

JON BUCK

TELLTALE FORMS



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# INTRODUCTION

*Sculpture is the art of expressing the reality of ideas in the most palpable form. It makes plain, even to the eyes of fools, the power of the human mind to conceive ideas, and demonstrates in cold lucidity all that is fervent, ideal, and everlasting in the soul of man.<sup>1</sup>*

HENRI GAUDIER-BRZESKA

One of the first exhibitions Jon Buck remembers seeing was one of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture and drawings in 1974 at Bristol Art gallery aged twenty-three. At the time, Buck was working at Bristol Zoo where he had joined as a bird-keeper five years previously in the hope that the role might lead to a career in the BBC Natural History Unit nearby. With his insatiable curiosity, Buck found himself at the gallery one lunch time where he recalls being particularly affected by Gaudier-Brzeska's angular bust of fellow Vorticist artist Horace Brodsky, replete with strange inscriptions on his chest, and also *The Wrestler*, whose bulky musculature and direct gaze expressed a powerful pent-up energy.

Feeling a direct affinity to Gaudier-Brzeska, who had lived briefly in Bristol and spent time drawing at Bristol Zoo where coincidentally Buck was painting bird identification plaques, these works inspired him to revisit making sculptures in clay. The return to this medium, which Buck had first enjoyed at school, and to this day often uses as starting point for his work, set off a chain reaction that led him to pursue becoming a sculptor.

For an artist as inventive as Jon Buck, a retrospective exhibition can be a daunting prospect especially for someone whose career has been punctuated by regular solo exhibitions that give the impression of a linear narrative, neatly packaging new areas of interest and thinking. In reality we know that an artist's evolution is much more complex and rather like Buck's local River Severn leading into the Bristol Channel, where his father was a pilot, it wends its way through twists and turns from source to sea. As such our objective for this exhibition was to gain an insight into the currents that have shaped both Buck and







his work, and as his title *Telltale Forms* suggests, to give the viewer an indication of what has come before and what may be created in future.

To reach the studio that Jon has worked in for over thirty years, one must first navigate the verdant oasis that is his back garden. Carefully tended to by Jon and his wife Jane, it is always alive with wildlife, semi-tame blackbirds or a pond full of frogspawn, to the extent that in its simplest sense this winding passage can be seen as a metaphor for Buck's journey from nature to art and how they continue to co-exist. Certainly, my visits there over the past 18 years have been highlights and it has been a privilege to witness the astonishing development of Jon's work over this relatively short time. With each visit his explorations seemed to have broken new ground and yet have always maintained his signature bold and instantly recognisable visual language.

Despite these regular visits, when it came to focusing on the full extent of this exhibition, I found connecting this recent, energetic period to the earlier works that I was less familiar with, required more investigation and explanation. With this in mind for *Telltale Forms*, I asked Jon to take a step back and write his timeline from a personal rather than formal perspective, bearing in mind important world events that he remembered. This would be an alarming prospect for many of us but thankfully Jon rose to the challenge and has kindly agreed that we can publish it here at the end of the catalogue.

Whilst Jon has always been very articulate writing and talking about his current work, for me, reading the timeline immediately illuminated the missing links that had somehow been overlooked in the excitement of explaining new ideas for previous exhibitions.

What might have seemed banal to Jon unlocked many doors, such as the insight into his rural childhood where books and visits to the library alongside family stories from the high seas and the natural world, offered not only entertainment but sanctuary. Pieces of the puzzle dropped into place when I learnt that receiving his first pair of binoculars aged nine had inspired a life-long passion as an ornithologist helping to explain the important recurring theme of the bird throughout his work.

Indeed, in this exhibition we find sixteen bird sculptures from over three decades, the earliest of which seen here is *Noah and the Raven*, 1988. Inspired by Stanley Spencer's setting of biblical events in his own ordinary, local environment of the village of Cookham, combined with the popular broadcast of Joseph Campbell's 'Power of Myth' this work reflects how Buck was beginning to consider comparative mythologies to explore whether there could be a personal context of his own that could also express a collective narrative.

(PREVIOUS PAGE)  
Jon Buck in his studio,  
2019 & Newspaper  
cutting, c. 1970s

(FAR LEFT)  
Henri Gaudier-Brzeska  
*Bird Swallowing a Fish*  
1914, Bronze  
Image: Courtesy of  
Kettle's Yard, University  
of Cambridge

(LEFT)  
*Feeding Birds*  
1992, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
23.5 x 23 x 14 cm

(RIGHT)  
*Noah and the Raven*  
1988, Bronze  
Edition of 5  
61 x 57 x 24 cm



Developing the idea of representing man and bird as an illustration of human myth and imagination, Buck later created *Go-Between*, 1999. With its intense gaze, sensuous features and coherent surface scarification of 's' shaped marks, *Go-Between* is timeless and almost dares the viewer to question why it should be odd that a bird might rest upon one's head. Like many totemic cultures around the world and more recently in the work of those artists inspired by so-called 'primitivist' art in the early 20th century such as Max Ernst and Joan Miró, combining the human and avian worlds often symbolizes the path from the conscious to the subconscious. Buck writes:

*For a short period at the beginning of the last century Picasso and his contemporaries rediscovered the power of reduced schematic images. These were shockingly primitive to the refined Western sensibilities of the time, appearing not as a camera eye might see them but as our minds would perceive them, not simply as ideas but as raw emotions.<sup>2</sup>*

*Go-Between* marked an important turning point in Buck's work illustrating his step away from imitative reality to something far more meaningful. In this exhibition, we can see Buck combine the theme of human and bird a number of times, such as in *Nightbird* and *Headland*, both of which relate to poems that he found particularly potent as well as creating his own aviary of individual birds such as *Bird of Paradox* or the aptly named *Taleteller*. Dogs also feature regularly throughout Buck's oeuvre and in this exhibition we include *Moondog*, 2000 and *Longdog*, 2005 which are both striking for their frontal rendition of man's best friend. In contrast to the bird, Buck notes "The dog is the beast within; it is the impulsive, emotional side".



(LEFT)  
*Bird of Paradox*  
1999, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
43 x 55 x 28 cm

(RIGHT)  
*Go-Between*  
1999, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
55 x 29 x 32 cm





Following an important trip in 1994 to visit the prehistoric caves at Perche Merle in South-West France, Buck affirmed his belief that art had always been made in response to important cultural narratives. Liberated by this revelation, it is almost as though Buck created *Moondog* and *Longdog* as three dimensional representations of his own imaginary, prehistoric cave paintings. *Longdog* sheds the lunar surface of crescent imprints that cover *Moondog*, to reveal a smooth yet sensuous surface which is refined further still in *Deep Down Dog*, 2009. This piece, painted in a vibrant lapis lazuli blue, is almost all outline and surprisingly only has three legs. In the pursuit of capturing that elusive quality of gaining more essence of the beast the more he simplified it, Buck recognised that this had the 'unnerving effect of seeming more convincing that the four-legged variety'.

Over two decades later, the dog is still an important motif for Buck and we are delighted to have in the exhibition two brand new works in bronze *Beware the Aposematic Dog* and *Something Like a Dog*. Here, we see their canine forms further abstracted and their coats covered with brightly coloured glyphs in patterns that would normally signal warning in nature, to make a contemporary comment on our human capacity for meddling with evolution.



(LEFT)  
*Beware the Aposematic Dog*  
2025, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
25 x 37 x 26 cm

(RIGHT)  
*Longdog*  
2005, Bronze  
Edition of 5  
140 x 172 x 26 cm





Returning to Buck's personal timeline, it is perhaps not surprising for an artist so well read in human, animal and scientific evolution that his memories of important historical markers over the course of his lifetime comprise an eclectic mixture of important socio-political events, scientific and anthropological discoveries, the broadcasting of important documentaries and releases of music and literature. Indeed, with this wide-ranging interest in our own human species it would have seemed strange if the figure had not held an important place in Jon Buck's work.

