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# GEORGE FULLARD HUMAN TENDER

11 September - 26 October 2019



*Three Women*, 1958, Bronze

**Pangolin London is excited to be presenting an exhibition of sculpture and works on paper by George Fullard. Although publicly and critically acclaimed during the golden age of Post-War British sculpture in the late 1950's and '60's, George Fullard's work slipped into relative obscurity following his early death in 1973. Over the last decade, Fullard's achievement and influence are finally winning belated recognition, and this exhibition will bring together bronzes, assemblages and drawings from all periods of his oeuvre.**

One of the most inventive post-war sculptors, Sheffield-born George Fullard forged a reputation, acclaimed by art critic John Berger on his first solo exhibition in 1958, as the best young realist sculptor in Britain, with bronze figures that appeared hurled, whacked and scraped into being.

Fullard's early death in 1973, aged just 50, and the difficulties of categorising his work which encompasses modelled figures made in the Cold War period, peculiar large-scale war assemblages and colourful enigmatic sculptures concerned with the sea have left him relatively little known by the public at large. Despite this, however, Fullard has been championed as a fluent draughtsman and a superb modeller, as well as an artist who explored the absurdities of life with a strong sense of irony.

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A charismatic head of sculpture at Chelsea School of Art from 1963 to 1973, Fullard influenced and encouraged a new generation of sculptors including Phyllida Barlow RA and David Nash RA. Barlow has described Fullard as a 'brilliant visionary who rejected traditional methods of stone carving and clay, and sent his students off to forage for materials on the street'.

Indeed, some of his works were made by combining raw timber and domestic fittings, many of which were salvaged from buildings being refurbished. In Fullard's small wooden figure *Pregnant Woman*, the torso is formed from uncut timber, the breast and belly from a round wooden object, and the skirt consists of a section of the circular wooden top of a small barrel. Each fragment of carved timber has been cleanly, meticulously sawn to create edges and lines, like a three-dimensional drawing.



(LEFT) *Pregnant Woman*, 1959, Wood, Unique; (right) *Flower Piece*, 1968, Mixed Media, Unique

Whether working in materials such as clay, plaster, concrete, bronze and wood, Fullard's sculptures were largely devoted to the human figure. John Berger wrote about his works' 'human tender' realism: 'We follow with our eyes the development of the physical fact of a clenched hand, a crossed leg, a rising breast... until at the moment of recognition we realize that all this and more lies behind and makes up the reality of one woman or child during one second of their lives. And in this human tender sense, I would say that Fullard is one of the few genuine existentialist artists of today. He opens up for us the approach to and from the moment of awareness.' John Berger, 'George Fullard', *New Statesman*, vol 56, no. 1434 (6 September 1958), p.274

According to writer and art historian Michael Bird, and as stated in the hardback publication *Sculpture and Survival* published in 2016, *Three Women* - the last modelled sculpture that Fullard would make for two years - 'suggests a single figure caught in three separate frames of one flowing movement: setting off, walking briskly, coming to a sudden halt and turning towards the viewer. Despite the abrupt, impulsive handling of the surface, Fullard's sensitivity to women's stance and attitude retains its characteristic humour and tenderness.'

Also on display will be a selection of Fullard's instantly recognisable bronze heads. Director of Pangolin, Rungwe Kingdon, describes these as '(...) beaten, punched, scratched and torn into forms that are vibrant in themselves, they reveal at certain angles a character, a sense of a real personality, where lip and eye, nostril or brow are all that are needed in conjunction with the 'mass of matter' to suggest the individual.'

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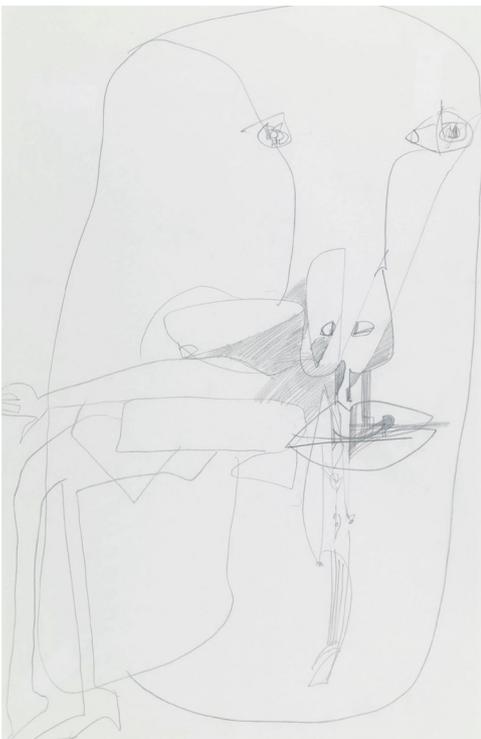
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The freedom suggested by these sculptures is even more evident in Fullard's drawings. His pencil and brush seem to move with great facility and assurance, the instinct for line and shape both childlike and sophisticated. The majority of his late 1950s drawings study two distinctive themes: running or dancing women, and spare, linear heads – many such as *Woman Running*, with her skirt flaring and hair flying backwards, projecting a quirky human warmth.

The running figure (as well as walking and falling figures) also allude directly to George Fullard's experience of war. He suffered severe injuries in an exploding tank at the battle of Monte Cassino during World War II, and this trauma became a central theme in his work. In some pieces, Fullard reimagined war through the filter of a child's game or a dream and has created perhaps the most poetic sculptures on the subject to date. In *The Infant St George*, part of the *War Game* project, the child's slatted body is also a wooden 'wall' mounted on wheels. There is a protruding gun barrel, with a roof-like head in place of a hair-like roof, and it powers forward unrestrained by the thin parental totem behind it. The game element here is incorporated in the form of two golf clubs representing the child's feet.

In his later works, Fullard developed the dreamscapes into a new world of imagined journeys across sea and sky. Mostly wall-based, like *Flower Piece* - which contains collage-like circular elements made from a batch of plastic lightshades - these colourful reliefs create a romantic notion of travel as an end in itself; the journeys of children's adventure stories or songs, nostalgic for an age of steam travel at a pace more suited to dreams and the early films and stories which inspired him.

George Fullard's works are intense, personal, skilful and playful with a very individual use of media and born of a totally unique vision.



(LEFT) *Female Head IV*, Pencil on Paper, 1961, Unique; (RIGHT) George Fullard with *Phoenix*, 1960, Metal, Unique

The Gallery is open from Monday - Saturday, 10am - 6pm

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