materials and tools of his art. He models maquettes by hand in clay or plaster, and in the process the ultimate form of the composition materialises before him. Hudson's scant formal training as a sculptor has not been any impediment to progress. He was undeterred by the necessary technical challenges of different media, having had to fall back on practical skills to succeed as a farmer. 'The practicality of tools, metal, welding and working with organic materials is a natural thing that I've been used to all my life. I had to mend things by using tenacity, and it evolved from that.'¹¹ An important experience early on in his artistic career came when he spent two months working in a foundry, learning about the technical processes of the fabrication of sculpture. 'I worked in a foundry for a couple of months to see the process, see who was making mistakes, just keeping my eyes open. I'm very practical; [learning to make art] wasn't a problem.'¹² This was the Magisa foundry in Madrid, with which he established a fruitful relationship. He admires traditional practitioners of the crafts of carving and metalwork, and appreciates the survival of those practices in Spain.

In the light of Hudson's faith in the art of sculpture, and the fulfilment he derives from seeing his work materialise in three dimensions on a grand scale, it seems surprising that he did not begin his career as an artist at an earlier stage in his life. To read his words is to be struck his sense of vocation as an artist. 'I think that my sculpture was always bound to happen. It was more a question of when as opposed to how', he told one journalist.¹³ Yet it is surely his earlier life that has

determined his powerful confidence as an artist. Having surveyed life from an extraordinary variety of perspectives, he decided he was ready to embark on a career in sculpture and allow his work to take its course. Assured that he possesses the physical resources and practical skills to work directly the materials of sculpture, he steeped himself in the craftsmanship of the discipline. He revels in being able to conduct the entire creative process, from inception to observing the reaction of his audience. Essentially self-taught, he now finds that his ideas emerge as autonomous entities that he must seize, marshal, control, and fashion into their correct form. He describes the process: 'The creativity just comes, I don't know where it comes from; it just comes.'¹⁴

Notes

- ¹ Quoted in H. Amirsadeghi, *Sanctuary. Britain's Artists and their Studios*, London, 2012, p. 355.
- ² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 352.
- ³ Quoted in C. Dominguez, 'Forma y Belleza' [Conversation with Richard Hudson], *Lapiz Revista Internacional de Arte*, anno XXXI, vol. 273/274, p. 98.
- ⁴ Quoted in Amirsadeghi 2012, p. 352.
- ⁵ Quoted in Dominguez *op. cit.*, p. 100.
- ⁶ L. Green, *Richard Hudson. The Unholy Likeness of Being. Sculpture by Richard Hudson* (exh. cat.) Leeds, 2006.
- ⁷ Quoted in Amirsadeghi 2002 *op. cit.*, p. 352.
- ⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 355.
- ⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 352.
- ¹⁰ Quoted in Dominguez *op. cit.*, p. 98.
- ¹¹ Quoted in Amirsadeghi 2002 *op. cit.*, p. 355.
- ¹² Quoted in *loc. cit.*
- ¹³ S.-J. Lovett, 'Richard Hudson', *Arts of England*, no. 58, June 2009, p. 48.
- ¹⁴ Quoted in Amirsadeghi 2002 *op. cit.*, p. 352.

Selected Monumental Sculpture

TEAR



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2016
Polished mirrored steel
Height: 300 cm
Edition: 3 plus 2 artist's proofs

EVE



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2010
Polished mirrored steel
Height: 250 cm
Edition: 3 plus 2 artist's proofs (edition sold out; one artist's copy available)

ADAM



2010
Polished mirrored steel
Height: 275 cm
Edition: 3 plus two artist's proofs

FROG WITH FLY



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2011
Polished mirrored steel
Height: 350 cm
Edition: 3 plus 2 artist's proofs

LOVE ME



2008
Polished bronze
Height: 200 cm (250 cm with plinth)
Edition: 3 plus 2 artist's proofs (3/3 is the last one available from the edition)

