

**Ink & Steel****Michael Craig-Martin, Garth Evans, Antony Gormley and Charles Ray**

A prominent strand of the Holtermann Fine Art programme explores tendencies in post-war and contemporary sculpture, looking at how important issues emerge when works by different artists are placed in close and meaningful dialogue with one another.

In our autumn show we are looking at the relationship between sculpture and drawing, beyond the familiar art museum category of 'sculptors' drawings' and beyond modernist 'drawing in space'. Rather than attend to the gestural, the calligraphic and the performing body of the artist, our exhibition focuses on the actual materiality of drawing and sculpture, considering them in dialogue, through the two- and three-dimensional possibilities of ink and steel, an industrial material well-known in sculpture since the 1960s.

*Ink & Steel* includes works by four artists - Michael Craig-Martin (b. 1941), Garth Evans (b. 1934), Antony Gormley (b. 1950) and Charles Ray (b. 1953) - one American, one American raised and two British, with active careers which play important roles in the sculpture cultures of both countries from the 1960s up to the present. Seeing their works together in an intimate white cube environment reminds of how imaginatively these artists explore sculpture through the possibilities of conceptualism and envisage drawing as having a compelling material and three-dimensional life of its own.

Charles Ray (b. 1953) is an artist who thinks (and has always thought) about sculpture and whose works address their problems and promises in equal measure, exploring the idea of sculpture past (and recent past), and pulling it into the here and now. 'Ink Drawing' (1988) is a particularly good early work through which to highlight this, whilst working perfectly for the sculpture and drawing conversation we are presenting.

'Ink Drawing' is a conceptually brilliant work and its measured simplicity, coupled with its urgency and its anxiety-inducing quality, make it an important work through which to think about cross-disciplinary artistic relations and questions of medium-specificity. At once a drawing and also a sculpture it alludes to both simultaneously. It is furthermore a work that, although 'non-figurative', alludes powerfully to the human body as a vessel and container (here of printer ink, rather than blood).

Antony Gormley's 'Liner' series of sculptures have become well-known in recent years, standing for the artist's work in the way his lead figures did in earlier decades. 'Liners' explore the fluidity of the human body through elaborate orthogonal compositions made of steel. These works give three-dimensional form to our nervous systems, outlining the human body not as anatomical drawing might, describing every muscle and sinew, but as a fascinating system of pressure points, running from head to toe. These networks evoke its inner energies and force lines, using the poetry of metal to articulate them and animate their 2d/3d dynamics. Like Ray's 'Ink Drawing', it too is a sculpture and a drawing simultaneously and both are kinds of vessel offering different accounts of the body: one vitreous, the other ventilated and both framing the idea of body in contrasting ways.

Michael Craig-Martin's 'Handcuffs', made in 1985, only a couple of years before Ray's 'Ink Drawing', is a wall-bound work made of painted steel and aluminium. It is part of a larger body of wall-based works which delineate individual objects, enlarging them and exploring them in relief, often accompanied by their own shadows. 'Handcuff', at once a painted steel sculpture and a large free-standing drawing, is an arresting image - literally and metaphorically - and sits in dialogue with Ray's 'Ink Drawing' chiming with its monochromatic spirit, as well as its material and conceptual energy. 'Handcuffs' is also evocative of a missing body, and in this way speaks to the subtle figurative imaginary of the other works in the exhibition.

Garth Evans' pen and ink drawing of the 1970s comes out of a long-standing investigation of the sculptural properties of steel that the artist began embarking upon from the late 1960s, coinciding with his two-year fellowship with the British Steel Corporation between 1969 and 1971, as part of his involvement with the Artists' Placement Group. 'Breakdown' (1971), a large floor-bound and expansive steel work (27 x 25 x 18 feet), came out of this fellowship, referring at once to a state of mind and a formal and compositional strategy. So too did the pen and ink drawings on display here which create similar expansive and asymmetrical linear networks explored on large sheets of paper and which at one point were to be made as sculptures with the same 'one square inch bar' as the earlier 'Breakdown'. They were eventually kept as independent drawings, animated by their 'own illusion of three dimensions' whilst also highly resonant of the sectional angularity of welded steel bars.

Dr Jon Wood