

Barry Flanagan
Sculptures 2001 - 2008
30 April–23 May 2008
 Monday – Friday 10am-6pm
 Saturday 10am- 1.30pm



Small Mirrored Nijinski 2004
 bronze - 63.5 x 81.3 x 22.9 cm

*“One doesn’t work out of a reaction **against** but out of affection **for** something. For the meaning of forms”* Barry Flanagan

Waddington Galleries are delighted to announce an exhibition of recent bronzes by Barry Flanagan, spanning the period of 2001-2008.

The exhibition comprises 23 bronzes; a medium Flanagan took up at the end of the 1970s and that inspired him to return to the figurative, predominantly in the form of animals. Most of the works exhibited are hares, which have become his trademark theme since casting his first *Leaping Hare* in 1979. Inspired by the sighting of a hare leaping through a snowy field, he chose to work with hare because of its energy, muscular physicality and grace. The hare has been a symbol of life for civilisations from the Egyptians to the Chinese, and in Western culture is associated with Christ and the resurrection. In an interview in 2006, Flanagan stated that he found in the hare a rich and expressive form that could carry the conventions of the cartoon and the attributions of the human into the animal form.² As a result of this Flanagan’s hares are anthropomorphic; they resemble human physique and characteristics.

Flanagan’s hares are never behaving straightforwardly, sometimes they leap, but over the Empire State Building, rather than through a field, while at other times they engage in human activities as dancing, pondering, playing instruments and painting. Barbara Dawson mentions in the accompanying catalogue that Flanagan at one point in his life harboured a desire to become a ballet dancer, and has made a series of bronzes inspired by the early 20th century Russian ballet dancer Nijinski. There are five Nijinski works in the show, varying from table-size, the *Small Mirrored Nijinski* (2004) to monumental, the 7m high *Large Nijinski on Anvil Point* (2001). In the latter he combines and contrasts the dynamism of the dancing hare balancing on the toes of one paw, simultaneously still and poised to leap away, with the solidity of the anvil acting as a base and reminder of the medium used.

Playfulness is a recurring theme in Flanagan’s work even when referring to a sculpture such as Rodin’s *The Thinker*, the famous sculpture on the theme of human intellectual meditation. With *Troubador* (2002) and *Large Troubador* (2004) Flanagan’s hare assumes the pose of the thinker on the rock however Flanagan has introduced the unique twist of adding a double bass, as if the hare is contemplating playing a music piece. The *Large Thinker on Computer* (2003) echoes Rodin’s pose of the philosopher, seated, chin in hand, however instead of a rock, the hare is seated on that symbol of modern technology and information culture, the computer.

Four of the works recall the leaping hare that first inspired Flanagan. *Moon Gold Hare* (2008), the most recent work in the show and the only gilded piece, portrays a five foot gilded hare leaping over a bronze pyramid form on which a full and a crescent moon has been engraved. The connection between the hare and the moon can be found in the Indian and Japanese tradition of noting a hare in the pattern of the shadowed patches in the moon but also like with the Empire State, the hare is scaling supernatural heights. Flanagan enjoys incorporating objects into his compositions, for example in *Pirate Wheel* (2005), the hare leaps over a bicycle wheel where the markings of the original wheel are clearly evident in the casting, mounted on a stool that was cast from one Flanagan found at Waddington Galleries. This bronze references to Marcel Duchamp’s readymade *Bicycle Wheel* (1913).

The three works in the show that are not based on the theme of hares, are two versions of *An Unlikely Alliance* (2003 and 2006), which depict the unusual combination of a roaring North American cougar sitting on the back of a stoic Asian elephant. The third is *Podenco Hound* (2005), a bronze of the indigenous dog of Ibiza, the island where Flanagan has a studio. Like the hares, the Hound is dog is lithe and playful, but a hunter instead of prey.

Barry Flanagan was born in Prestatyn, North Wales in 1941. His first solo exhibition was held at the Rowan Gallery, London in 1966. Since then he has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions, both in Britain and abroad, and in 1982, represented Britain at the Venice Biennale. Retrospectives of his work have been held at the Fundación 'La Caixa' Madrid (1993), touring to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes (1994) and the Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, Germany, touring to the Musée d’Art Moderne et d’Art Contemporain, Nice (2002). The Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin held a major retrospective including large outdoor bronzes in 2006.

A fully illustrated catalogue with an introduction by Barbara Dawson accompanies the exhibition.

For further information or images please contact Leonie Holzwarth.

¹ Catherine Francblin, ‘Barry Flanagan, Always the Unexpected’, *Art Press*, no.186, December 1993

² *Barry Flanagan in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist*, in the Exhibition Catalogue of *Barry Flanagan Sculpture 1965-2005* at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2006, p. 65