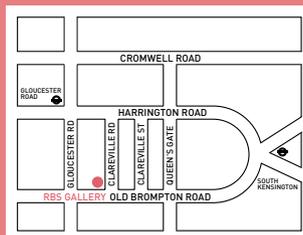




RBS Bursary Awards 2011

◀ Cover image:
Eric Schumacher
Untitled 2010

ROYAL
BRITISH
SOCIETY
OF
SCULPTORS



108 Old Brompton Road
London SW7 3RA

T +44 (0)20 7373 8615
E info@rbs.org.uk

www.rbs.org.uk

Registered charity no 212513

Demonstrating that sculpture is as important and relevant as ever, competition was again fierce for these annual awards and the sculptors on the RBS Council had a challenging time making the final selection. My heartfelt congratulations go to all ten of the 2011 RBS Bursary Awards winners.

These two year awards are designed to support talented early career sculptors in making the transition to full professional practice. This includes participation in the Bursary exhibition and catalogue, inclusion of their profiles on our website, free access to all the benefits of membership, as well as perhaps most importantly joining a community of artists who can provide the creative contact and critique that every sculptor needs to develop.

This is not a taught programme; the value of the award reflects an individual's engagement with it. I am immensely proud to witness the success of previous Bursary Award winners and am confident that this year's group will also excel in offering their own unique commentary on the world as it is and enriching the art of contemporary sculpture.

Johannes von Stumm
President

Foreword

There's an old joke that goes, 'Sculpture is something you bump into when you're backing up to look at a painting.' It is most commonly ascribed to the Abstract Expressionist painter Ad Reinhardt and probably dates from some time in the Fifties, when modernist painting, boosted by critics like Clement Greenberg was at its zenith. Yet even before Reinhardt's death in 1967 painting had begun to suffer a crisis of confidence and purpose it has never fully recovered from while sculpture continued to charge forward, expanding and diversifying at a dizzying pace.

Poststructuralist philosophy in the Sixties and Seventies challenged the notion of a single master narrative in art arguing that it served only to perpetuate an ossified, reactionary and phallogocentric reading of art history. As the critic Claire Bishop has noted more recently, "there is no one 'right' way of looking at the world, nor any privileged place from which such judgements can be made." Bishop was writing with particular reference to installation art but it is no great leap to extend her words to cover contemporary sculpture in general. While painting has weakened under the scrutinising gaze of conceptualism, sculpture has been able to adapt in form and composition precisely because it carries no expectation of a single, heirerachied perspective but asks of the the viewer to consider its status from multiple physical, aesthetic and theoretical positions as once. Over

the decades it has mutated, taking in abstraction, land art, installation art, performance and other forms without pausing or faltering.

Ultimately sculpture's defining virtue is that it exists in the world. Rather than being forced to stand back in contemplation, viewers are invited to step forward and engage with work. Sculpture is social. It is restless in its enquiries about place and space. And it continues to thrive.

We can see all those qualities on display in the work of the winners of this year's RBS Bursary Awards. In David Buckley who offers his art works as a kind of elegant dumb show, a silent, but pointed inquiry into the values of power and status implicit in the display of objects. In James Balmforth's explorations of process and tension. And in the way that Julia Malle remaps her adopted city of Edinburgh by utilising neon, normally the most garish of materials, in pursuit of "more subtle narratives" of the city, that are informed by texture and sensibility more than location or territory.

Questioning prevails. The title of Sian Griffith's work raises more queries than it answers. Are we supposed to take the words 'A Serious Sculpture' at face value? Does that preclude anything but a po-faced response to her work? And if so, how does that square with Griffith's use of cheap, disposable, profoundly unserious materials gathered from pound land stores, toyshops and stationers? Perhaps Griffith is suggesting that in the context of the gallery even the most throwaway of objects is rendered worthy of investigation.

If so, there's something of a similar proposition at play in the work of Katie Louis Surridge who brings unlikely materials such as pelt and bone and animal parts into the gallery in

order to watch them meld and grow and form new shapes. The consequences of this forced evolution are hybrid structures that carry the memory of their separate parts even as they reach towards a whole, and entirely novel, proposition of beauty.

