ANN CHRISTOPHER

SILENCE IS A POWERFUL SOUND

CYPHERS OF SILENCE

There is a long history of religious, spiritual and philosophical inquiry into silence, often folded into related thinking on solitude and sanctuary. In his seminal book *The World of Silence* (1948), the philosopher Max Picard understood silence not as an absence, or a void, but as a reality that precedes and surrounds everything. He observed that: 'It extends to the furthest distances, yet is so close to us that we can feel it as concretely as we feel our own bodies.'[1] When the writer Sara Maitland embarked upon her quest in search of the powers of silence in 2008, her experiences intersected with the reality of silence that Picard identified.[2]

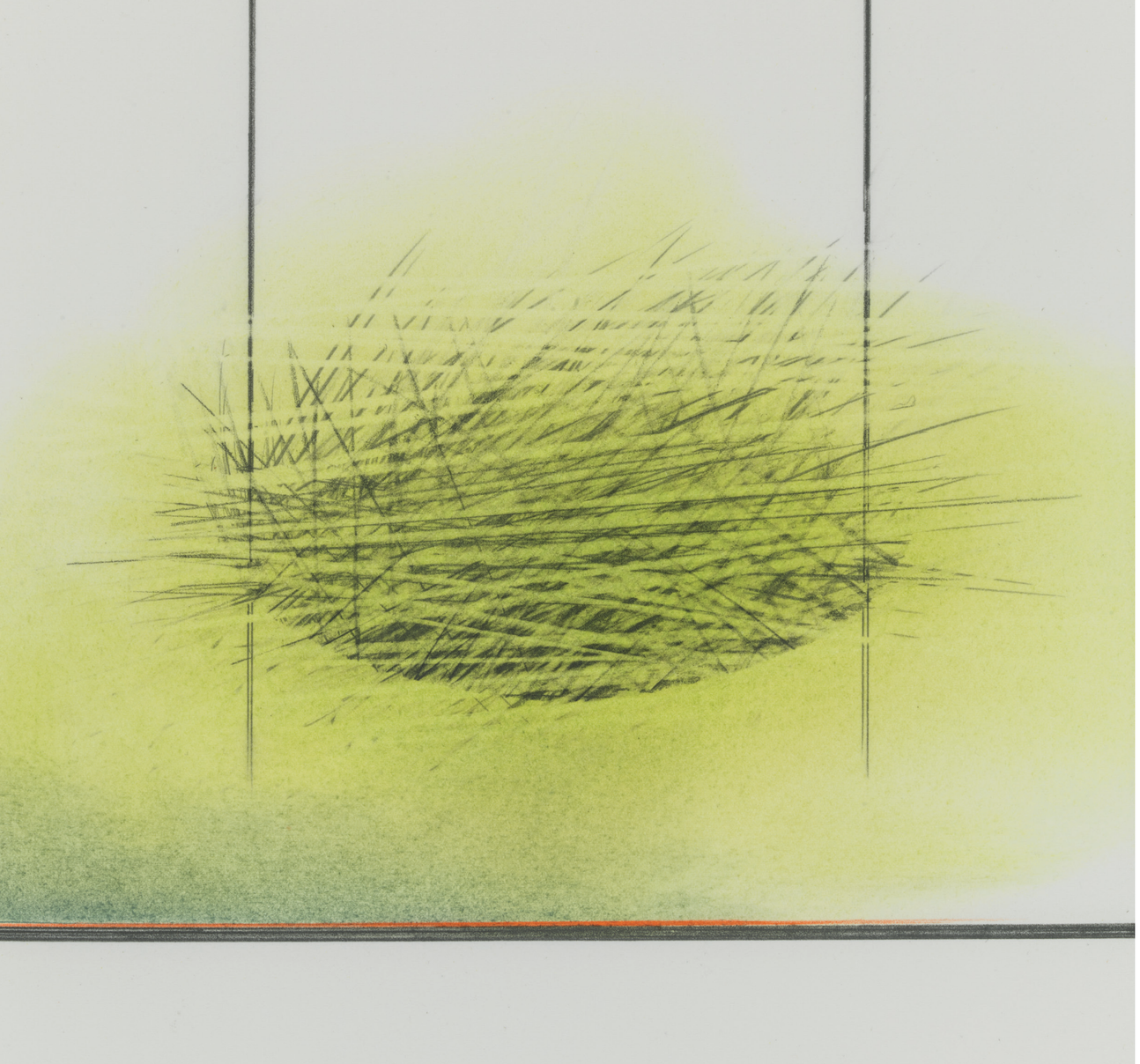
When it comes to thinking about silence in modern and contemporary art, approaches vary enormously from the contemplative portrait, to conceptual works, and even the introduction of an anechoic chamber in the gallery space.[3] John Cage's *Lecture on Nothing* (1950) and composition 4'33" (1952) are perhaps the best-known works of the twentieth century in this respect. Yet, Ann Christopher's long engagement with the subject is unlike that of any other artist I can think of. For most of her working life, silence has been a pervasive theme. Following an involuntary five-year break from making sculpture, something she experienced as a silence in her practice, new work has emerged.

