

Tony Cragg

29 May – 18 September 2015

Via Zenale 3, Milan

52–54 Bell Street
London NW1 5DA

T +44 (0)20 7724 2739

Via Zenale, 3
20123 Milan
Italy

241 Eldridge Street
10002 New York
USA

lissongallery.com

Tony Cragg's first exhibition at the Lisson Gallery Milan consists of several new sculptures in bronze, wood and stone. Alongside these are a number of works on paper. The upright sculptures in the gallery are the result of complex internal formal constructions and geometries that give rise to outer forms that we can recognise, have associations with and give names to. Cragg's complex polymorphic sculptures reveal aspects of the relationship between the rational internal dynamic of materials and our subjective response to material forms. For Cragg this is not only the essence of all sculpture, but of all our experiences in the world as well. His work is full of movement, growth, dynamism and a sense of wonder at the seemingly unlimited possibilities of sculptural form.

Cragg exhibits two larger bronze and marble works – *Over the Earth* and *First Person*, the latter outside the gallery. In these works, Cragg looks not only to nature and the forces of energy found in the organic world, but he also references an enhanced and extruded reality as experienced through technology and the multiple perspectives afforded to us by the pace and prisms of modern life.

Several of the works at Lisson Gallery Milan have close corollaries with seven of Cragg's sculptures being exhibited concurrently at the Duomo di Milano (as part of the Milan Expo, until 31 October). The centrepiece of his collaboration with the Duomo is a work in the Duomo entitled *Paradosso (Paradox)*, seemingly inspired by the golden statue of the Madonnina (Little Madonna), which sits atop the uppermost spire, traditionally marking Milan's highest point. Cragg's exhibition on the roof terraces of the Duomo presents a further six monumental sculptures, that jostle with the static gothic architecture and the Milanese skyline.

The reference to the Madonnina's majestic, skywards gesture is obliquely mirrored at the gallery by a two-metre bronze entitled *After We've Gone* (2015), a similarly torqued object suggesting bodily movement. The artist's own physical being expressed in his drawings are the starting point for his three-dimensional practice and contain something of the genesis for each radically rotational form, perhaps revealing how the germ of an idea, an unseen energy, or an observation from life can be brought into matter and eventually into complex, confounding objecthood.

About the artist

Tony Cragg is one of the world's most foremost sculptors. Constantly pushing to find new relations between people and the material world, he works with stone, wood, glass, aluminium, cast bronze and cast iron, and found objects, from plastic consumer goods to rubbish from the streets. His early, stacked works present a taxonomical understanding of the world, and he has said that he sees manmade objects as "fossilized keys to a past time which is our present". So too, the floor and wall arrangements of objects that he started making in the 1980s blur the line between manmade and natural landscapes: they create an outline of something familiar, where

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the contributing parts relate to the whole. Cragg has always had, from an early age, a passionate interest in science and natural history and worked as a young man as a lab technician at the National Rubber Producers Research Association (1966–68), an experience that is reflected in his vigorous approach to material. He has said, “I see a material or an object as having a balloon of information around it” (1992). For him form and meaning are interdependent, any change in form changes the ‘balloon of information’ and vice versa, so that any change in materials also changes meaning and significance. Cragg understands sculpture as a study of how material and material forms affect and form our ideas and emotions.

This is exemplified in the way in which Cragg has worked and reworked two broad bodies of work he calls *Early Forms* and *Rational Beings*. The *Early Forms* explore the possibilities of sculpturally reforming familiar objects such as containers into new and unfamiliar forms producing new emotional responses, relationships and meanings. *Rational Beings* explores the relationship between two apparently different aesthetic descriptions of the world; the rational, mathematically based formal constructions that go to build up the most complicated of organic forms that we respond to emotionally. The human figure being the prime example of something that looks ultimately organic eliciting emotional responses, while being fundamentally an extremely complicated geometric composition of molecules, cells, organs and processes. Cragg’s work does not imitate nature and what we look like, rather it concerns itself with why we look like we do and why we are as we are.

Tony Cragg was born in Liverpool, UK in 1949 and has lived and worked in Wuppertal, Germany since 1977. He has a BA from Wimbledon School of Art (1973) and an MA from the Royal College of Art (1977). Among many major solo shows he has exhibited at CAFA Museum in Beijing (2012), the Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh (2011), Tate Gallery Liverpool, UK (2000), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte, Reina Sofia, Madrid (1995), Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (1991) and Tate Gallery, London (1988). He represented Britain at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 1988 and in the same year was awarded the Turner Prize at the Tate Gallery, London. He has been a Professor at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris (1999-2009) and Professor at Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf, 2009 – present. He was made a CBE in 2003, elected a Royal Academician in 1994; received the Praemium Imperiale for Sculpture, Tokyo (2007) and he was Awarded the 1st Class Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (2012).

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Exhibition Facts

Opening Hours Mon-Fri 10am-6pm (closed 1-3pm) Sat by appointment

Location Via Zenale 3, 20123 Milan

Contact +39 02 8905 0608, www.lissongallery.com

For press information and images

Italy PCM Studio, via Goldoni 38, Milano – press@paolamanfredi.com

Federica Farci, +39 342 0515787 – federica@paolamanfredi.com

Roberta Mascherpa, +39 349 9267882 – roberta@paolamanfredi.com

UK, rest of Europe Diana Babei at Rhiannon Pickles PR

Contact +44 (0)7789 868 991, diana@picklespr.com