Press Release

Barry Flanagan *Alchemy of the Theatre*
4 March–18 April 2020

Private View: Tuesday 3 March, 6–8pm

Waddington Custot are pleased to present *Alchemy of the Theatre,* an exhibition of work by Barry Flanagan (b. 1941, Prestatyn, North Wales; d. 2009, Ibiza, Spain) focussing on the works in bronze for which he is widely celebrated. The exhibition marks forty years since the first solo exhibition of Flanagan's work at Waddington Custot, then Waddington Galleries, in 1980.

Alchemy of the Theatre explores the theatrical elements of Flanagan's sculptures, from their dramatic conception, to the performances of the hares to reflect human experience. At the heart of the exhibition are Flanagan's well-loved sculptural depictions of hares, which are captured in various positions of dynamic movement, cast in bronze.

By taking an exuberant, irreverent, and often humorous approach to his subjects, Flanagan injected a palpable new energy into a medium steeped in tradition, embracing the '*bloom and drama*' of the dark surfaces of their material. Using the hare as a metaphor, Flanagan explored the human experiences and actions which contribute to and convey an individual personality or identity. The hares leap, dance, sit pensively; they perform as troubadours, swing as acrobats; they are cricketers and jugglers. Seen together, they provide a means to explore a full spectrum of emotion and experience from delight to boredom, melancholia to pure unbridled joy.

Flanagan began to focus his practice more resolutely on bronze from 1979. Proclaiming the atmosphere of the bronze casting foundry to be: '*as exciting as standing in the wings of a theatre, with the first night buzz*', he would develop a deep engagement with the material of bronze and the fabrication of the sculptures, even setting up a temporary apartment on the premises of east London's A&A Foundry with whom he worked. Now known as AB Fine Art Foundry, it is the same location where today the Estate of Barry Flanagan is headquartered.