

To Draw or not to Draw (sculptors that draw) by Simon Court

In a previous piece I mentioned three sculptors, Eric Gill, Gaudier-Brzeska and Joseph Epstein, arguing that if Picasso's *Demoiselle D'Avignon* (1907) represented the beginning of Modern Art/Painting then these three represent the beginnings of modern, abstract sculpture in this country. As I said previously I will return to these three, an Englishman, a Frenchman and a Russo-Polish American. I mention them now simply so I can go on thinking about sculpture, drawing and sculptors.

This was triggered as ever by seeing an exhibition, in this case of drawings done by sculptors. I saw it at the Kings Place in London gallery twinned with Northumbria Art Gallery; exhibitions are curated together or separately; they get Cornish and we get Albert Irving. On this occasion we got "Sculptors' drawings and Works on Paper" some of you may have seen the exhibition in Newcastle; either way it was quite excellent, and it was possible to buy the catalogue from Amazon UK (unless you are boycotting this company for not paying tax) or indeed from the Northumbria Gallery. £20 well spent as it provides examples of prints and drawings from Michelangelo to dear Damian via Serra, Maillol, Picasso, Degas, Manet and Caro, plus a host of other more modern sculptors and the other usual suspects: Marini, Moore, Hepworth, Paolozzi and Nicholson.

Curiously Hepworth wasn't represented and yet she draws magnificently (Barbara Hepworth: *The Hospital Drawings*, 27th Oct-3 Feb 2013 The Hepworth Wakefield Gallery). Another wonderful exhibition in a gallery which is interesting in itself. You might also take in the YSP- Yorkshire Sculpture Park. If she was alive she would almost certainly argue that men (in particular Moore) have received more of the attention and credit than was fair.

Clearly the process of drawing is simpler than sculpting, one is two-dimensional, the other has three dimensions. We look into pictures and the eye can be directed round but not behind the picture. They are in some measure constrained by a frame although Howard Hodgkin takes you out of the picture and onto the frame. There seems little doubt that a frame can make or destroy an image.

I thought collage might appeal to a sculptor or similarly collographs and making prints and although many do generate prints, in practice, the pen, pencil and charcoal remain the principle media employed. It isn't always easy to know if the drawings came first and represent exploration of ideas, quickly undertaken to capture the moment or after to record the sculpture and explore a new direction. Within the exhibition there seemed to be examples of both or neither.

Richard Serra:-

"Drawing for me has always been an autonomous activity- I've done it since I was a kid and it's always been a way of seeing. For me seeing is a way to think so I've always made drawings but I don't depict or illustrate my sculpture and I don't do anecdotal drawings or representational drawings, it's a separate body of work."

Barbara Hepworth:-

"I rarely draw what I see. I draw what I feel in my body."

(Continue overleaf)

Henry Moore:-

“Drawing is everything. If somebody comes to me and says, “There is a young sculptor and he’s going to be very good-would you like to see his work”? I say what’s his drawing like? Oh, he doesn’t draw. Well then I know he is no good. All the sculptors who have been any good have been great draughtsmen”.

Even the most abstract artists all seem to be good draughtsmen; look at the early Jackson Pollocks. As I understand it, drawing is no longer central to the teaching within Art schools.

All children draw until they become worried that it isn’t any good. A child’s development is punctuated by the ability to draw circles, squares, triangles and diamonds. (2-3yrs. 3-4yrs. 4-5yrs. and 6-7yrs respectively.)

A circle has an inside and an outside, positive and negative space, boundaries and beyond. I can remember being taught the exercise of not drawing the object/model but drawing the space around. When I began to think what I might write I had been reading a book on Henry Moore (*The life and work of a great sculptor*’ by Donald Hall. pub Victor Gollancz 1966) and was struck by the following:-

“The year 1932 was notable not only for Moore’s resignation (?sacked) from The Royal College, it was the year of the hole...the hole did not arrive until 1932 in Hampstead”. There has been an argument as to whether Moore or Hepworth invented as part of abstraction the modern un-natural hole. Natural spaces/holes had previously been used by Michelangelo, Rodin and previous good sculptors (the space between the bent leg or head and raised arm at the elbow).”

In my view of the two Hepworth has the better claim with the pierced form (1) (plaster work since destroyed but photographed 1931) Donald Hall however argues that neither can really claim this honour as Alexander Archipenko drilled an un-natural hole through the body in 1912 yet this was described as frivolous, decorative and small. May be I will explore this artist in a different piece at a different time.



1. The pierced form 1931,
Barbara Hepworth

Both Moore and Hepworth exploited nature and exploited the hole in very different ways. (2) (3) and (4)



2. The hole as a frame, Henry Moore



3. The hole with water, Barbara Hepworth



4. Reclining Figure, Henry Moore, YSP

Two Moores from Nature



5. Rock formation Jordan

6. A stone from Provence



REFERENCES

- 1) The life and work of a great sculptor, Donald Hall, Victor Gollancz 1966
- 2) Henry Moore (my ideas, inspiration and life as an artist) Henry Moore and John Hedgecoe Ebury Press 1986.
- 3) Hepworth and Moore -null position <http://www.nullposition.com>
- 4) Sculptors' Drawings and works on paper. Pangolin London & Kings Place N1 9AG