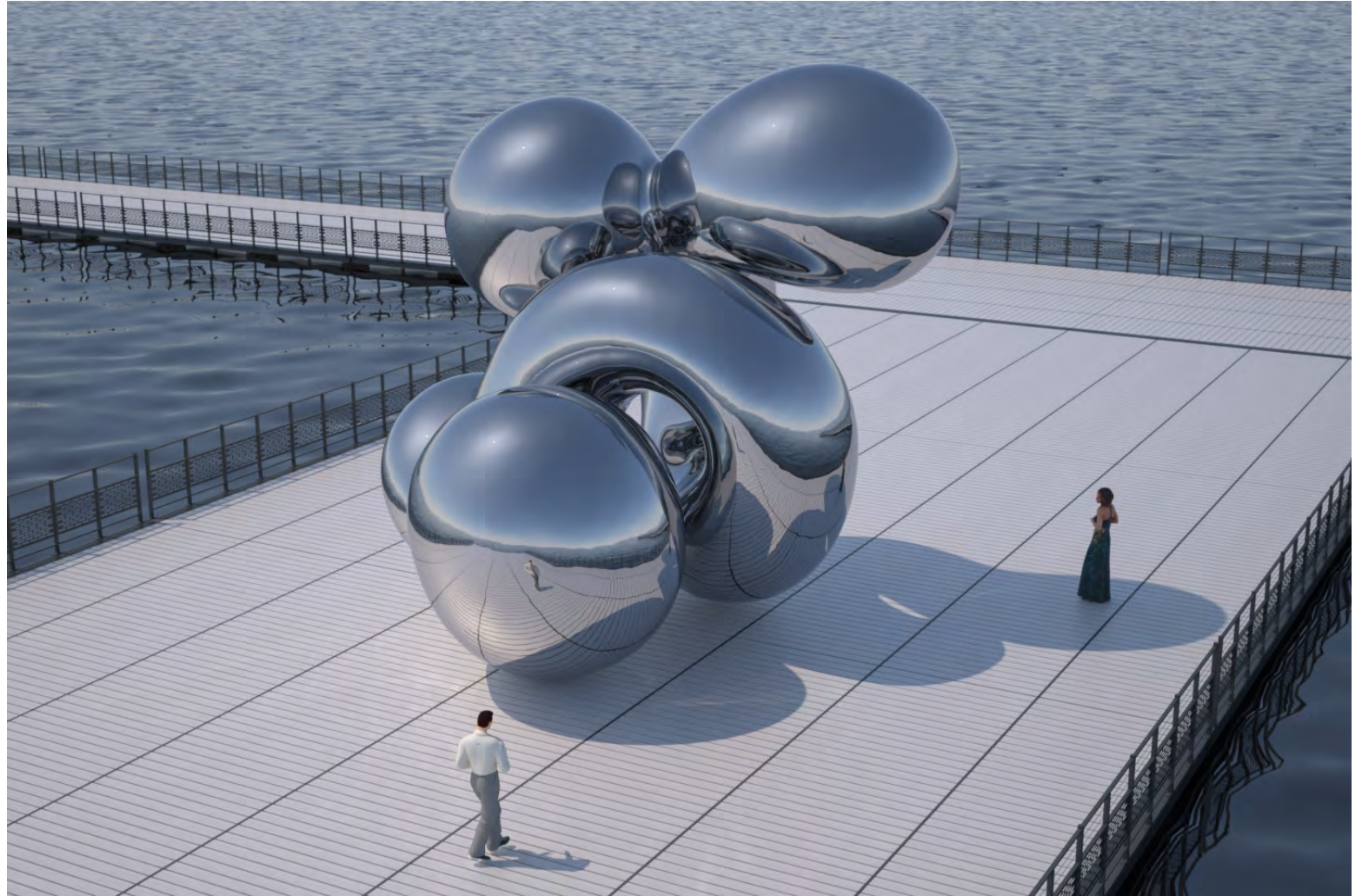
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SEED



2014
Patinated bronze
Height: 180 cm
Edition: three plus two artist's proofs

THE KNOT



Polished mirrored steel
Height: 800 cm

Selected Medium-size Sculpture

MAYBE



2015
Polished mirrored steel
Size: h. 80 x l. 102 x w. 80 cm
Edition: 5 plus 2 artist's proofs

TEAR

2016
Polished mirrored steel
Height: 120 cm
Edition: five plus two artist's proofs



TWISTED



2016
Polished mirrored steel
Height: 110 cm (oak plinth: h. 50 x 60 x 60 cm)
Edition: five plus two artist's proofs

LOVE ME

2015
Polished bronze
Height: 132 cm (165 including base)
Edition: 2 plus 1 artist's proof (2/2 is the last one available from the edition)