Initially turning to making figurative work as a reaction against the 'Caro-esque minimalism' that was inherent in art schools of the 70's he said: *There were two prevailing schools of thought: those who constructed with metal girders and found scrap-metal and the conceptual minimalists. Neither camp was concerned with sensuality or the provoking of emotional response and the lack of basic humanity I perceived in their work troubled and confused me.* <sup>3</sup>

At first photography and the naked body were Buck's source material but this soon changed after a visit to the Museum of Mankind in London. Having been given a cast of the paleolithic 'Venus of Willendorf' Buck found the confidence to move away from realism to create his own language. At the same time, a visit to the studio of highly respected sculptor Reg Butler made an important impact. Five years previously, a photo of Butler working in his studio published in 'The Hand and Eye of the Sculptor' by



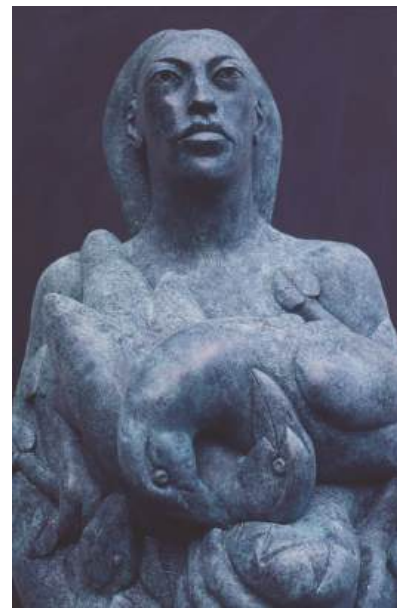
*Sowing the Seed*  
1992, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
30 x 33 x 28 cm

Schwarz Paul Waldo had given Buck the encouragement and vision that he too could become a sculptor. Coincidental then to find that upon meeting Butler in person that he too was working on his own Venus-inspired figures in painted bronze with glass eyes and real hair. This galvanised Buck to pursue his own figuration and to begin with, these were expressed through brightly coloured resins with a quirky humour. However, Buck soon found the 'superhumanism' hype increasingly impersonal and returned to casting in bronze. These works combined a human and nature inspired narrative in works such as his public commission *Embracing the Sea* 1998 for Deal in Kent or as seen here in *Sowing the Seed*, 1992.

Perhaps in search of solace after his mother died and connections to his childhood home were severed, Buck re-read the works of the Anglo Argentinian writer W.H. Hudson whose own ornithological background collecting specimens for institutions such as The Smithsonian and London Zoological Society as well as corresponding with Darwin, Buck



Jon Buck standing  
next to *Embracing  
the Sea*, 1998  
Deal, Kent



could relate to. Inspired by re-reading *Green Mansions*, Hudson's most successful novel, Buck embarked on making a large sculpture to represent the heroine 'Rima' only to find that Jacob Epstein's controversial memorial to Hudson in Hyde Park had done exactly the same. Sadly, finances for casting Buck's striking rendition of Rima did not allow for bronze so she remained in plaster and eventually had to be destroyed. If she had survived, she would have certainly been included in this exhibition to highlight a pivotal moment in Buck's figurative journey. A moment where his ambition to create sculptures at scale in a way that could communicate more than an image or particular character whilst also conveying an emotional connection to both the recent and prehistoric past had come to fruition.

Whilst I had been aware of Rima's importance the timeline also revealed other interesting visual parallels and connections between Jon Buck's work and that of Jacob Epstein (1880-1959). Not only was Epstein's powerful *St Michael's Victory over the Devil*, 1958 commissioned for the newly rebuilt Coventry Cathedral, one of Buck's first memories of seeing sculpture as a child, but in the early 1980s Buck also worked part time for the bronze founder Ken Cook who with his wife, Royal Academician Ann Christopher, and art critic Richard Cork embarked on their own Epstein-inspired project to recreate his powerful *Rock Drill* c.1913-15. Destined to be exhibited at the Royal Academy, Buck cast the plaster legs they had made into resin in his own studio so that it would be durable enough to exhibit. Looking more closely, early works of Epstein such as *Adam*, 1938-9 and *Rock Drill* can be said to resonate with Buck's in their search of a similar primal energy.



(FAR LEFT)  
Jacob Epstein  
*W.H. Hudson Memorial*  
(*Rima*), 1925  
Hyde Park, London.  
Photo: London  
Remembers

(LEFT)  
*Rima* (detail)  
1991, Plaster  
Unique  
Height: 170 cm

(RIGHT)  
*Immolation*  
1993, Charcoal and glass  
reinforced polymer  
Unique  
Height: 180 cm

*Rima* was first shown at Gallery Pangolin in 1992 and the following year Buck was invited to make a work for an exhibition in Valencia. Made in resin but with the addition of crushed charcoal to add interest to the surface texture, we are delighted to show *Immolation*, 1993 for the first time in London. This collection of five male figures, who seem vulnerable individually but gain power and cohesiveness as a tribe, was one of Buck's earliest works to express his concern about our human impact on the environment. More recently, these concerns have fuelled a progression of sculptural language that has seen animals expressed as thoughts such as in *Mind Menagerie* to more abstracted glyphs that cover vessels such as arks and tolling bells asking the viewer to consider the importance of diversity.



In the last five years, Buck has expressed these concerns more urgently through combining scientific metaphors with complex patterns. Here in works such as *Becoming the Fool*, 2020 his figures have been reduced to symbolise the human 'fool' who carries on blindly disrupting the delicate balance of evolution and diversity. Whilst these works carry a sober message they still retain an element of humour and most importantly highlight Buck's signature approach to communicating the wonders of nature through his joyful understanding of pattern, form and colour.

In 2015, we held an exhibition entitled *Coded for Colour* which focused on Buck's exploration of colour over his career and his pioneering exploration of how this could be developed within the confines of traditional bronze casting. Charting the progression from his early brightly coloured resins to experimentations with unusual patinas and stained surfaces, followed by the bold painted bronzes, in this exhibition we can see a continuation of this development over the last decade. Subtle layers of bright patina give depth to the more abstract 'glyph' works such as *In Ferment*. The unusual addition of silver nitrate to the patina of works such as *Red Queen V* gives it a precious almost ethereal quality. In contrast, the brightly painted surfaces of the most recent bronzes and ceramics remind us that Buck is a colourist at heart and that he revels in their myriad combinations much as he has spent a lifetime marvelling at the infinite colours and patterns we find in nature.



(LEFT)  
*Becoming the Fool*  
2020, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
33 x 28 x 12 cm

(RIGHT)  
*In Ferment* (detail)  
2018, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
76 x 52 x 16 cm





As a leisure sailor, I am very familiar with two innocuous but extremely important pieces of wool attached to the foresail also called 'telltails'. Watched carefully these indicate subtle wind shifts termed 'lifts' or 'headers' that might give you the slightest advantage over an opponent or get you to your destination that much more quickly. This exhibition of Jon Buck's *Telltale Forms* may not be quite so practical, predictable or indeed competitive, but they illustrate the shifts of an extraordinary career dedicated to expressing pertinent personal and cultural narratives that are relevant to our current time. Nature is this journey's guiding theme which Buck first used as a metaphorical language to look at our interconnected relationships and has since developed to focus on our relationship to nature and our place within it. All the works seen in this exhibition adhere to Buck's personal manifesto that they should "grab attention and evoke emotion"<sup>4</sup> and they do so with a timeless yet contemporary expression that crucially tells us about ourselves and most certainly lifts the spirit.

POLLY BIELECKA

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-2015) letter to Dr. Uhlemayr 24th May 1910 published in H.S. Ede, *Savage Messiah*, Kettle's Yard & the Henry Moore Institute, 2011. p. 26.
2. *Jon Buck, Making A Point: The Point of Making*, Gallery Pangolin, 2011 p.77
3. Ibid. p.106
4. *Jon Buck: Coded for Colour*, Film by Distant Object Productions & Pangolin London, 2015.

