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STEVE HURST

WAR TOYS

9 July - 23 August 2014



STEVE HURST
MARCH OF FOLLY, 2005

Coinciding with the centenary of the First World War, Pangolin London will host an exhibition of works by sculptor and war historian Steve Hurst. Whether cast, fabricated, drawn or written, Hurst's work often actively questions common opinion and official war history and contrasts it with his own personal experience.

The enigmatic sculptures, collages and assemblages that result from these combined interests are instantly recognisable in form, yet imbued with a poignant sense of the tragedy, futility and injustice of war.

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STEVE HURST
BEAUMONT, 1971
THE SOMME SERIES

Steve Hurst was born in 1932 in Cairo to British parents. By the outbreak of the Second World War the Hursts had returned to their native Oxfordshire, where Steve would spend his childhood years. From a young age he was aware of the devastation and change that war brought. His mother and father had lost friends and family to the First World War and were part of that initial generation of pilgrims who journeyed to Flanders and Picardy to pay respect to lost loved ones and seek answers and perhaps some solace amongst the devastation.

His parent's accounts of this harrowing trip were the catalyst for Steve Hurst's own expeditions to the Western Front in the late 1960s and early '70s. These trips inspired 'The Somme Series', a body of sculpture and relief works that draw on the destroyed landscape of the area, symbolising the events that took place there and the lives lost.

Hurst was himself called up for national service in the early fifties and had first hand experience of war while posted in Malaya. Army life, the disorganisation and indeed sadism of some of his comrades, left him critical and questioning of his own position within the conflict.

Between 1979 – 1981, during some of the worst of the Northern Irish 'Troubles', Steve Hurst took up a post as the head of the sculpture department at the University of Ulster, Belfast. Seemingly drawn to situations of conflict, Hurst taught students and made his own work

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STEVE HURST
RUINED CITIES, 2000



STEVE HURST
AFGHANISTAN DRAWING, 2013

amidst the constant threat of bombing. The instability of the city had a direct impact on his sculpture, working with wood and found materials which were lightweight and easily available to him. On a practical level these could be transported easily from the studio to home for safe-keeping and on a conceptual level reflected the fragile nature of the situation in Northern Ireland.

As with his studies of the Somme and his experiences in Malaya, he approached the conflict in Northern Ireland with a sympathetic yet critical eye and sought, through his work, to understand what felt like a futile and destructive war.

In the decades that followed Hurst's fascination with war endured. During the Iraq and Afghanistan wars he kept a diary of daily sketches and collages. Aesthetically these works have a strong topographical quality that pays homage to his time in the army as a tactical sketcher and air photo interpreter. The sculptures also made during this time are perhaps some of his most politically critical. The series of 'War Toys' and in particular his carved wood *March of Folly* make a strong comment on the corruption and stupidity of the political leaders engaged in these conflicts, with a particular focus on Blair and Bush.

Between 2009 – 2013 Hurst began to make regular visits to Ypres as artist in residence at the In Flanders Fields Museum. He was honored with a retrospective at the Museum in 2013 exhibiting both older works from his extensive oeuvre and a newer body of sculpture based on his visits to the city. Many works from the Ypres Series question our culture's



STEVE HURST
CHOCOLATE MENIN GATE, 2013
THE YPRES SERIES

obsession with war and indeed notions of remembrance and commemoration in relation to the First World War.

Steve Hurst's sculpture, reliefs and drawings ask difficult and poignant questions about accountability and the true human cost of war. In addition, Hurst's lifelong artistic exploration of the subject speaks not only of the artist's enduring interest, but of the ever evolving and enduring nature of war itself.

This selling exhibition includes sculpture and works on paper and is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. For further information on additional works in the exhibition please contact us.

Gallery open Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm

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