The science fiction author William Gibson once wrote that “the street finds its own use for things.” This could pass as a description of the work of Hannah Wiles who explores the way that our presence transforms the meaning of the places we pass through. Wiles seems to suggest that we define our territories by our emotional responses to them and her practice can be seen as an attempt to make that process visible. In a series of works called Monotony, for instance, she inscribes that word, letter by letter on the benches, bins and other public furniture she finds around her in frustration – or is it benumbed fascination – at the repetitive presence of their standardized, uniform design.

Alex Chinneck also takes commonplace forms as a starting point. In his hands, objects constructed from utilitarian materials like breezeblock, London brick and concrete spring mysteriously to life, spewing steam and sliding back and forth. The effect is to remind us how fundamentally strange the everyday world really is. Viewed from the perspective of say, the proverbial Martian visitor, we make our homes in an unsettlingly voluble environment of noisy, flashing, clamorous machines and buildings, all of which we seem to pass through without registering. Chinneck’s work is a prompt to look again at the shape and function of over-familiar objects.

Mark Davey describes his sculptures as existing “somewhere between sensuality and sexuality”. Yet rather than sensuality the machines he builds, which perform their simple functions –

spinning, turning, touching – with a lurching, hypnotic elegance give off the suggestion of sentience. It’s as if they are bowing to the repetitive tasks assigned to them grudgingly, even as they regard us with a cool intelligence.

Eric Schumacher situates his work in the aftermath of modernist utopianism. In contrast to the faith in the future evidenced by cubism or brutalist architecture, he creates structures hacked together out of crude materials to apparently haphazard design – structures that manifestly fail to deliver a gleaming future but address instead the compromises and complexities of present day reality. Nevertheless, the effect is beguiling, a “recycled modernism” which suggests the potential that arises from embracing uncertainty rather than seeking its eradication through a quest for perfection.

Nodding also to the past, Kate McCleod uses traditional materials such as clay and plaster to evoke the figurative tradition in sculpture. But the result is works that are simultaneously monumental and abject. In Brace! for instance, submerged forms are visible, heads raised, arms outstretched. But they seem to have fallen victim to their ambitions. Limbs are propped up by cast off wood and junk. Bodies disappear beneath the surface into a protean mass of clay. And once an exhibition is concluded, the work itself will be swept away and consigned to memory.

In a larger sense, we could say that this process of making, unmaking and remaking speaks of the whole history of contemporary sculpture with its ongoing, unstinting commitment to articulate, in physical terms, the condition of the times.

Ekow Eshun
August 2011

James Balmforth

Since graduating from Chelsea College of Art & Design in 2003, James Balmforth has exhibited across the UK and abroad, including sculpture parks: Bold Tendencies, New Art Centre and Cass Sculpture Foundation. His second solo show, 'Forces and Needs' opens this October at Hannah Barry Gallery.

Statement

Our lives are shaped by structures, though our awareness of them is eroded by over familiarity. I am interested in the notion of structure both in its material and societal forms. I focus on breaking points; the stage at which a system or process breaks irretrievably; the amount of tension it can withstand before it exceeds its elastic limit. Structures are thus undermined or subverted, with an aim to expose a latent potential for new order and action.

Further information • www.jamesbalmforth.co.uk



David Buckley

With a BA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, David Buckley was awarded the REMET Prize for sculpture and the Cité des Arts Studio Award whilst studying for his MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in 2010. He was commissioned for the cover of Wallpaper* magazine's Next Generation edition, and has been selected for this year's Saatchi New Contemporaries exhibition.

Statement

Power is articulated through objects in their making, arrangement and display. I use gesture in the work of art as an anchor for a number of ways to explore this, and to think about the interaction between abstract objects and language. Authenticity and dynamism are features of this gesture, their legitimacy beyond question. Problems arise as the work of art is manipulated into an arrangement of objets d'art, changing the nature of the objects from primal and immediate to urbane and ironic.