*Taleteller*  
2005, Bronze  
Artist Copy  
21 x 20 x 5 cm





# CATALOGUE







*Embracing Birds*  
1991, Bronze  
Edition of 9  
25 x 19 x 14 cm



*Immolation*  
1993, Charcoal and glass  
reinforced polymer  
Unique  
Height: 180 cm





*Ancestor Bird*  
1999, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
34 x 33 x 18 cm







*Chance Piece I*  
1999, Bronze  
Edition of 12  
9.5 x 16 x 8 cm



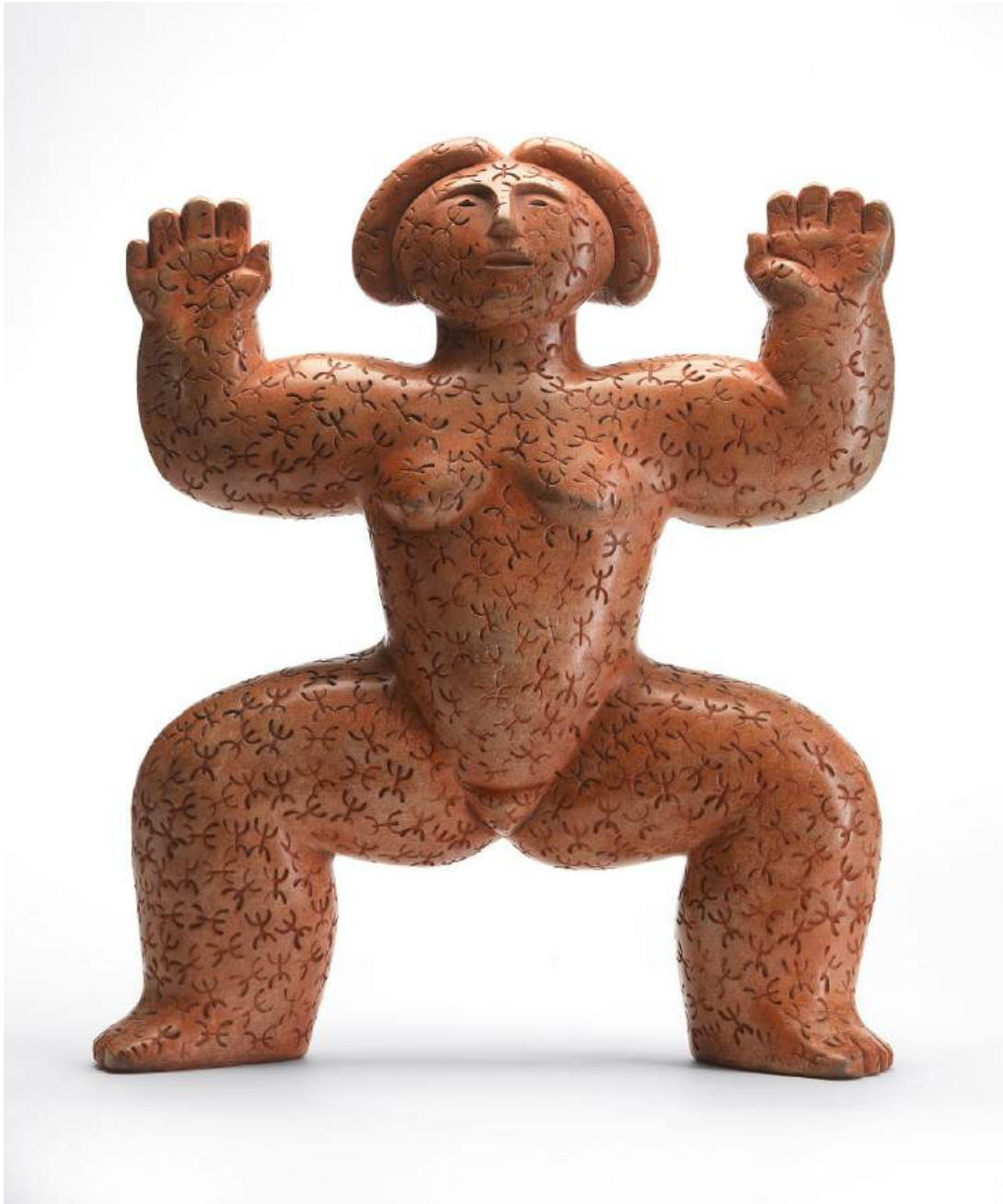
*Chance Piece II*  
1999, Bronze  
Edition of 12  
13.5 x 13 x 10 cm



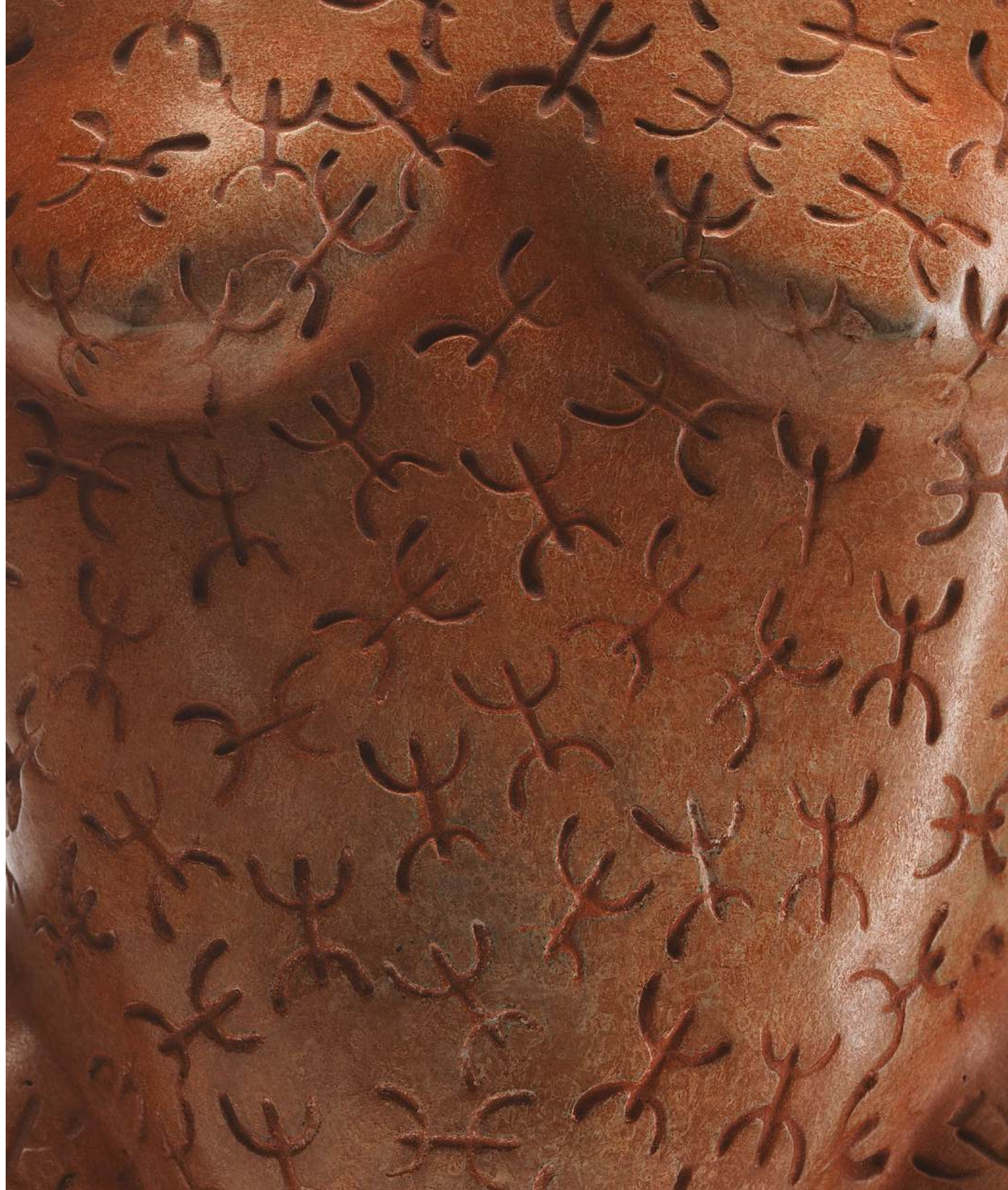


*Hawk*  
1999, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
36 x 22 x 27 cm