BEYOND SILENCE 1994
Bronze
Edition of 3
226 x 74 x 18 cm

Christopher's thoughts on silence are contradictory. For her, it is both an absence and a presence, something that can be blissful, or induce anxiety, so what exactly are we dealing with? Rather than address her subject conceptually, or emotionally, Christopher approaches it instinctively. There is a stripping back, or simplification, that allows both her sculpture and works on paper to become interlocutors for silence. It is the perspicacity of her observation, the particular way she sees the world, that enables her to distil ideas and create non-figurative forms that engender a visceral response in the viewer. In this way, silence becomes a productive space for reflection, what the narrator in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913) calls a nourishing and succulent silence.[4]

Sculptures such as *Line of Silence* (1991) or *Beyond Silence* (1994) present a line, or edge, a threshold to be crossed, although where it might lead is unclear. Conversely, works on paper such as *Holding Silence* (2020) offer up shadows or spaces. The openness of these works on paper, delineated only by the edge of the paper, means their articulation of silence is oddly spatial, acting as portals to silent landscapes. Wall mounted sculptures such as *Silent Space* and *Broken Silence*, both from the mid-2000s, behave differently again – almost on the border between two and three dimensions where thresholds and spaces are fused, bringing silence into the space of the viewer. It is offered as prompt, perhaps, a reminder to be present and seek out silence precisely where we are in the world.

Christopher finds moments of silence and contemplation everywhere. Whether it is collecting images while walking in central London, or finding stones in Uganda, or interesting plants and seed pods closer to home, Christopher collects fragments of the world. Her focus on the object, and on the image as object, is a joyous one and her sense of curiosity oozes out of each one. They inhabit almost every surface in Christopher's home and studio, like the diffuse contents of some long-emptied Wunderkammer. They are potent cyphers for the artist, miniature objects that help coax the next new work into being. The collection of pocket-sized objects and small squared-off Instagram images provide a framework for understanding Christopher's thinking and making. As the poet and literary critic Susan Stewart writes, 'the miniature finds its "use value" transformed into the infinite time of reverie'.[5] In that sense, Christopher's souvenirs of moments of reverie, or silence, become part of her lexicon, and instigate the making of new spaces of silence.



Twelve new drawings, a continuation of Christopher's *Broken Time* series, follow a similar approach as earlier members of the series. *Broken Time* began in 2020 when the pandemic hit and the whole world fell (almost) silent. In these works, her tireless act of drawing articulates a complex organisation between order and chaos. The precision of bold straight lines cutting resolutely across the page acts as a counterpoint to the looser accretion of graphite lines that come together in a dense mass. There is a relationship to landscape and architecture here, but not in any direct way. Rather, like everything else – line, colour, form, space – they permeate and filter into the work unbidden.

