

WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Press Release

Barry Flanagan

18 September–24 November 2019

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham



Ikon presents a major survey of work by Barry Flanagan, one of Britain's most inventive sculptors, filling entirely the gallery's two floors of exhibition space. It includes key pieces drawn from the Estate of Barry Flanagan, Tate, Arts Council Collection and Southampton City Gallery.

Curated by Jo Melvin, the exhibition will bring together a selection of Flanagan's iconic bronze sculptures (1980s–90s) alongside earlier works, offering new insights into the connections between seemingly distinct aspects of his practice. Demonstrating an ongoing experimentation with materials and their properties, and a symbiosis between abstraction and figuration, the exhibition will challenge the supposition that Flanagan's later works represent a marked shift in his approach to art-making. Rather, they represent the distillation of his decades-long fascination with ontology, movement and the physicality of the various materials with which he worked.

Flanagan enrolled at Birmingham College of Arts and Crafts to study architecture in 1957, transferring to the fine art department a year later, before moving to London in 1960. The exhibition will highlight his presence in the city, signified also by the placement of one of his bronzes, *Large Troubador* (2004) outside Ikon's premises in Brindleyplace.

Flanagan's first solo exhibition in London in 1966 positioned him as a leading figure in what soon became known generally as conceptual art, although working sculpturally with sand, cloth, plaster, string and paper. Ikon will present a number of works from this time including *sand muslin 2* (1966), *2 space rope sculpture (gr 2 sp 60)* (1967), *heap 3 '67* (1967), *sand pour* (1968) and *Untitled twice* (1973).

In 1972 Flanagan bought a copy of the book *The Leaping Hare* by George Ewart Evans and David Thomson, an 'anthropological study' of the hare combining legends from different cultures, superstitions and mythologies. Revealing the hare as a symbol of unpredictability, resurrection and renewal, it resonated with Flanagan in terms of the fundamental proposition of his work overall. Film works (*hole in the sea*, 1969,

bollards project, 1970) and projected light installations (for example *daylight light pieces 1 & 2*, '69, 1969) in particular convey Flanagan's preoccupation with transience and fugitive phenomena, and the hares were embodiments of this, for example, *Ball and Claw* (1981), *Leaping Hare* (1982), *Large Boxing Hare on Anvil* (1984), *Figure in the Trees* (1993) and *Juggler* (1994).

For Flanagan, sculpture was as much performance, sound, light as it was bronze and carving. The exposure of process and method is something he consistently performed in every medium he used throughout his career. He frequently used casts of objects as components in sculptures and allowed bits of the armature to show through stripes of clay or plaster, thereby exposing and recording the processes of its making. The durational nature of his films is translated into the bronzes, as we bear witness to the processes of casting. It is aptly contradictory then, that the fleeting hare should become a monument to time and duration, channelling the quixotic, mysterious propositions implicit in the early work.

The exhibition is supported by Brindleyplace, The Estate of Barry Flanagan and Waddington Custot. Key loans have been made possible through The Ferryman Project: Sharing Works of Art which is supported by National Lottery players through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the John Ellerman Foundation and Art Fund.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Image

Barry Flanagan, *one ton comer piece '67*, (1967) and *heap 3 '67* (1967) at Cullinan Richards 2015, © The Estate of Barry Flanagan courtesy Plubronze Ltd

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact

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Exhibition: Barry Flanagan
Address: Ikon, Birmingham, Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
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Opening Times: Tuesday-Sunday & Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am-5pm
Admission: Free

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