*Primal Woman*  
1999, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
45 x 38 x 12 cm







Venus  
2000, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
29 x 31 x 15 cm



*Eachway Heads*  
2005, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
41 x 48 x 13 cm







*Aurora*  
2003, Bronze with gold leaf  
Edition of 10  
50 x 54 x 20 cm





(LEFT)  
*Double Take II*  
 2005, Charcoal on paper  
 Unique  
 57.5 x 72.5 cm (framed)

(RIGHT)  
*Double Take*  
 2005, Bronze  
 Edition of 10  
 34 x 43 x 6 cm







*Cactus Cat*  
2005, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
55.5 x 35 x 8.5 cm



*Drawn In*  
2008, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
32 x 67 x 17 cm





*Deep Down Dog*  
2009, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
46 x 20.5 x 51.5 cm



*Headland*  
2009, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
75 x 52 x 19 cm







*Inner Man*  
2010, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
62.5 x 40 x 11.5 cm





*Nightbird*  
2011, Bronze and gold leaf  
Edition of 10  
46.5 x 47 x 8 cm



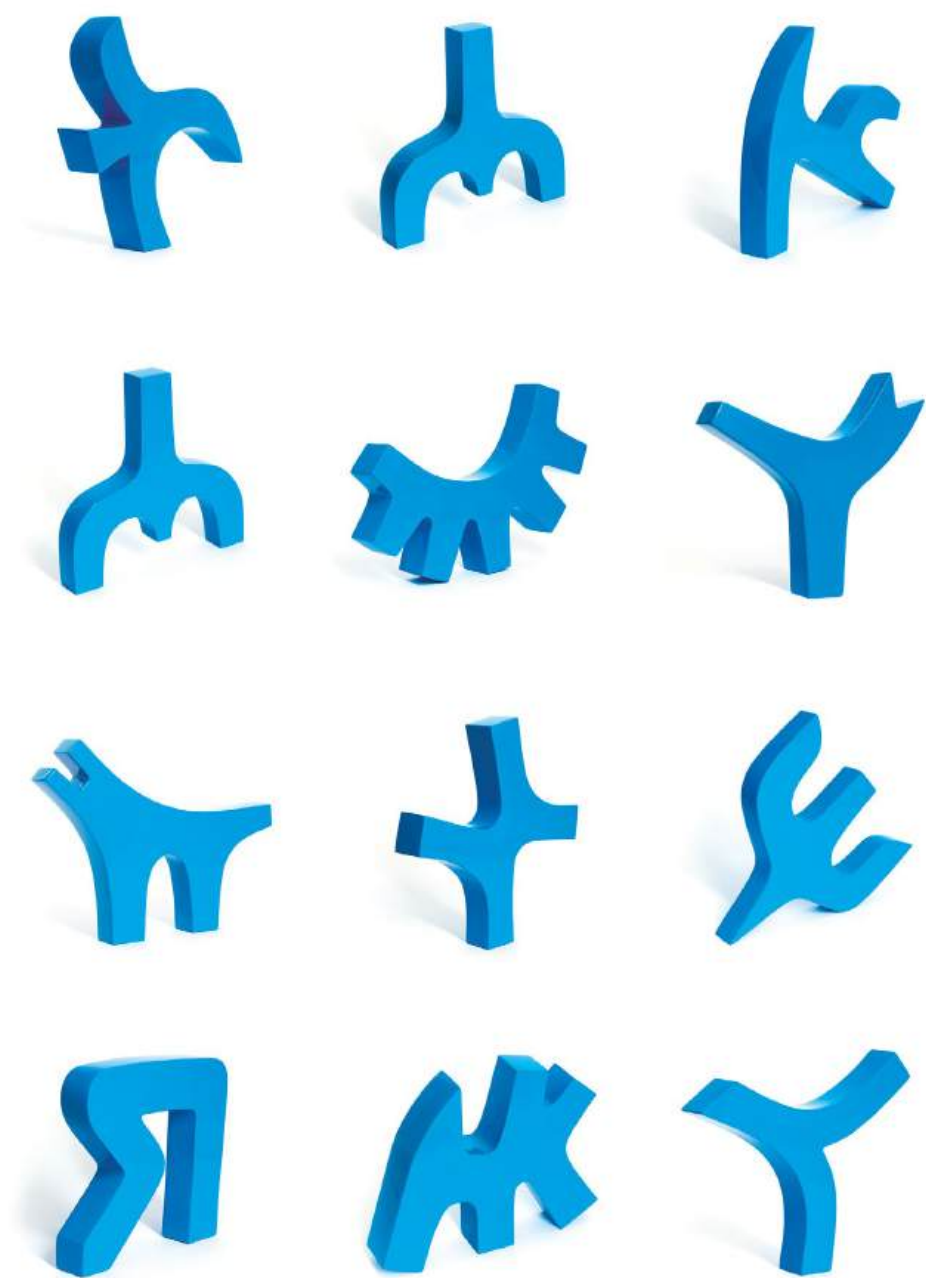


(LEFT)  
*Red Queen Rules*  
 2011, Bronze  
 Edition of 10  
 70 x 38 x 17 cm



(RIGHT)  
*Symphysis*  
 2011, Bronze  
 Edition of 10  
 32.5 x 41.5 x 17.5 cm





(LEFT)  
*Eidos* (series)  
 2012, Bronze  
 Editions of 10  
 Height: Approx. 30 cm (each)

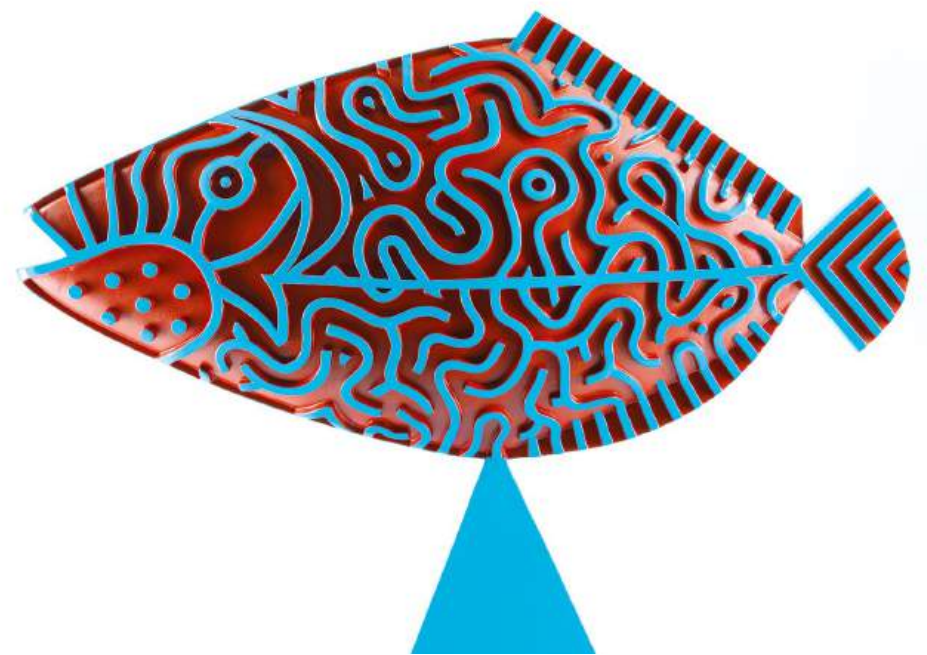


(RIGHT)  
*Flashback*  
 2011, Bronze  
 Edition of 10  
 46 x 22 x 15 cm

*Mind Menagerie*  
2012, Resin for bronze  
Unique  
77 x 42 x 18 cm







*Part of the Puzzle*  
2012, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
59 x 71.5 x 15 cm