Further information • www.davidbuckley.info



- ◀ Left to right:
James Balmforth
Failed Obelisk
We Don't Have Drawings,
We Think and We Build

- ▶ Left to right:
David Buckley
The Dead (detail)
Patience



Alex Chinneck

Since graduating from Chelsea College of Art & Design, London based artist Alex Chinneck continues to produce kinetic and wall-hung sculptures. Recently he was short-listed for the UK Young Artist award and is the founder of The Sculpture House, an organization that commissions emerging sculptors to produce limited edition items of furniture.

Statement

My work enlivens readily available construction materials by removing them from their utilitarian context and entering them into theatrical situations. I want to explore the illusory element of sculpture, employing clever engineering to perform visual tricks that entice and mystify the viewer. Using contemporary methods of fabrication I make work that is unconcerned with creative disciplines and can exist across the realms of art, design and architecture.

Further information • www.alexchinneck.com



- ◀ Left to right:
Alex Chinneck
Concrete Cross-dresser
(detail)
Self Employed

- ▶ Left to right:
Mark Davey
Fresh and Bright (detail)
Machine to catch a strip
light

Mark Davey

Graduating from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2008, Mark Davey won the Saatchi Gallery's New Sensations competition the same year. He completed his postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Art this year and has shown work across the UK including a solo show at Backlit Gallery, Nottingham.

Statement

I often have a reluctance to read any more into a piece of my work other than what you are presented with; a machine that catches, dunks, rubs or reflects.

However, the pieces are usually erotically charged in a way that reminds us of ourselves, and perhaps the relationships that we invest in. Sometimes perverse (designer pants and oil) and sometimes beautiful (oscillating convex mirror) my work walks the line, quite literally, between man and machine.

Further information • www.mark-davey.com



Sian Griffiths

Sian Griffiths completed her BA Fine Art Degree at Loughborough University in 2010. After graduating she became artist-in-residence at a secondary school in Stevenage. She has also exhibited in numerous group shows across the UK.

Statement

My practice engages with a process of transformation. Brightly coloured junk from pound shops and rubbish bins is subtly altered and juxtaposed to elevate its aesthetic status.

I establish an obsessive relationship with the object's materiality in which I am guided by intuition and spontaneity. The resulting pieces are ornate and highly sensual, challenging notions of taste and beauty, whilst also implicating the viewer in a playful and mesmerising manner.

Further information • www.siangriffiths.co.uk



Julia Malle

Having originally trained as a scientific glassblower, Julia Malle now works as an independent artist in Edinburgh. She completed her Master of Fine Art degree at Edinburgh College of Art in 2010 and her work is shown in galleries and museums both nationally and internationally.

Statement

In my sculptures light and glass come together to form map-like structures that stand independently in the architectonic space. This kind of gestural neon is peculiar and idiosyncratic rather than commercial in character.

The material quality of the tubing exploits both the membrane like nature of a glass tube and its potential for thinness and fragility and the coloristic immateriality of light against the hard, cold surfaces of the glass.

Further information • www.juliamalle.com



◀ Left to right:
Sian Griffiths
A Serious Sculpture
Umbrella (detail)

▶ Left to right:
Julia Malle
Rhizome (detail)
Untitled 1



Kate McLeod

After graduating from Goldsmiths College in 2005, Kate McLeod spent three years working for Anthony Caro. In 2009 she completed a Masters at the Slade School of Fine Art and has exhibited in group shows around the UK. McLeod had her first solo exhibition last year at The Postbox Gallery, London.

Statement

My practice is underpinned by the notion of 'becoming other'. The work is visceral; an expressive pursuit concerned with materiality within a figurative sculptural practice.

I use archetypal materials such as clay and plaster to work into figures and these materials are braced by off-cuts and junk. It is un-monumental yet clearly references a monumental classical sculptural tradition. A major part of my current practice is a series of temporary sculptures made by physically throwing clay at structures.

Further information • kate.mcleod@btinternet.com



Eric Schumacher

After completing his studies in Sculpture at Edinburgh College of Art in 2010, Eric Schumacher was predominantly based at the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop. His first major show took place at the annual graduate show 'They Had Four Years' at GENERATOR projects, Dundee in 2011.

Statement

The critical confrontation with our aesthetic everyday-environment stands at the forefront of my artistic research. By citing a basic language of architecture and design and by utilising inexpensive materials, my work refers to the crude construction methods used in post-war Europe and beyond, relating to our present habitat and its cultural backgrounds.

