



First Snail by Edward Allington.

A Changed World

Joseph Paul Cassar

A Changed World is an exhibition brought about through the initiative and assistance of the British Council in Malta, and it focuses on the various transformations that British sculpture has undergone over the past 40 years. It presents the concept of change as the process by which the future invades our lives, for change is ongoing without which time would stop.

The exhibition is about the fantastic intrusion of novelty and newness into our existence. This is the story of how we learn to adapt – or fail to adapt – to the future. Each change brings with it a need for new learning, for in us, there is the power to shape change.

Many of us have a vague feeling that things are moving faster nowadays. Computer programmers and technicians,

people in the medical field and other disciplines complain that they cannot keep up with the latest developments in their respective areas and many are those who are uneasy and suspicious that change is out of control.

We live in a world of objects and commodities that have been designed for instant death. It is clear now that the acceleration of change has reached such a rapid pace that it is possible to open your eyes one morning to see a world totally new.

In my opinion, the whole point of this exhibition is that in the past one rarely saw a fundamental change in an art style within a man's lifetime. A style or school endured as a rule, for generations at a time. Today, the pace of turnover in art scarcely has time to

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Out of this World by Anthony Gormley



First important international art exhibition at St James

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see a school develop, learn its language, understand it and develop it fully, for before you know, it vanishes.

This exhibition features some of Britain's most important exponents in the field of sculpture such as Anthony Caro, Tony Cragg, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Barry Flanagan, Gilbert and George, Antony Gormley, Damien Hirst, Anish Kapoor, Tim Lewis, Richard Long, David Nash, Eduardo Paolozzi, William Tucker, Shirazeh Houshiary, Rachel Whiteread and Bill Woodrow among others.

Eduardo Paolozzi (b.1924) is represented with two works, one of which records a technique that this artist developed by casting small bits of mechanical gadgetry or defunct electrical circuits. These casts served as the basis of making sculptures in bronze.

The result was generally an animal, a head, or a figure (as is the case in *Diana as an Engine 1* of 1963-66) integrating into a new whole these clusters of specific details which already had a previous life. The final work represents the inside machinery of the body exposed on the surface.

Anthony Caro's (b.1924) *Pink Stack* (1969) follows on Davis Smith's use of welded steel. In the process the sculpture's base has been eliminated with the introduction of colour which neutralises the industrial effect that is generally associated in the works of the American artist Smith or the Spaniard Gonzalez. His forms extend to the sides like some insect crawling sharing human scale. Its placement on the terrace of St James Cavalier by the exhibition curators enhances its sense of occupying and dominating space.

Spring Circle (1992) by Richard Long (b.1945) consists of stones laid on the gallery floor next to one another in the form of a circle. His minimalist arrangement is the fruit of his personal experience of landscape. Long literally brought landscape within the art gallery by installing naturally found stones that echo the activities of quarrying and stonecutting.

Other artists like Tony Cragg, Bill Woodrow and Richard Deacon used found objects for their sculptures. Deacon (b.1949) made use of thrown away patterned linoleum to create a new

abstract poetic language as in his piece *Boys and Girls come out to play* (1982).

From cheap popular material the work gains a new meaning of interlocking sensuous forms. There is a feeling that the work is the fruit of great craftsmanship. His work is the opposite of solid materials such as stone or wood. His sculpture is concerned with the surface skin of form and not its mass.

On the other hand, Woodrow (b.1948) does not stop at retrieving and utilising found material but he also intervenes by cutting into the existing manufactured articles and finishes in the end by creating a new object. In this process he comments on consumerism and recycling material as is the case of his *Long Distance Information* (1983) which in itself is a document and a specimen of contemporary archaeology.

The work of Rachel Whiteread (b.1963) is the product of casts that she makes of different things ranging from books to a whole room. Her exhibit, *Black Books* (1996-7), is reminiscent of her Holocaust Memorial in Vienna which consists of a cast in concrete of a whole library of anonymous books.

It is already very clear in the examples cited above that this new generation of artists rejected traditional materials and methods. Moulding and constructing replaced carving and modelling. Colour, which pertained only to painting, became an integral part of the works as much as it is manifested today in product design. The prophecy of Henri Matisse of cutting through

coloured paper became a reality.