*Repository*  
2012, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
70 x 38 x 17 cm







*Matrilinear*  
2014, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
58 x 38 x 18 cm



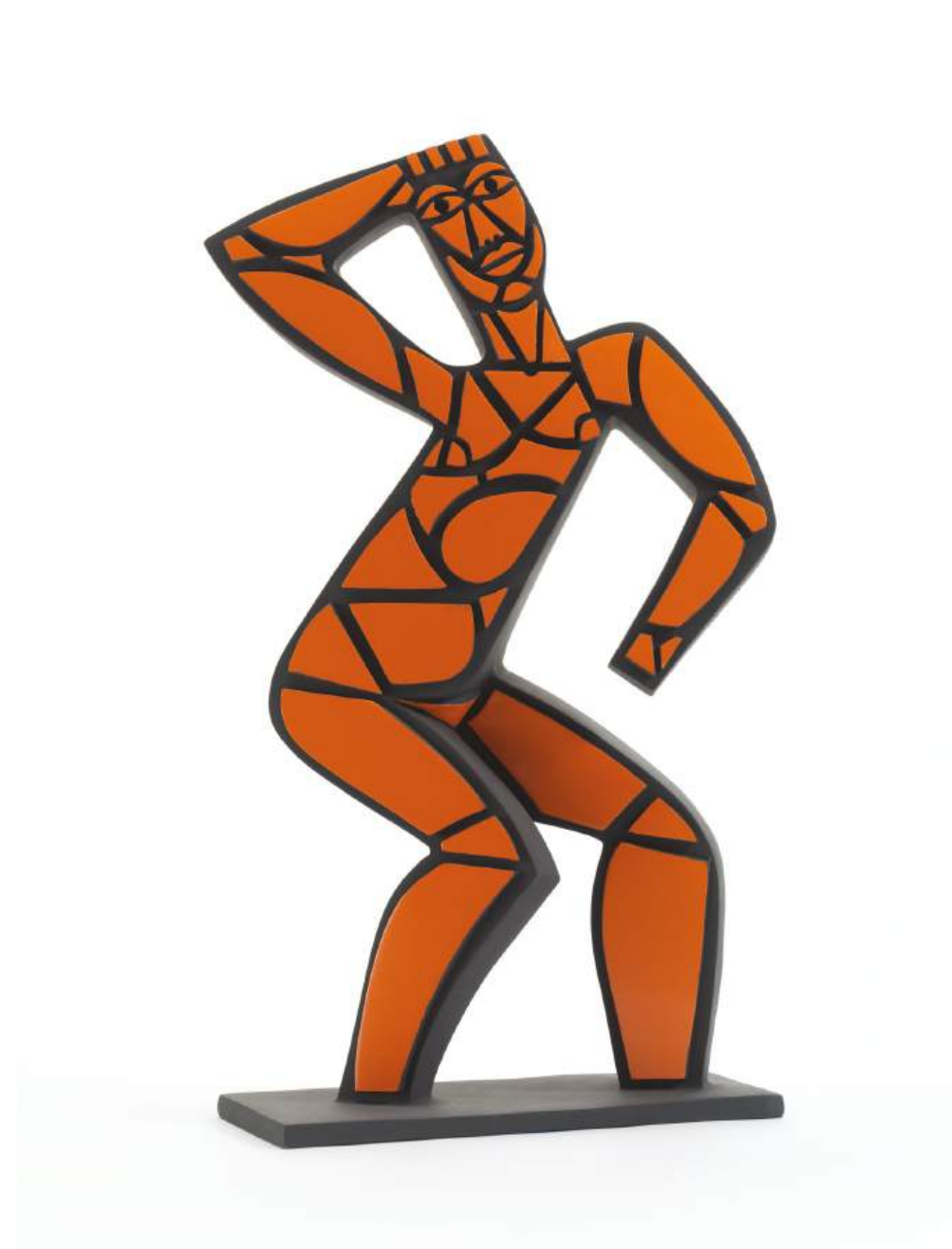
*On Reflection*  
2014, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
44 x 53 x 9 cm







*Dancing to Time*  
2014, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
54 x 32 x 15 cm



*Into the Light*  
2014, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
56 x 29.5 x 17 cm



*Recalling the Dog Maquette*  
2014, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
37 x 50 x 20 cm





*Argentum Vivum*  
2016, Sterling silver  
Edition of 10  
22.5 x 10 x 10 cm





*Ritual Objects:*  
*Preserving Bowl II*  
 2019, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56.5 x 71.5 cm  
 (framed)

*Sculpture: In the*  
*Landscape II*  
 2019, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56.5 x 71.5 cm  
 (framed)



*Sculpture: Strange Fruit*  
 2018, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56.5 x 71.5 cm  
 (framed)

*Making a Difference:*  
*Gone Missing*  
 2019, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56.5 x 71.5 cm  
 (framed)





*Tocsin*  
2018, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
75 x 45.5 x 32 cm





*Strange Fruit*  
2019, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
50 x 63 x 18 cm



*Up and Over*  
2019, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
40.5 x 35 x 22 cm





*Matrices: Webs of Diversity VI*  
 2018, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56.5 x 71.5 cm (framed)



*Matrices: Webs of Diversity IV*  
 2018, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56.5 x 71.5 cm (framed)





*Ringling the Changes*  
2019, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
62 x 38.5 x 38 cm





*Ritual Objects: Preserving Bowl I*  
2018, Pastel on paper  
Unique  
56.5 x 71.5 cm (framed)





(LEFT)  
*Lachrymal Vase*  
 2018, Bronze  
 Edition of 10  
 52 x 34.5 x 33 cm



(RIGHT)  
*Barking*  
 2019, Bronze  
 Edition of 10  
 28 x 39 x 7 cm





Ark: High & Dry  
2017, Bronze  
Edition of 3  
212 x 363.5 x 93.5 cm





*Red Queen Dynasty*  
 2020, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56 x 71 cm (framed)

*Theme and Variations II*  
 2020, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56 x 71 cm (framed)

*Red Queen Effect I*  
 2020, Pastel on paper  
 Unique  
 56 x 71 cm (framed)





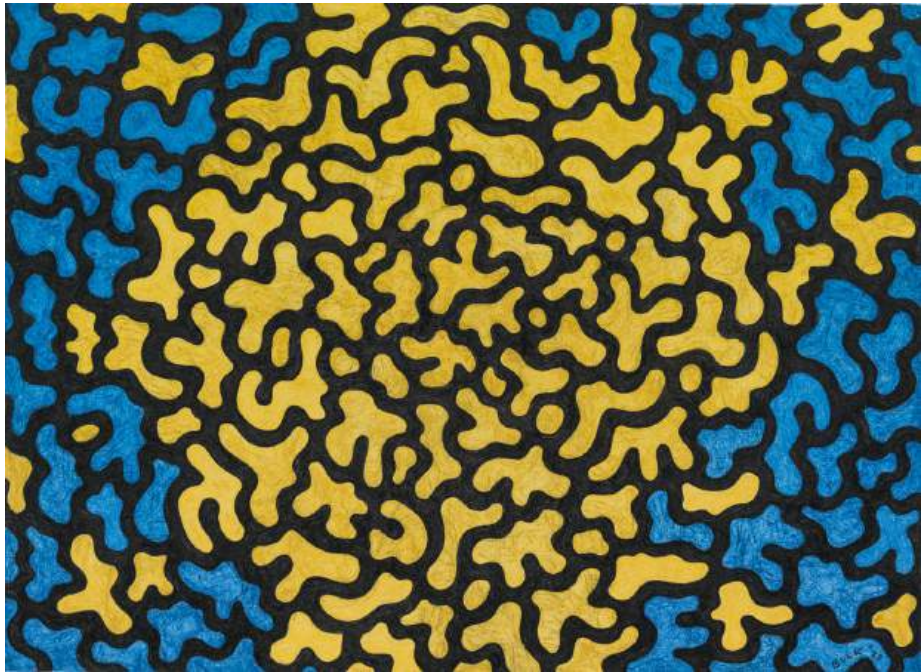


(LEFT)  
*Red Queen IV*  
 2020, Bronze  
 Edition of 10  
 28 x 26 x 10 cm



(RIGHT)  
*Red Queen V*  
 2020, Bronze  
 Edition of 10  
 32 x 27 x 8 cm





*Transmission II*  
2021, Pastel on paper  
Unique  
56 x 71 cm (framed)