The new sculptures in this exhibition are elusive. Undoubtedly, they relate to earlier work yet somehow shift the terms of engagement. These works concern not only a formal interrogation of sculpture and materials, but the spaces they occupy and the silence they hold. *Finding the Edge* (2024) cuts through the silence in a trice. *The Other Side of Silence* (2024) relates to *Floating Shadow* (2019), but its slightly larger and altered shape lends a sense of it being grounded that is absent in its smaller silver relation. In *Memory Lines 1* and *Memory Lines 2*, both 2024, scale, materials and construction come together to suggest something provisional or temporary, where 'the centre cannot hold', to borrow from W.B. Yeats.[6] *Memory Lines 1*, at once fixed to the wall, while simultaneously seeming to take its leave, conveys a slightness of form that implicates the space around it, a silent space the viewer might inhabit, if only briefly. In *Memory Lines 2*, the looped, drooped and loosely coiled rubber seems ready to spring open and release the dark blade-like object from its ties.

BROKEN TIME -3 (detail), 2024
Pastel / crayon / graphite
Unique
39 x 29.5 cm

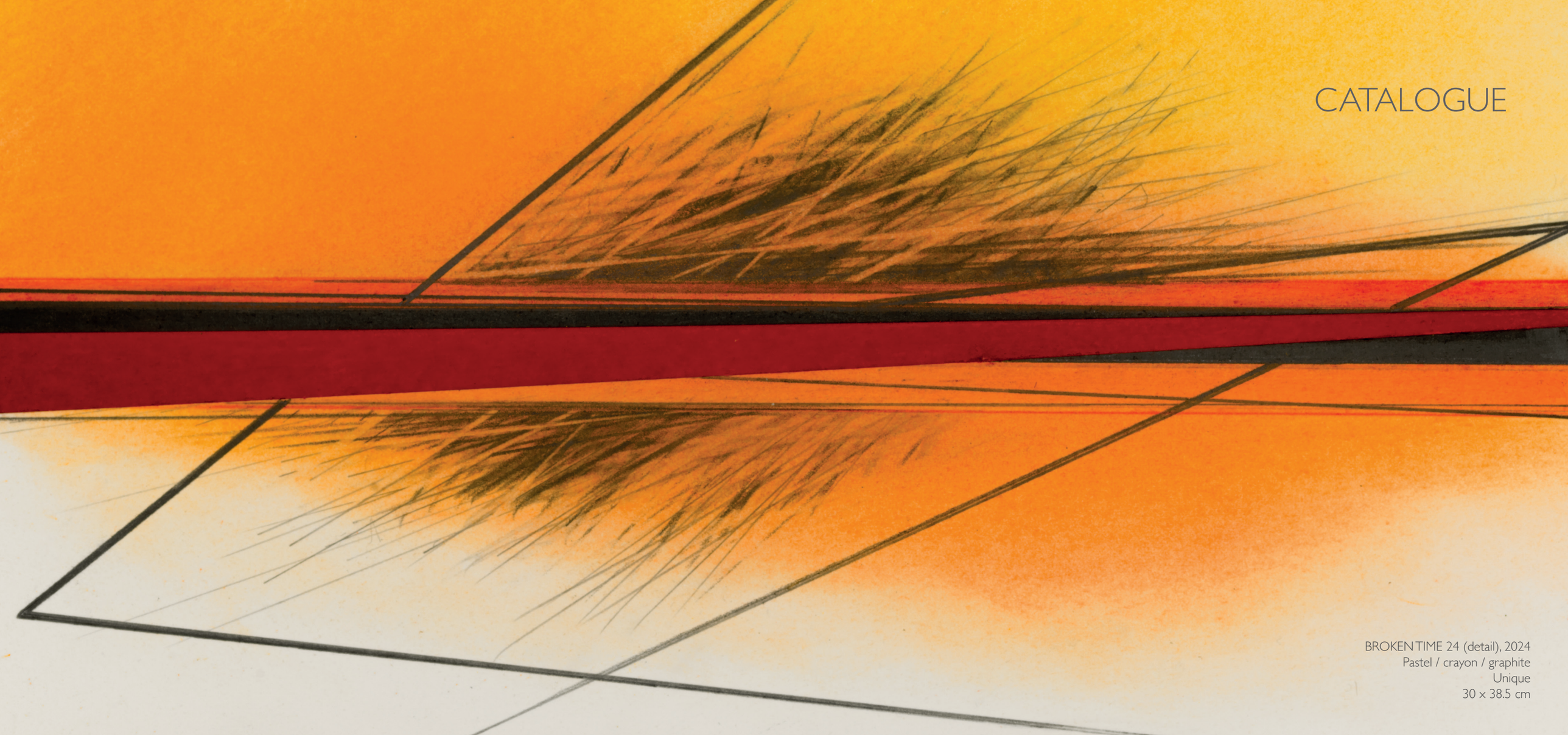
The mystery of these two most recent works resides in their duality. For Christopher, they end a period of not making and so break silence, returning her sculptural vocabulary. For the viewer, they hold silence in the tensions of materials, in the poignancy of a curve or gesture, and in the varying weight of lead, resin, rubber and aluminium. Their inherent strength lies in their condition as objects which have emerged from a powerful period of silence, a material memory of that time. T.S. Eliot spoke of poetry as communicating before it is understood. The same might be said of Christopher's work. It communicates before it is understood. The difference is that when it does, it is not only the work we understand better, but also ourselves.