TOTEM

2016
Polished mirrored steel
Height: 155 cm (the granite plinth h. 28 x 44 x 44 cm)
Edition: 5 plus two artist's proofs



ENVELOPE

2012
Patinated bronze
Height: 70 cm
Edition: 9 plus 3 artist's proofs





Selected Small Sculpture

MAYBE



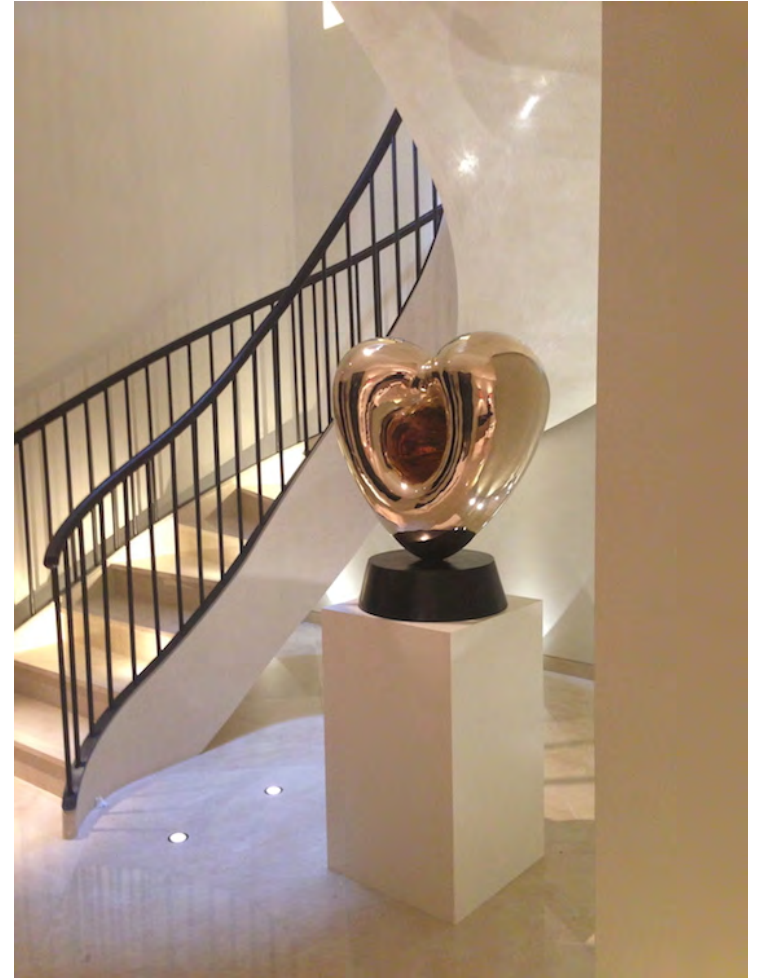
2016
White Marble
Height: 40 cm
Unique

TEAR



2016
Polished mirrored steel
Height: 50 cm
Edition: 9 plus 3 artist's proofs

LOVE ME



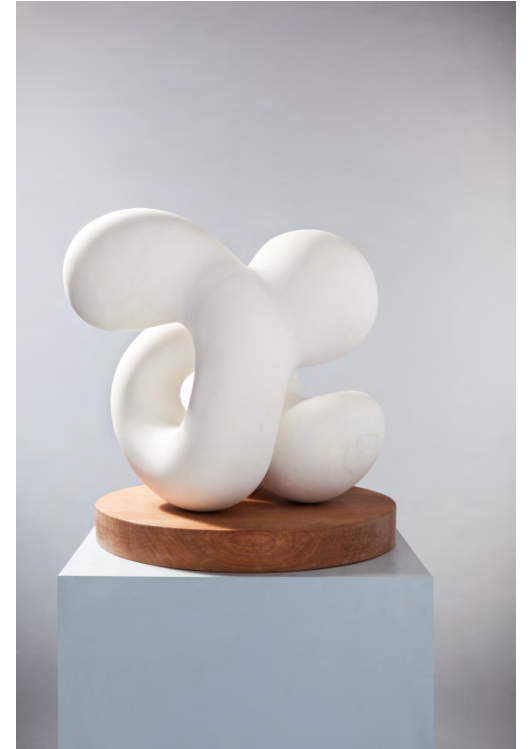
2007
Polished bronze
Height: 70 cm (85 cm including base)
Edition: 5 plus 3 artist's proofs