*Just So You Know*  
2021, Pastel on paper  
Unique  
56 x 71 cm (framed)



*Queen's Influence*  
2020, Pastel on paper  
Unique  
56 x 71 cm (framed)

*Don't Blame the Sun II*  
2021, Pastel on paper  
Unique  
56 x 71 cm (framed)







*All in the Blood*  
2022, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
26 x 30 x 7.5 cm



*Goldilocks*  
2022, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
32 x 31 x 21 cm





*None so Blind*  
2022, Ceramic  
Unique  
38 x 28 x 12 cm



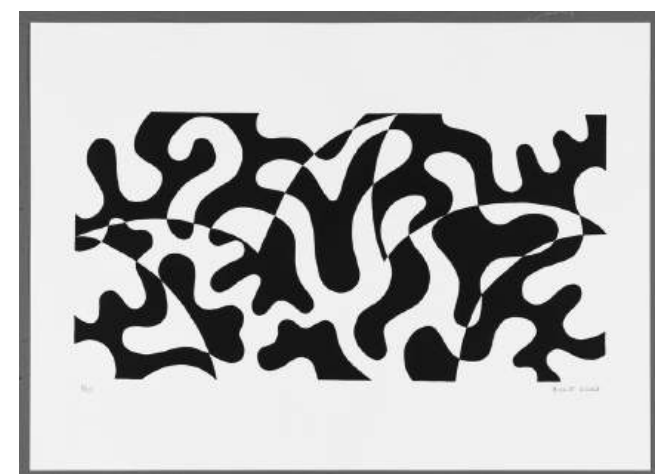
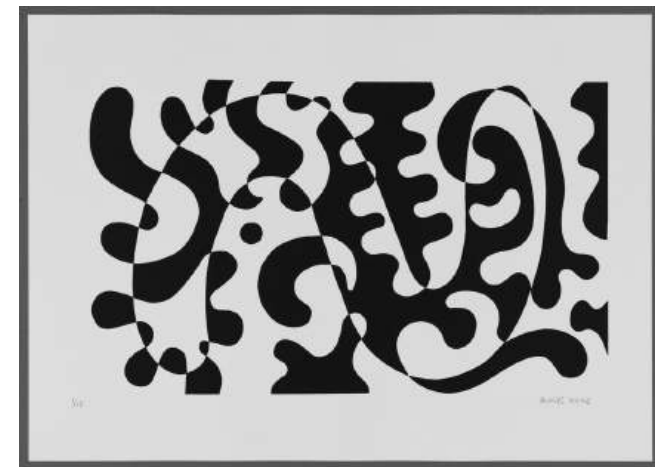
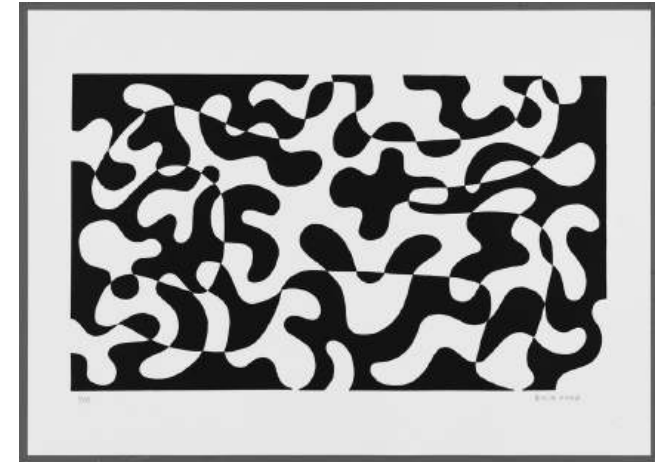
*More Fool Us*  
2022, Ceramic  
Unique  
49.5 x 38.5 x 10 cm



*All the Running You Can Do II*  
 2022, Woodblock print  
 Edition of 15  
 51.8 x 72 cm (framed)

*Inverted Proof*  
 2022, Woodblock print  
 Edition of 15  
 51.8 x 72 cm (framed)

*Fooling Around II*  
 2022, Woodblock print  
 Edition of 15  
 51.8 x 72 cm (framed)







*Alarm Bells are Ringing*  
2025, Ceramic  
Unique  
38 x 30 x 8 cm







*Not Waving*  
2025, Ceramic  
Unique  
36 x 49 x 11 cm





*Sorcerer's Apprentice*  
2025, Ceramic  
Unique  
32 x 27 x 12 cm







*King of Fools*  
2025, Ceramic  
Unique  
40 x 29 x 11 cm





*Something Like a Dog*  
2025, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
27 x 39 x 22 cm







*Beware the Aposematic Dog*  
2025, Bronze  
Edition of 10  
25 x 37 x 26 cm



# JON BUCK: TIMELINE

*How do we find images and symbols adequate to our predicament?* SEAMUS HEANEY

Public Narrative	Timeline	Personal Narrative
Roald Amundsen first person to reach the South Pole.	1911	Father born into a dynasty of sea-faring families.
Outbreak of World War One.	1914	Maternal grandfather's farm requisitioned for the war effort.
Russian Revolution leads to overthrow of the Tsar.	1917	Mother born to the last of a long line of farmers.
Outbreak of Second World War.	1939	Father returns from sea to become a Bristol Channel Pilot, Mother joins the Women's Land Army. My parents are married and move into the family home on the edge of farmland.
Treaty of Peace ends the last of hostilities of the war.	08/09/51	I am born, youngest of three children, on the day WW2 is officially declared over. None of us children will follow either family's profession and we will be the first to break these traditions. It would seem we are entering a completely new era.
Festival of Britain on the South Bank, celebrating British creativity.		
Food rationing ends in UK.	1954	My first memories of a sense of self and place. We live outside the village, in a house adjoining farmland. Something of a secret place, once part of a large estate, it is now a working farm. It consists of parkland, pasture and woods with a hidden pool feeding into a large lake, all protected by meanders of the river Avon. Our house is a place of stories; my father's travels on the high seas and his run-ashore life and my mother's candle-lit family life in an old farmhouse. Then of course there is the war, still vivid in everyone's memories. We possess no TV or gramophone but there are always books, the encyclopaedias and a large atlas being my favourites, and we all rely on the weekly trip to the village library. Adventure stories are always my first choice, then Gerald Durrell's zoo-collecting travels and particularly his exploits in Corfu as a child in 'My Family and Other Animals' and W H Hudson's 'Far Away and Long Ago', a childhood amongst nature.

Prime Minister Harold Macmillan makes his *Winds of Change* speech, beginning of the end of British colonisation.

President Kennedy assassinated.

Cuban missile crisis.

Bob Dylan releases '*The Times They Are A-Changin*'.

Rachael Carson publishes '*Silent Spring*'.

Student riots in Paris.

Neil Armstrong first man on the Moon.

Woodstock Music Festival.

TV: Kenneth Clarke's '*Civilisation*'.

Idi Amin heads a coup to become President of Uganda.

1960

My junior school takes possession of a pottery kiln and I make my first ceramic sculptures which are praised and I am told I have a talent.

Receive my first binoculars, becoming a dedicated 'ornithologist'.