Beth Williamson
September 2024

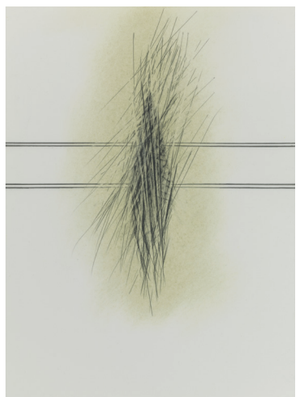
ENDNOTES

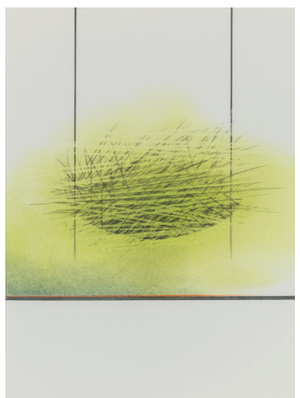
1 Max Picard, The World of Silence [1948] (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1964), p. 2.
2 Sara Maitland, A Book of Silence, London: Granta Books, 2008.
3 We might think here of the female figure in Edgar Degas' In a Café (The Absinthe Drinker), 1875–6 as one example of a contemplative figure. In terms of conceptual works, Joseph Beuys' The Silence (1973) or Noiseless Blackboard Eraser (1974) serve well enough. Simon Heijdens created Silent Room (2016), a fully soundproof and anechoic room, first exhibited at SXSW, Austin, Texas that year.
4 For a discussion of this and related ideas see Alain Corbin, A History of Silence: From the Renaissance to the Present Day [2016] (trans. Jean Birrell), Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018, p. 7 ff.
5 Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection, Durham, Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993, p. 65.
6 W.B. Yeats, 'The Second Coming'. Accessed at www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43290/the-second-coming on 3 September 2024.

CATALOGUE

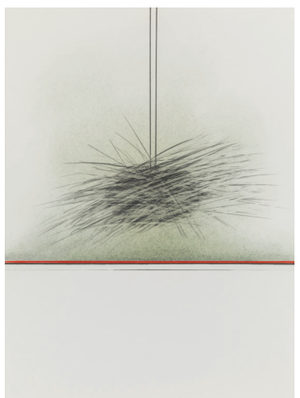


BROKEN TIME 24 (detail), 2024
Pastel / crayon / graphite
Unique
30 x 38.5 cm



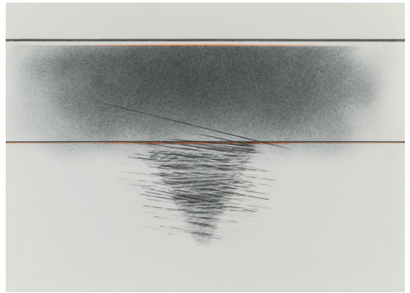


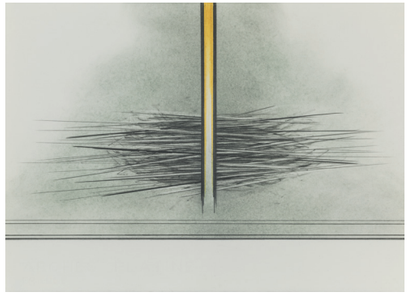
BROKEN TIME 2, 3 2020
Pastel / crayon / graphite
Unique
39 x 29.5 cm



