



RICHARD ROME

AT CANARY WHARF

Curated by Ann Elliott for Canary Wharf Group

3 April — 2 June 2017
Daily 7am — midnight
Lobby, One Canada Square,
Westferry Circus and Cabot Square

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This collection of cast, forged and welded bronze and steel sculptures by Richard Rome forms the largest exhibition of his work to be seen in London since the 1970s. A number of monumental sculptures are displayed in external spaces at Canary Wharf - in Cabot Square and Westferry Circus - with numerous pieces in the Lobby of One Canada Square, which together cover nearly forty years of the artist's dedication to making sculpture. But it is as a teacher that Richard Rome is also known and respected, which gave him little time or even inclination to promote his own work. This is not to imply that his sculpture has never been exhibited, the reverse is true, but for an artist of his age and standing he has had relatively few solo shows, his last being in 1982. Visiting his massive studio in the Kentish countryside is akin to discovering a treasure trove of works of art in steel and bronze. Carefully stored and covered, only a few needed conservation treatment by the artist to make them ready for exhibition and to be seen in the light of day.

The earliest piece shown is in the centre of Westferry Circus, *W1* 1976-77, which spans nearly five metres. As Martin Holman described in his monograph on Richard Rome (*Richard Rome*, Lund Humphries 2011), the piece has a formal clarity of simple shapes in sheet steel, cut and welded with impressive accuracy. Balance and lightness of being are described within the triangles, beams and blocks that rest gently on the ground. At this time Rome had been appointed senior tutor in sculpture at Canterbury College of Art and *W1* was exhibited in his solo show, *Large Outdoor Sculptures* at The University of Kent in 1977.



Pepper Rock 1997. Photograph: © Jonty Wilde



Novington 1985

From welding sheet steel, beams and bars into sculptures, all perfectly finished in order that the welds should not corrupt the surface, Rome moved to forging elements for his sculptures. The mix of steel sheet, manufactured beams and bars with newly forged members resulted in his work becoming more fluid and expressive.

Three sculptures occupy the perimeter of Westferry Circus, all in galvanised steel: *Clotho* 1990-93, *Caryatid: Looking South* 1993-98 and *Unkar* 1990-2015, which present vertical compositions that are full of incident throughout their height anchored by weight bases. The same may be said for *Pepper Rock* 1997, located in Cabot Square. However, the active elements in this latter piece are partially enclosed by the vertical column and horizontal beam at the top. Rome says that his starting point for this sculpture was the shape of a torus located at the top of the sculpture. By combining elements from abandoned sculptures, he built the form intuitively to its successful conclusion. *Lachesis* 1990-2015, shown in the Lobby of One Canada Square, is also part of this group. Richard Rome's way of working demonstrates a continuum of making and revisiting a sculpture some years later. The period of twenty-five years over which *Lachesis* reached completion is one of the most extreme. *Clotho* and *Lachesis* are the Greek names of two of the three Fates (the third being *Atropos*, a sculpture that Rome also made at this time, which is not featured here). *Clotho* was responsible for weaving cloth, *Lachesis*, normally seen clothed in white, measured the thread spun on *Clotho's* spindle.

The earliest of the larger sculptures in the Lobby of One Canada Square, *Liam's House* 1985 is an



Boy's Dream 2006

exemplar of forged and welded steel. When asking Richard Rome how he decided on titles for his work, his answer was that it varied a lot. For example *Liam's House* was named for the son of the sculptor, Hamish Black, in whose studio in Sussex Rome was working, with access to a well-equipped workshop with a forge and power-hammer. *Novington* 1985, made at the same period, was named after the lane on which Black's house was located. Many, but not all titles are autobiographical. Some are locations he visited when making a sculpture or places remembered; other titles are self-explanatory such as the *Alphabet Series* and the *Nubian Series*.