ENVELOPE



2016
White marble
Height: 50 cm (the white marble plinth h. 4 x dia. 30 cm)
Unique

THE KNOT



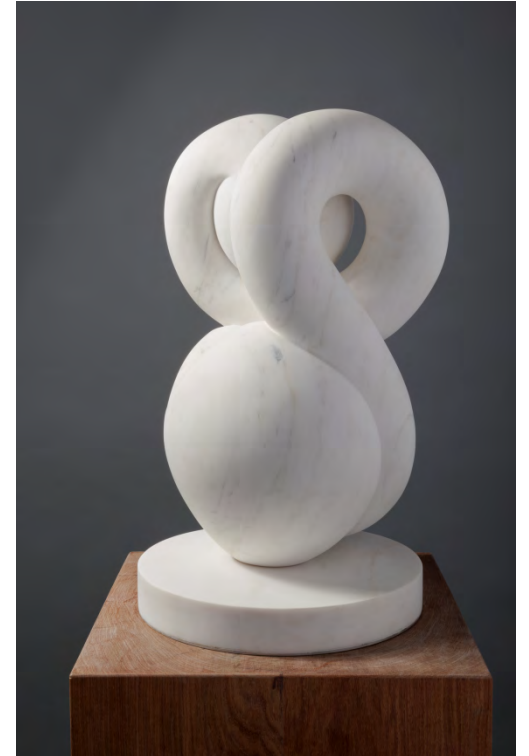
White marble
Height: 45 cm
Unique

EVE



2014
Patinated bronze
Height: 50 cm
Unique

TWICE



2016
White marble
Height: 50 cm (the white marble plinth, h. 4 cm. dia. 32 cm)
Unique

FLOWER IN SPACE (AFTER BRANCUSI)

2011
Polished bronze
Height: 85 cm
Edition: 9 plus 3 artist's proofs



SEED



2016
White marble
Height: 50 cm (the white marble plinth, h. 5 cm x dia. 36 cm)
Unique

FROG WITH FLY



2006
Patinated bronze
Height: 68 cm
Edition: five plus two artist's proofs

TWISTED



2016
White marble
Height: 50 cm (the white marble plinth, h. 4 cm x dia. 29 cm)
Unique

Selected Collections

Dr Beltran Collection
Baron Bentink-Thyssen
Gisep Biert
Dona Pilar de Borbon
David Coultard
Donum Winery Estate Sculpture Park, California, USA
Nigel & Lucy Doughty
Michael Douglas & Catherine Zeta Jones
Edward & Maryam Eisler
Ekeburg Sculpture Park, Oslo, Norway
Esbaluard Museum of Modern Art, Mallorca, Spain
Espirito Santo
Fabien & Lucy Fryns
Dino Goulandrís
Stephanie Hoener
Robert Hurst
Sir Elton John
Michael & Betty Kadoorie
Manarat al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE
March Collection
Jean-Pierre Martel
George Michael & Kenny Goss
Jim Mellon

Tamara Mellon
Prince Albert of Monaco
Christian Ringnes
Royal Caribbean Art Collection
Spas & Dilia Roussev
Lily Safra
Claudia Schiffer
Don Pedro Serra
Sir Jackie Stewart
Helmut & Dana Swarovski
Nadia Swarovski

Exhibitions

2016

The Armory (Leila Heller Gallery), New York
Dallas Art Fair (Leila Heller Gallery), Dallas
Beyond Limits, Sotheby's, Chatsworth, Derbyshire
Richard Hudson. New Sculptures [solo show], Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai
Abu Dhabi Art (Leila Heller Gallery)

2015

Maastricht (Van de Weghe Gallery)
Hong Kong Basel (Van de Weghe Gallery)
Masterpiece (Leila Heller Gallery, New York)
Port Tonic Art Centre, Contemporary Art Show, St Tropez

2014

ARCO (Leila Heller Gallery, New York), Madrid
Art Madrid (Ansorena Gallery, Madrid)
Art 14, F2 Gallery, UK
The Armory (Leila Heller Gallery), New York
Leila Heller Gallery, New York,
Sao Paulo Art Fair (Lemos de Sa Gallery)
Brazilia Art Fair (Lemos de Sa Gallery) Brazil
Masterpiece, (Leila Heller Gallery, New York)
Art Rio (Lemos de Sa Gallery), Brazil