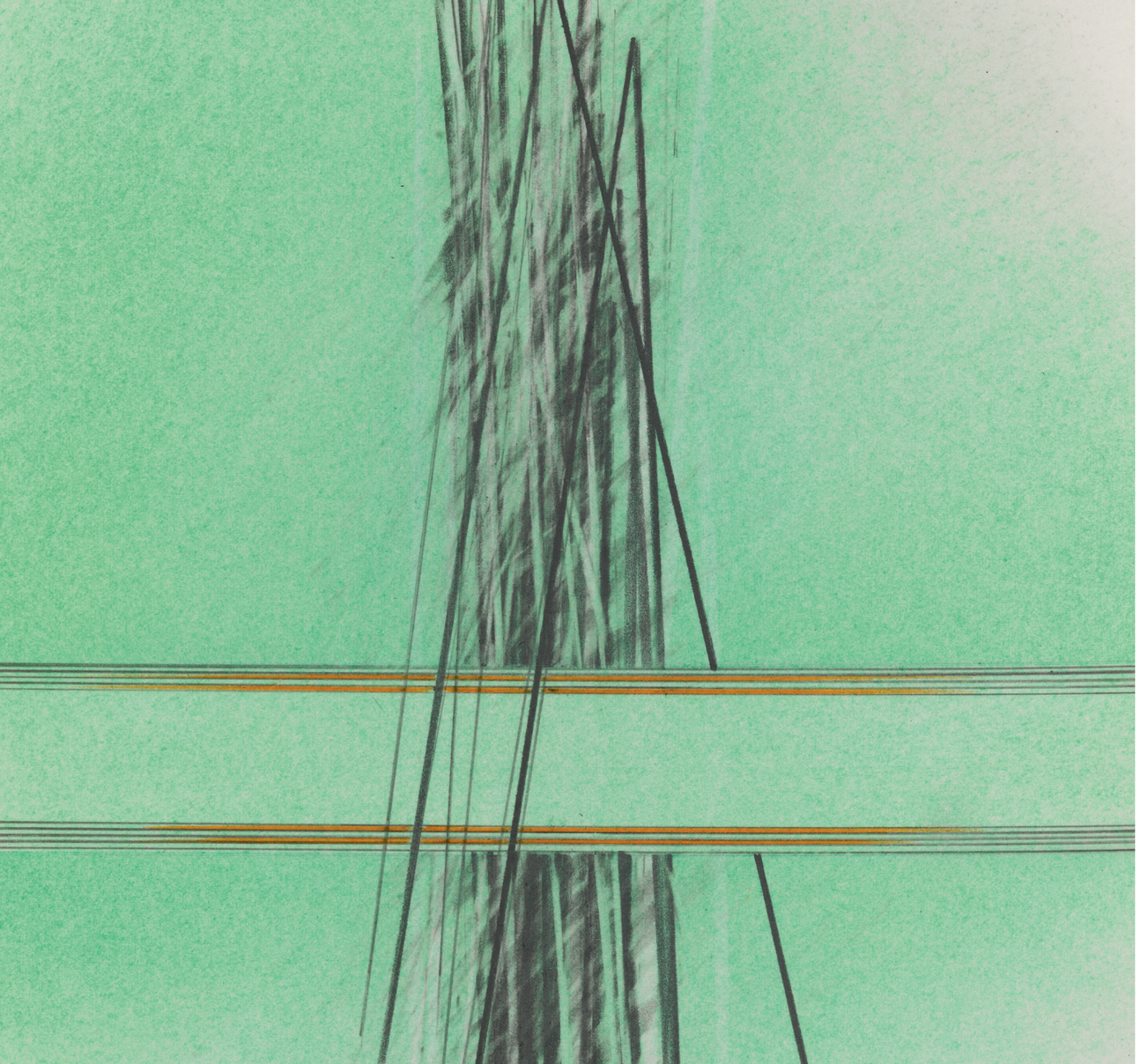
BROKEN TIME 4, 5 2020
Pastel / crayon / graphite
Unique
39 x 29.5 cm