A number of sculptures in this selection feature the form of an archway; *Self* 1991 in plaster, and its bronze version cast in 2006, is in effect a self-portrait. Modelled in clay before being cast in plaster to create the mould for bronze casting, the vertical elements differ and the linking horizontal members seem to pull apart. This tension shows to a greater extent in the bronze *Irresolute Clay* 2003, where the linked arms are joining the distinctly differing verticals, one soft, the other hard-edged. At the time of naming this sculpture, Rome had been reading the poem *Walking Away* by Cecil Day Lewis about taking his son to boarding school:

*That hesitant figure, eddying away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature's give-and-take - the small,
the scorching
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay.*¹

Of the small sculptures in the exhibition, *XXIX Steady* 1982/84 exhibits similar formal elements.

¹ From C Day Lewis *The Gate and Other Poems* Jonathan Cape, London 1962, p.21

The Alphabet series, of which this exhibition includes 'J', 'L' and 'M', were made in 1985 but not cast in bronze until 1990-91. The models were made in wax: Rome found that he could create the forms he wanted by making sheets of wax, cutting and bending them when they were almost set but still malleable, and joining them with more liquid wax. The letters are just the basis for compositions that Rome would take to conclusion intuitively.

Bronze sculptures *Horsereach* 1989 and *Riven* 1989, cast in 1996, are two distinctly horizontal compositions, the former made initially in wax, and the latter modelled in clay. The 'horse' element does not refer to the animal but is based on the notion of a sawhorse or clothes horse. *Riven* is literally an assemblage of fragments.

The arch that is clearly defined in *Irresolute Clay* and *Self* appears again in *Parted* 2006 and also, but subliminally, in *Blackstone River North* 1998, *Song in Iron* 2006, *Embrace* 2009 and *For SP* 2009 in which the enclosed space is filled with activity and incident.



Riven 1989-97

Although not a figurative sculptor, elements of the human form are revealed in a number of Rome's sculptures. Humanity also plays a part in the feelings that some of the works transmit. *Mother and Child* 2002, *Boy's Dream* and *Girl's Dream*, both of 2006, *BH1* and *BH2* of 2007 and even *Split Riven* 2008 and *Sculptor* 2008 speak of humanity or of human activity. The form of the head is clearly delineated in *Boy's Dream*, *Girl's Dream*, *BH1* and *BH2* - open in the 'Dream' sculptures, closed in the 'BH' pieces, these being an acronym for Bomb Head. *Split Riven* and *Sculptor*, however, are much more joyous and full of incident, containing the sculptor's tools and a set square included in the form of *Sculptor*.

Apollo and Daphne 2010, although not initially conceived as being related to the figure, was named by Rome on completion, when the composition reminded him of the sculpture *Apollo and Daphne* 1625 by the Italian sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who captured the moment when Daphne was transformed into a tree. Rome's sculpture exhibits a similar rhythm in its two dynamic, leaning elements.

A group of small sculptures dating from 1976 to 2015 completes the exhibition. Their rich, dense compositions echo the larger works, although none are studies for larger pieces. Each is cast in bronze or iron, Richard Rome's signature in enduring materials.

Ann Elliott
March 2017



Above: Self 1991



Above: Song in Iron 2006



Above: Embrace 2009

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Richard Rome was born in Harpenden, Hertfordshire in 1943. On leaving school he worked for Trollope and Colls, a construction company, then from 1962 he studied at St Albans School of Art. Among his tutors were the sculptors George Fullard, John Mills and John Wragg. In 1966 he completed a one-year post-graduate course at Chelsea School of Art, again being taught by Fullard and Wragg.

Teaching on a part-time basis since his first appointments at Brighton College of Art and Walthamstow School of Art allowed him time for his own development as an artist. Other teaching posts followed, including senior lecturer at Canterbury College of Art, course-leader in Site Specific Sculpture at Wimbledon College of Art in 1989 and tutor of bronze casting at the Royal College of Art in 1991. The RCA's new bronze foundry, designed by Rome, was completed in 1995-96. He retired from teaching there in 2008.