The borders, barriers and field patterns surrounding our home become a special place of solitude and imagination and are indelibly etched in my mind to this day. Perhaps echoes of these are reflected in the surfaces of my sculptures.

1962

I wake to find the house on fire. After the fire brigade leave my mother and I sit in the dark. It is only when we hear the robin's song heralding the dawn that we can begin to feel safe and for many nights afterwards I wait for the reassurance of that song.

1963

Visit the newly consecrated Coventry Cathedral, rebuilt after the blitz. Jacob Epstein's huge bronze figures on the exterior make a big impression.

1964

My father is seriously ill and becomes incapacitated for the rest of his life.

1968

I leave school. My main interests besides art and nature are geology and geography. Fascinated by fossils and maps, perhaps still influencing my work today, I naively think this qualifies me to start training as a quantity surveyor.

1969

Road trip to Spain with two friends, return via Paris to visit the Louvre, my first exposure to a major art museum.

Start work as a bird-keeper at Bristol Zoo, hoping this might eventually lead to a career in the BBC Natural History Unit which is situated close by.

1971

Meet Jane Kelsey and we form a life-long partnership, sustained in part by our mutual fascination with the natural world. Her father is a photographer and her mother a landscape painter.



Bloody Sunday, British troops kill 13 civil rights marchers.	1972	Begin to study for a science degree with the Open University.			Jane starts a degree course in Art and English in Nottingham.
Greenpeace arrives in Britain.					
Great Britain joins the European Economic Community.	1973	I take up photography and Jane's father processes my B&W work.	'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' broadcast on the radio.	1978	I spend the majority of my time studying 'the figure' which I believe to be an innovative reaction to the Caro-esque minimalism that was ubiquitous at the time. I then begin to consider how to make this practice relevant to the time we are living in.
TV: Jacob Bronowski's <i>Ascent of Man</i> .		We get married and honeymoon on the Island of Alderney, complete with binoculars and telephoto lens.	Khmer Rouge massacre thousands in Cambodia.		Start using contemporary photographic journalism of the naked body as source material.
		We have a flat provided by the zoo in a fashionable part of Clifton.			Visit Museum of Mankind in London (now part of the British Museum) and feel immediate empathy with much of the work in the collection.
Watergate scandal in US.	1974	We make a 2000-mile road trip to the Scottish Highlands, Inner Hebrides and Northumberland's Farne Islands to photograph wildlife.			Procure a cast of Palaeolithic 'Venus of Willendorf' which also helps me begin to engender a move away from realism.
Discovery of fossil "Lucy" in Ethiopia.		I start painting birds as identification plaques for the aviaries and bird enclosures.	Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister.	1979	Obtain a place on the MA Fine Art course at Manchester Polytechnic.
		See Gaudier Brzeska sculptures and also drawings he made in Bristol Zoo and take up making sculptures in clay again.	<i>Outsiders: Art Without Precedent</i> Exhibition, Hayward Gallery.		I learn to bronze-cast and first bronzes exhibited in a commercial gallery.
		Discover 'Hand and Eye of the Sculptor' in the library. Seeing an image of Reg Butler working in his studio, I realise that this is the profession I want to pursue.			Visit Reg Butler at his studio. His work has changed dramatically in the intervening years and I am extremely impressed with the boldness of his vision.
Vietnam War ends.	1975	I meet a History of Art lecturer at Jane's mother's studio complex. He invites me to present my portfolio at Cardiff School of Art. I am given a place on their Foundation Course.	Stanley Spencer Exhibition at the RA.	1980	Awarded a one-year Fellowship in Sculpture at Gloucester College of Art and Technology, Cheltenham.
		I leave the Zoo and we have to give up our grand accommodation. We buy a VW camper van and travel around the Cornish coast for five months making drawings of the anthropomorphic rock formations before I take up my Foundation Course.	Riots in St. Pauls, Bristol.		Our first daughter, Rosie, is born.
			Ronald Reagan becomes US President.	1981	Meet students Rungwe Kingdon and Claude Koenig who become lifelong friends and collaborators.
Summer heatwave in Britain.	1976	Recruited to the Fine Art course at Trent Polytechnic by the sculptor John Clinch who goes on become a close friend and mentor until his death in 2001.	John Lennon is shot dead in New York.		My sculptures are shown at Nicholas Treadwell Gallery, London, all in polychrome resin.
Entebbe Raid, Israeli commandos free hostages from Entebbe airport.			Falklands War, sinking of the Argentine battleship General Belgrano.	1982	Become Visiting Lecturer at Lancaster College of Art, Trent Polytechnic and Winchester College of Art.



		Work as a part-time studio assistant to sculptor Ralph Brown. Introduced to Ken Cook and Ann Christopher and start regular part-time work in their bronze-casting foundry.
		'A <i>Chorus Line</i> ' selected for RA Summer Show.
		We become homeless for a short time and though without a studio I manage to continue working by making the first of a series of animal/human heads.
HIV virus discovered to be the cause of AIDS.	1983	Eventually we buy our first home in the city of Bath.
Reg Butler Exhibition at Tate.		Our second daughter, Laura, is born.
BBC report on the Ethiopian Famine.		Continuing a search for a relevant personal narrative, I make a number of zoo-related images.
Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art exhibition opens in MOMA.	1984	Appointed first Artist in Resident by Thamesdown Borough Council and am commissioned to make a public sculpture, ' <i>Looking to the Future</i> '.
Mikhail Gorbachev becomes leader of the Soviet Union.	1985	Made part-time Lecturer at Southampton Institute.
Hole in the Ozone Layer discovered.		
Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster.	1986	The vandalising of the Swindon sculptures leads me to reconsider my material practice. Start casting again in bronze with Pangolin Editions.
		The Lepenski Vir sculptures at Southampton Art Gallery make an impact.
Joseph Campbell's <i>Power of Myth</i> broadcast on TV.	1988	Intrigued by Stanley Spencer's imaginative merging of his cultural beliefs with his everyday existence, I begin to consider whether there is a personal context of my own that coincides with collective narrative. I start to use the mythic animal/human relationships from Biblical texts: ' <i>Noah and the Raven</i> ', ' <i>Tree of Life</i> ', ' <i>Peaceable Kingdom</i> ' and others.
Bum's Day Hurricane hits Britain.	1990	I read all Campbell's works of comparative mythology.
Nelson Mandela freed from prison.		My Mother dies and the family home is sold. The connection to my childhood sanctuary is severed.

		I make a series of work connected to family and human relationships.
		We use my inheritance to buy a farmhouse in the Vendee, France, which is somehow reminiscent of the Somerset countryside of my youth.
		We will spend more than thirty years discovering the local flora and fauna and developing our land into a small 'parc naturel', planting a wood, nurturing a meadow and adding a small lake.
Dissolution of Soviet Union, first free elections.	1991	Made Associate Senior Lecturer at Solent University, contributing to validation of new Fine Art degree course.
		Visit to Germany with the students. The Insel Hombroich Museum is enthralling; ethnic sculptures exhibited with contemporary paintings and no explanatory text. One is left to contemplate art is art, even stripped of context.
		Continue to make work considering human relationship to natural world. Rereading all of the naturalist W H Hudson's work, I use his character Rima, from the novel 'Green Mansions', to make a large figurative sculptural composition . I discover Hudson's memorial relief made by Jacob Epstein also used Rima as a subject ( <i>The Hyde Park Atrocity</i> ).
The Cold War ends.	1992	Gallery Pangolin is opened, and Jane is instrumental in its development over the next 27 years.
World Wide Web becomes public, marking the start of the Internet Age.	1993	Make ' <i>Immolation</i> ', an early response to our effect on the environment. Invited to exhibit the work at Valencia University.
<i>Africa: Art of a Continent</i> exhibition at Royal Academy.	1994	Visit Pech Merle prehistoric cave in South West France, to see the 25000 year-old images. An inspirational experience and impossible not to believe art has always been made in response to important cultural narratives.
Good Friday Agreement ends most of the violence in Northern Ireland.	1995	Start to concentrate on public commissions, Harlesden, Porthcawl and others.
		Visit the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie in Paris.