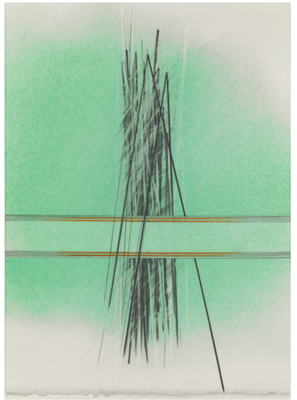
HOLDING LINES 2019
Bronze, concrete, tyre strip & lead
Unique
240 x 63 x 50 cm

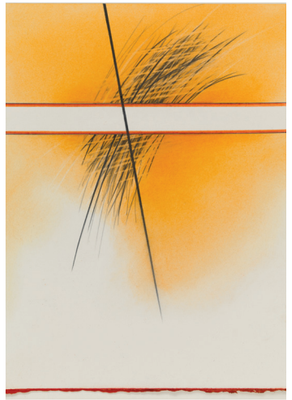




BROKEN TIME 10, 14 2020
Pastel / crayon / graphite
Unique
30 x 38.5 cm

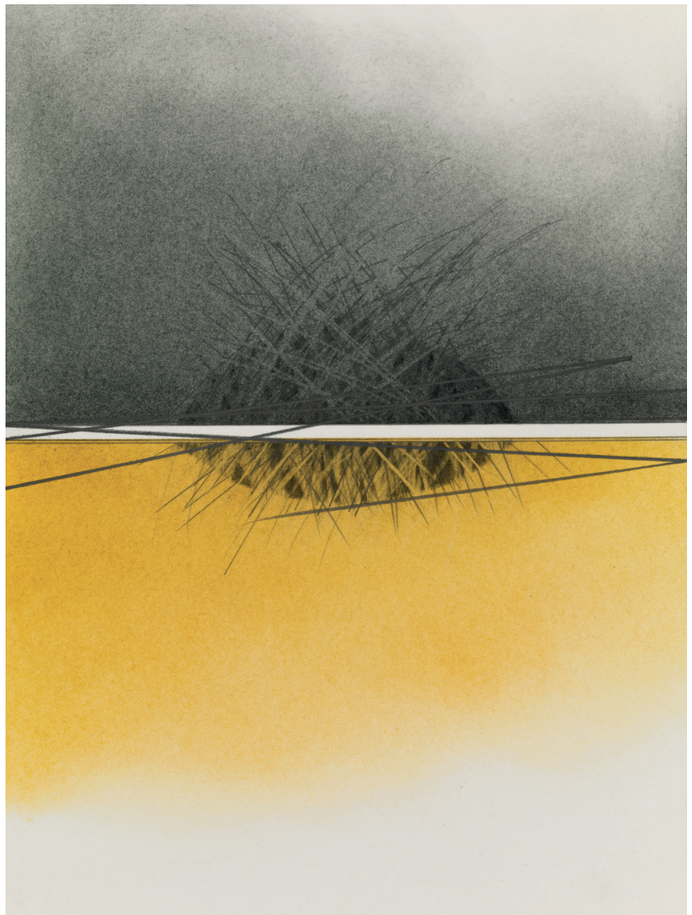




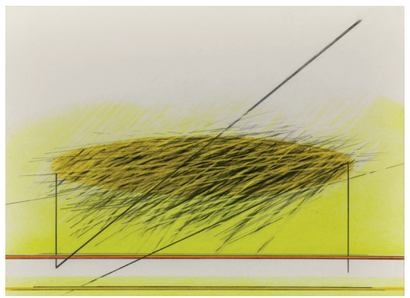


BROKEN TIME 16, 17 2023
Pastel / crayon / graphite
Unique
39 x 29.5 cm
Private Collection

FOLLOWING THE JOURNEY 2018/2024
Resin, Aluminium & stainless steel
Unique
300 x 52 x 30 cm

