

Waddington Galleries

PRESS RELEASE

BARRY FLANAGAN

LINEAR SCULPTURES IN BRONZE
AND STONE CARVINGS

28 JANUARY - 21 FEBRUARY 2004

This is the first showing of Barry Flanagan's recent linear sculptures in bronze, a series of small sculptures he began two years ago, most of which are unique. They are among the most tactile objects Flanagan has yet made, inviting the viewer to pick them up just for the pleasure of handling the smooth linear shapes. As Paul Levy points out in his catalogue introduction, everything Flanagan has ever done 'seems to have this element of playfulness, of wit and good humour.' And he continues: 'Sometimes there's mischief, sometimes sweetness, sometimes jokiness and jest - but always play. There's never a whiff of pretension in Flanagan's work - in his hands bronzes can be mighty, heroic even, but never pompous.'

These small bronzes demonstrate Flanagan's continuing awareness of forms in nature, whether in the shape of the bounding hare, trees bending under the force of a gale, or the delicate movements of crawling insects. The pleasure he takes in the ingenuity of organic structures are also investigations into the nature of the armature. Flanagan has always been a superb draughtsman, and those skills are fully demonstrated in the way in which he fashions lengths of pipe-cleaners into forms that simultaneously hide and reveal their subject matter. The pipe-cleaner sculptures are then dipped in wax and cast in bronze.

The bronzes are a form of drawing in space, and the stone carvings are about another way in which a sculptor uses his hands - modelling. Flanagan began working with stone in the mid-1970s, but the larger sculptures presented here were made in the early 1980s, carved by Italian stone masons from plaster or clay models made by the artist. These forms, which fold in on themselves like flesh or dough, are equally inviting to the touch. Like the bronzes, they are primarily tactile objects which demand an equally physical reaction on the part of the viewer. Flanagan uses stone, as he uses bronze, to subvert the traditional concept of the heroic and the monumental, and to redefine the relationship between the sculptor and his materials.

Barry Flanagan was born in Prestatyn, North Wales in 1941. His first solo exhibition was held at the Rowan Gallery, London in 1966. Since that time he has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions, both in Britain and abroad, and in 1982, represented Britain at the Venice Biennale with an exhibition of stone and bronze sculptures. In 2002, a major exhibition of his work was shown at the Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, Germany, and toured to the Musee d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice. His work is found in collections

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worldwide including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Kunsthaus, Zurich, and Tate. He lives in Dublin.

A fully illustrated catalogue accompanies this exhibition

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