Questioning the confrontation between decay and progress by analysing the relationships between space, form, time and function, I create installations and sculptures of striking angular geometries.

Further information • www.ericshumacherartist.com

- ◀ Left to right:
Kate McLeod
Small Mediterranean Blue
Brace (1) Musgrove Road

- ▶ Left to right:
Eric Schumacher
Untitled (detail) 2011
Untitled (detail) 2010



Katie Surridge

Whilst Katie Surridge studied at Slade School of Fine Art in 2010 she was awarded The Dolbey Scholarship for Art and Travel and was a finalist of the Saatchi Gallery's New Sensations competition. Her most recent solo show, 'Voo-dology', was at EB&Flow Gallery during Summer 2011.

Statement

My work incorporates elements of animal and botanical origin, such as pelts and bones. I enjoy focusing on discarded materials caught between production and decomposition. This process of discovery is integral to my work and, having found these materials, I rearrange them to construct large structural forms, which often grow to fit a space and form links with each other. Finding an aesthetic in these disposed or unloved items, is important to me.

Further information • www.ebandflowgallery.com



Hannah Wiles

In October 2010 Hannah Wiles graduated with a Masters degree from MIRIAD (Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design). Prior to this in 2007, Wiles received a First Class Honours degree from the School of Art and Design at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Statement

For me, places are experienced concretely, not as equations of function to form. In this sense, architecture is 'not' place until and unless we subvert it with the contents of our lives.

Through my work, I hope to confront how people respond to place through transforming it in a way that encourages interaction. I am also interested in emotional and intuitive responses to specific spaces, considering multi-sensory aspects and the effects of the urban environment on the individual.

Further information • www.hannahwiles.com



◀ Left to right:
Katie Surridge
And in Pole Position
Diary Pots

▶ Left to right:
Hannah Wiles
Untitled (Plasticine)
Untitled (Gold Pins)



Deirdre Hubbard Award

This award was initiated by Helaine Blumenfeld FRBS OBE in memory of one of our Fellows, Deirdre Hubbard, who died in 2009. With work in numerous collections, Hubbard had a long and successful career and made a passionate contribution to the Society and its support of newly emergent sculptors.

The President, Johannes von Stumm, together with Helaine Blumenfeld selected Neil Dixon (Bursary 2010) as the recipient of this award of £500 for distinction in the 2010 exhibition.

Neil Dixon graduated from Nottingham Trent University in 2009 with a BA in Fine Art. He is now a member of Stand Assembly studio group in Nottingham and has exhibited widely across the UK. Dixon has taken inspiration from the village Portmeirion in Wales and from artists such as Simon Le Ruez, Graham Hudson, Matthew Houlding, David Thorpe, Paul Noble and Egon Schiele.

Further information • www.standassembly.org



▶ Neil Dixon
(Bursary 2010)
Whatever You Want

The Gilbert Bayes Charitable Trust was established in 1996 by his son and daughter, Geoffrey and Jean Bayes, who gifted to it a jointly owned collection of their father's works of art.

The principle objective of the trust has been to advance the education of the public in the knowledge understanding and appreciation of the Arts with particular emphasis being placed on sculpture and the works of Gilbert Bayes.

The trustees went a long way to fulfilling their objective by providing funds to the V&A to enable it to refurbish an area of the museum, which was subsequently named the Gilbert Bayes Sculpture Gallery.

The Trustees approached the Royal British Society of Sculptors where, fittingly, Gilbert Bayes served as President between 1939 and 1944, in order to support early career sculptors. As the work of the RBS, through its bursary scheme, so closely matches the objects of the charity, the trustees were pleased to make the first of five annual grants in January 2008.

Gilbert Bayes Charitable Trustees

ISBN: 978-0-9521592-1-6



The RBS Bursary Awards are supported
by the Gilbert Bayes Charitable Trust

◀ The Gilbert Bayes Gallery at the V&A
© V&A Images Victoria and Albert Museum

ROYAL
BRITISH
SOCIETY
OF **SCULPTORS**