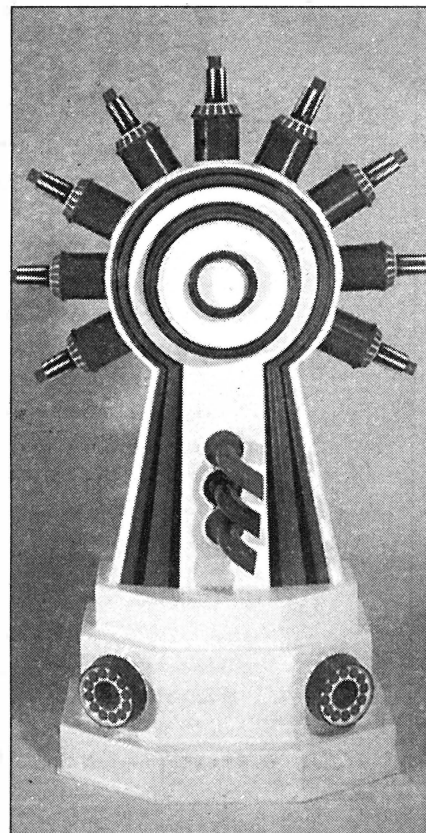
The works of Anish Kapoor (b.1954) consist of shapes laid on the floor coated with brilliantly coloured chalk dust. This idea was imported from the Indian markets he had seen in 1979. His sculpture is sensuous art, rich in surface tactile qualities and extremely fragile.

The figures of Antony Gormley (b.1950) are also the fruit of casts similar in principal to the works of George Segal, but Gormley prefers to overlay on his own bodysheets of lead in order to eliminate the particular individual details.

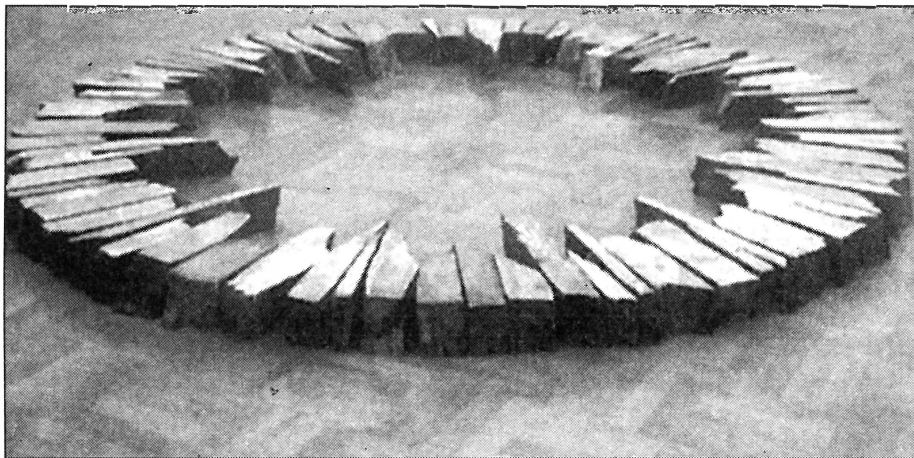
On handling the work out of its huge squarish box I realised that the work is made of lead that encloses the figure as in a suit of armour similar to the ones we have at the Palace Armoury with evident joints that form a kind of grid all over the body.

Corner to Kasimir (1992) is not a crucifix as many visitors thought, but is a reference to the artist Kasimir Malevich who produced corner reliefs inspired by the icons in Russian homes which were generally placed in special corners of reverence.

Thanks to the British Council, the Maltese public has been lucky to meet Edward Allington, one of the artists who was brought to Malta for this occasion. He gave a guided tour of the exhibition at St James Cavalier last Sunday and delivered a lecture at the Art Unit of the University of Malta to art history students. One is also grateful for the availability of the curators Diana Ecc-



Diana as an Engine 1
by Eduardo Paolozzi



Spring Circle by Richard Long

less and Joanna Gutteridge of the British Council's Visual Arts Department in London who put up this stimulating and thought-provoking exhibition.

The idea of having A Changed World concurrently with the Art in Malta Today exhibition has been a rewarding decision which has not only put the local artists' work in a more international context, but it has served as an invitation to strengthen the process of change so vital in art production.

Both exhibitions in different ways point to the need of renewal and appraisal which is the major challenge that St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity is facing in forging its own international identity.

A Changed World is an exhibition that augurs well in strengthening further the links between Malta and Britain.