Rome established his first studio in Chelsea in 1967 before moving to share a new space in Shoreditch in London with Derek Boshier, John Maine (whom we have exhibited at Canary Wharf), Glynn Williams and Lee Grandjean. After sharing other studio spaces in London, Rome established his current studio in a former hop-packing shed near Faversham in Kent, which enables him to work directly on large-scale sculptures.

Throughout his career Richard Rome has participated in many group exhibitions internationally, but has had relatively few solo shows. However, he travels regularly to America where he has attended workshops and undertaken residencies. Rome was appointed Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Art in 2009. He lives in London and continues to work in his Kentish studio.

For more information visit richardrome.co.uk

Exhibition Tour

Tuesday 25 April, 6.30pm to 7.30pm
Curator Ann Elliott tours the exhibition with Richard Rome

The tour is free but please contact Canary Wharf Public Art Office at visualart@canarywharf.com to reserve a place.

Most of the works are for sale

Photography courtesy of the artist unless otherwise credited.

LIST OF WORKS

Dimensions in cm, height x width x depth

THE LOBBY, ONE CANADA SQUARE:

Fold and Cut (Nubian Series)

1976/77 Bronze
16.7 x 23.5 x 20.7

Study for a Sculpture

1977 Bronze
13.7 x 15.2 x 11.2

Baltimore

1980 Bronze
20 x 11 x 11

XXII Still Life

1982/84 Bronze
21 x 15 x 9.4

XX Weald

1982/84 Bronze
15 x 15.1 x 7.4

XXIX Steady

1982/84 Bronze
14.5 x 17 x 10.5

XXVII Little Korean

1982/84 Bronze
14.7 x 17 x 11.4

Maquette

1984 Bronze
20 x 21 x 8.5

Liam's House

1985 Forged and welded steel
63 x 79.5 x 47

Novington

1985 Forged steel, painted
115 x 63 x 52

Horsereach

1989 Bronze
22.5 x 37.5 x 15

Riven

1989 cast 1996 Bronze
39.9 x 58 x 18.2

'J'

1985 cast 1990-91 Bronze
52.5 x 31.5 x 23

'L'

1985 cast 1990/91 Bronze
55.5 x 39 x 20

'M'

1985 cast 1990/91 Bronze
49.5 x 34 x 20

Lachesis

1990-2015 Galvanised steel
235 x 80 x 75

Self

1991 Plaster
129.5 x 76.5 x 27.8

Self

1991 cast 2006 Bronze
129 x 75.5 x 28.5

Blackstone River North

1998 Bronze
26.5 x 25.5 x 16

Mother and Child

2002 Bronze
202 x 65 x 58

Irresolute Clay

2003 Bronze
107 x 84.5 x 36

Song in Iron

2006 Cast iron and bronze
64.5 x 33 x 22.2

Boy's Dream

2006 Iron
65 x 43 x 13

Girl's Dream

2006 Iron
66 x 40 x 13

Parted

2006 Cast iron
81 x 80 x 55

BH1

2007 Bronze
51 x 57 x 29

BH2

2007 Bronze,
cast from 1988 plaster
93 x 40 x 34

Split Riven

2008 Iron
72 x 35.5 x 4

Sculptor

2008 Iron
99.5 x 49.8 x 19.5

Embrace

2009 Iron
114.3 x 60.5 x 27.5

For SP

2009 Iron
93.3 x 63.5 x 27.5

Apollo and Daphne

2010 Iron
57.5 x 42 x 14

DOX

2015 Iron
25.6 x 16.2 x 9.8

Sinyala

2015 Iron
22.7 x 18.5 x 6.2

Maopa

2015 Iron
26.5 x 19 x 7.5

Cardenas

2015 Iron
28 x 17.5 x 11.5

CABOT SQUARE:

Pepper Rock

1997 Steel
400 x 265 x 140

WESTFERRY CIRCUS:

W1

1976-77 Mild steel, painted
250 x 250 x 490

Unkar

1990-2015 Galvanised steel
190 x 90 x 62

Clotho

1990-93 Galvanised steel
247 x 56 x 86.5

Caryatid: Looking South

1993-98 Galvanised steel
247 x 86.5 x 85