2013

Sculpture Al Fresco at Great Fosters, Surrey
Art Rio (Lemos de Sa Gallery), Brazil
Art International Istanbul (Leila Heller Gallery, New York)
Ekebergparken Sculpture Park, Oslo

Abu Dhabi Art (Leila Heller Gallery, New York)
Judge for the Royal College of Art Cowley Award for Sculpture

2012

Art Stage Singapore (F2 Gallery), Singapore
Hong Kong Contemporary Art Fair (F2 Gallery), Hong Kong
Art Miami (Olyvia Fine Art), USA

2011

Beyond Limits, Sotheby's, Chatsworth, Derbyshire
Hong Kong Contemporary Art Fair (F2 Gallery), Hong Kong
Sculpture Al Fresco at Great Fosters, Surrey
Rarity Gallery, Mykinos, Greece

2010

Beyond Limits, Sotheby's Chatsworth, Derbyshire
Monumental Sculptures Miami Basel (Gary Nader Gallery), USA
Estampa, Madrid
Beyond Limits, Sotheby's Chatsworth, Derbyshire
F2 Gallery, Beijing
Art Miami (Olyvia Fine Art), USA

2008

Beyond Limits, Sotheby's Chatsworth
Art Miami (Olyvia Fine Art), USA
F2 Gallery, Beijing

2007

International Asia Art Fair (F2 Gallery), Hong Kong

Exhibitions (continued)

Hong Kong Contemporary Art Fair (F2 Gallery), Hong Kong
F2 Gallery, Beijing

2006

Fabien Fryns Fine Art, Malaga
Unbearable Likeness of Being, City of Leeds

2005

Ayuntamiento de la Villa de Fuenlabrada, Madrid
Hamiltons Gallery, London
Goss Gallery, Dallas
Sculpture nominated for 2012 Olympics, Madrid

2004

Palm Beach Art Fair (Fabien Fryns Fine Art), Florida
Exhibition Monumental Sculptures, Malaga
Fabien Fryns Fine Art, Malaga
Museum Palau de la Musica de Valencia, Public Exhibition, Spain

2003

Estampa (Galerie di Arte Kreisler), Madrid
Fiera di Arte Contemporanea (Fabien Fryns Fine Art), Milan

2002

Aire, Centro Cultural Andratx, Mallorca

2001

Artexpo, Galeria Joan Oliver Maneu, Barcelona

2000

Art Obert, Festival Hibritart, Mallorca
Espai Galeria d'Art, Mallorca

1999

Espai Galeria d'Art, Mallorca

1998

Galeria Joan Oliver "Manue", Palma de Mallorca

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A. Stafford, 'Curving Enthusiasm', *Selections*, www.selectionsarts.com, 19 October 2016.

M. Armanz, 'French Connection', *Nuevo Estilo*, no. 419, February 2013, p. 113.

F. Fryns, 'Portrait of an Artist: Richard Hudson', *Vanity Fair on Art*, no. 1, November 2012, pp. 60-61.

C. Dominguez, 'Conversación con Richard Hudson: Forma y Belleza/Conversation with Richard Hudson: Shape and Beauty', *Lapiz. Revista Internacional de Arte*, no. 273/274, anno XXXI, pp. 92-101.

H. Amisadeghi (ed.), *Sanctuary, Britain's Artists and their Studios*, London, 2012, pp. 352 – 357.

S.-J. Lovett, 'Richard Hudson', *Arts of England*, June 2009, no. 58, June 2009, pp. 48-51.

Art Patron, vol. 4, no. 1, January 2008, p. 85.

'Looking Forward', *Sotheby's Preview*, June 2008, p. 12.

V. García-Osuna, 'Richard Hudson', *Tendencias del Mercado del Arte*, no. 16, October 2008, pp. 81-82.

'Erotic. Aesthetic. Ironic. Richard Hudson. Sculptor', *Mynt*, no. 2, Spring 2007.

L. Green, 'The Unholy Likeness of Being. Sculpture by Richard Hudson' (exhib. cat., Leeds), 2006.

M. I. Beneyto & L. M. Caruncho, 'Metamorfosi', *Equipamientos Culturales*, no. 24, March 2006, pp. 89-91.

P. Serra, *Esculturas al Vall de Soller*, 2003, pp. 11, 12 & 234.

Front cover image:

Love Me (800 cm)

Donum, California

Back cover image:

Tear (300 cm)

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