TV presenter Jill Dando is shot dead on her doorstep.	1998	Win a commission to make a sculpture for the entrance to Deal Pier. <i>'Embracing the Sea'</i> wins the Rouse Kent Award for Public Art.			and then on Zanzibar where we are oblivious to the 9/11 attack.
		Visit Fundacio Miro in Barcelona, highlight is Miro's Sculpture <i>'Solar Bird'</i> .	US and Allies invade Iraq.	2003	<i>'Early Bird'</i> first cast made in silver for Gallery Pangolin and later shown in Sigurjon Olafsson Museum, Reykjavik.
Jackson Pollock Retrospective at the Tate.	1999	<i>'Returning to Embrace'</i> made in 1997 is exhibited in the <i>'Shape of the Century Exhibition'</i> and then at Canary Wharf where it was purchased by public vote to be a permanent installation.			Jane visits Mauritius to oversee the installation of bronze <i>'Extinct Species'</i> collection on the Ile aux Aigrettes. I join her and we visit the conservation projects funded by Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust started by Gerald Durrell.
		Reassess my working practice and move away from naturalism to consider the 'objectness' of the sculptures I am making. I start to pattern the surface, starting with <i>'Go Between'</i> , to take it away from imitative reality.	Boxing Day Tsunami hits Japan and coastal islands.	2004	Commissioned to make <i>'Flat Out'</i> , a running figure carrying a pattern of symbolised glyphs covering its surface, for the Sports and Recreation Centre, Bristol University.
		I gradually start to merge the individual human and animal shapes to form single entities.			Invited by the Ruwenzori Foundation to give a bronze-making workshop at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.
Millennium Celebrations, including <i>'Bronze: Contemporary British Sculpture'</i> in Holland Park London.	2000	<i>'Goodwood Goddess'</i> maquette shown at Guggenheim Museum in Venice and enlarged version made in bronze and shown at Goodwood Sculpture Park for a number of years before being sold.	Edvard Munch's 'The Scream' is stolen from Munch Museum, Oslo.	2005	Visit Jean Dubuffet and Art Brut exhibition in Lille, France.
Human Genome Project first draft completed.		Discover the work of archaeologist Marija Gimbutas and am fascinated to learn we have our own early European cultures whose art is largely abstract with vibrant surface patterns, appearing to celebrate female deities and a reverence for nature. This is in stark contrast to the Christian Judaic cultures who have long been considered the foundation of 'Western Art'.			Surface patterns of my sculpture evolve into incised lines to describe 3D features. This has the effect of merging the two processes of drawing and sculpture. Colour that had been somewhat curtailed with the use of bronze now becomes an integral element in my work and I experiment with ways to colour the metal surfaces. Solo exhibition <i>'Odd Birds and Other Selves'</i> , which considers the age-old notion of animals as alter egos.
		First one-man exhibition of new work <i>'Intimate Connections'</i> (links with nature and prehistory).			
		<i>'Back to the Beginning'</i> , large bronze exhibited in 'Bronze' before being purchased for a private collection in US.			
9/11 Terrorist-hijack attack on the Twin Towers, New York.	2001	Visit the Prado and Reina Sophia, Madrid, highlights are Bosch's 'Garden of Earthly Delights' and Picasso's 'Guernica'			
		Celebrate my 50th birthday making a family trip to Africa. We spend two weeks in Ruaha National Park			
			Hurricane Katrina causes devastation in US area of New Orleans.	2006	Visit Jean Dubuffet's Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland.
					Jane and I visit Madagascar to meet up with our daughter Laura, who is undertaking research on Ruffed Lemurs, which coincidentally I had made a bronze sculpture of in 1987 for Bristol Zoo.
					Invited to make a public sculpture for the new development at Portishead Marina. This is a home turf commission as I grew up not far away. <i>'Ship to Shore'</i> refers to the telephonic communications



		system based in Portishead that connected world-wide shipping to the land. At the same time I regard it as symbolising the dichotomy of my own parents' lives.
After ten years as Prime Minister, Tony Blair is succeeded by Gordon Brown.	2007	Visit New York. At MOMA, 'Les Demoiselles d'Avignon' is the highlight. An incredibly radical image in 1907, inspired by Picasso's visit to The Trocadero Museum. At the Met it is Victor Brauner's 'Prelude to a Civilisation' Made with encaustic wax when he was in hiding in WW2 it is an influential work.
UK financial Crisis - most severe economic downturn since the great depression.	2008	Return to Paris to see the newly-opened Quai Branly Museum of Arts and Civilisation and 'Animal', exhibition of African Art at the Musee Dapper.
Barack Obama becomes first black American President.	2009	Return to Uganda to research the history of the Baganda Clan totems.  'Behind the Lines', first one-man show at Pangolin London, Kings Place. The form of my work becomes much more simplified with graphic elements that help to develop a narrative. The title refers to this process but also expresses a feeling that as an artist I exist somewhere behind the front line of contemporary art, not an 'Outsider' but not an 'Insider' either.  My research could find no visual records of tribal symbols in Uganda so I set about designing more than thirty Clan Totems I feel would be sympathetic to East African culture. With the help of the foundry team we begin to cast them into bronze at the Foundation's centre in Western Uganda.
Osama bin Laden assassinated by US forces in Pakistan.	2011	'Making a Point: The Point of Making' an exhibition reviewing my work to date. An accompanying book is published with an essay arguing the importance of the act of making as a way of thinking, that aesthetics are related to cognitive perception and that art and our relationship to nature is of paramount importance to our culture.
London Olympics.	2012	I change the surface patterning of my work from negative indentations to raised three dimensional lines; 'Symphysis' is the first of these works.  Solo exhibition: 'Turning Inside Out'. A number of ideas come together - the use of animal metaphors

Russia annexes the Crimea.	2014	to comprehend our world is found in science, mythology, poetry and all come together in the making of art. I distil my patterns into essential forms or glyphs, these also become fully realised as sculptures in their own right: 'Eidetic Trees'.
Terrorists attack Charlie Hebdo magazine offices killing 12 journalists.		'Without Words' solo exhibition, suggesting art doesn't necessarily need explanatory text by the artist but can have a direct dialogue with the viewer.
		Return to Uganda to make a large bronze for the Ruwenzori Foundation's sculpture park. 'Bird in the Bush' celebrates the Foundation's work rewilding their environment.
Elizabeth Kolbert publishes her influential book 'The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History'.	2015	Exhibition: 'Coded for Colour' at Pangolin London, reviewing the use of colour in my work. I make a 3 metre fabrication 'Recalling the Dog', which along with the sculpture 'You and Me' go to a private collection in New England, USA.
Japan resumes commercial whaling after a 30 year moratorium.	2019	Exhibition: 'Time of Our Lives' split between Pangolin London and Gallery Pangolin. The title alludes to the fact that since 1950's there has been an unprecedented loss in biodiversity due to human activity.
UN reports that up to one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction.		
Donald Trump supporters storm the Capitol Building in Washington DC in an attempt to overturn the 2020 election result.	2021	I am invited to show the work made in this period at the Museum in the Park, Stroud, Gloucestershire in an exhibition entitled 'March of Mutability'.
Russia invades Ukraine and a bloody war ensues.	2022	I am Invited by Pangolin London to make a body of work, 'Patterns of Change' to be exhibited for a six-month period in a public area of Kings Place. I further develop the drawings made for my previous show by making three monumental Birchwood relief panels.
COP 15. Governments around the world agree to secure 30% of the planet's land for Nature.		
UK gets a new Labour government after fourteen years and US re-elects Donald Trump for President.	2024	Revisit Pech Merle Cave and the latest replica of the Lascaux Cave. It is still a stunning and inspirational experience to witness the beauty of the work made by artists living so many thousands of years ago.

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(COVER IMAGE)  
*Alarm Bells are Ringing*  
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