

**PRESS RELEASE****William Turnbull***Sculpture & Paintings from 1946 to 1962*

31st January - 24th February 2007

Monday – Friday 10am-6pm  
Saturday 10am-1.30pm

Mask, 1947, bronze, edition of 4  
15 1/2 x 9 1/2 x 5/8 in / 39.5 x 24 x 1.5 cm

“Monumentality is a value and not a dimension”<sup>1</sup>

Waddington Galleries are pleased to announce an exhibition of sculpture and paintings by William Turnbull, concentrating on the years 1946 –1962.

The earliest work in the exhibition is *Mask 1946*. Originally conceived in concrete and string it was made whilst Turnbull was still a student at the Slade, London. In 1948 he transferred his grant to study in Paris, there meeting Brancusi, Leger and becoming friends with Héliou and Giacometti. In 1950, having moved back to London, he made *Horse* a linear dissection of three-dimensional space that stands poised without a base. This bronze has a direct relationship to the paintings of *Heads* and *Figure* from 1956, their motifs built from thick interlinking bars of monochromatic impasto.

To create *Figure 1955* corrugated cardboard was pressed into wet plaster making the column-like figure appear fashioned from seams of strata, its elemental shape revealed by lines of erosion - the fluid plaster fossilized into bronze, creating an aura of permanence and stillness. *Screwhead 1957* is a similar upturned-T composition whose forms originated from a chocolate grinder and grandfather clock but again, through Turnbull's economy of expression, suggests a motionless totemic figure.

These sculptures have a surface texture also seen in his paintings of that period such as the mysterious dark ridges of *Black Painting 1957*, made with a palette knife. The Monet retrospective of that year encouraged his exploration that painting could be about painting alone, leading Turnbull to subsequently abandon figurative elements in his own painting. The sculpture *Strange Fruit 1959* rests on its base like a primordial cranium, honed and shaped, weathered and pitted by the passage of time. The title, always given after the work is completed, is from a Billie Holiday song and offers the viewer a direction rather than description.

Turnbull was drafted into the services in 1941. He joined the RAF and served as a pilot, being stationed in Canada, Ceylon and India. The experience of flying - an unraveling of perspective and opening of spatial dimension - was to have a major impact on his work both through being airborne and the resulting flattening of the landscape. This tension between balance, movement and stillness can be seen in Turnbull's painting *20-1959* where two planes of colour are split by a single graceful high arch. In the large two-panel work *13-1960* there is also a chromatic balance, orange being balanced by its complementary hue, blue, both divided by a central passage of earth brown.

William Turnbull was born in Dundee Scotland in 1922. He held his first one-man exhibition in 1950 at the Hanover Gallery, London. In 1952 he was a founder member (along with Richard Hamilton, Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi) of the Independent Group based at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, which culminated in the *This is Tomorrow* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1956. He has had major retrospectives of sculpture and paintings at the Tate Gallery, 1973 the Serpentine Gallery, 1995-96 and Yorkshire Sculpture Park 2005.

**Please contact Louise Kybert for further information and images**

<sup>1</sup> William Turnbull, conversation with Amanda A. Davidson, 22 May 2002, Davidson, Amanda A.: 'Line and movement: Paris and London 1948-53', *The Sculpture of William Turnbull*, The Henry Moore Foundation, Hertfordshire in association with Lund Humphries, Hampshire, p. 25, 2005