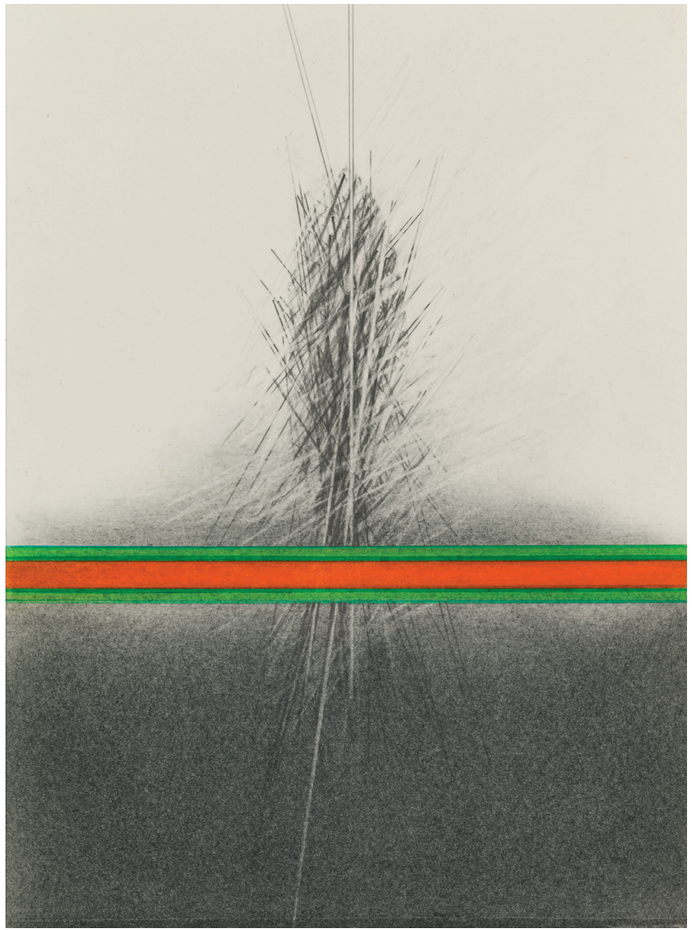


BROKEN TIME 19 2023 - 2024
Pastel / Crayon / Graphite
Unique
39 x 29.5 cm

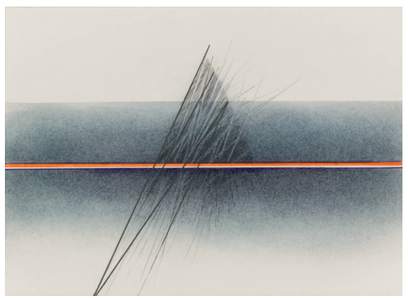


BROKEN TIME 25, 20 2023 - 2024
Pastel / Crayon / Graphite
Unique
30 x 38.5 cm

FINDING THE EDGE (wall) 2024
Resin for bronze
Edition of 3
92 x 11.5 x 3 cm



BROKEN TIME 23 2023 - 2024
Pastel / Crayon / Graphite
Unique
39 x 29.5 cm

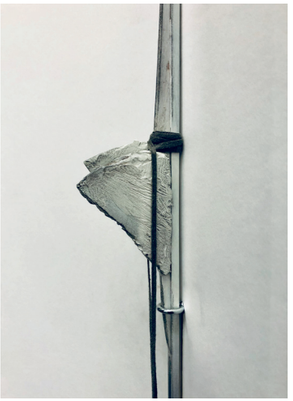


BROKEN TIME 21, 24 2023 - 2024
Pastel / Crayon / Graphite
Unique
30 x 38.5 cm

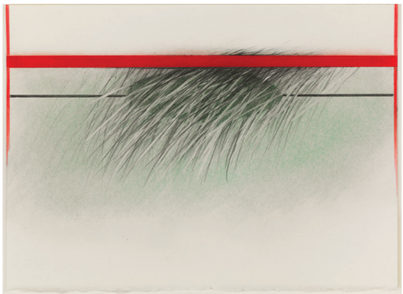
THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE -1 2024
Resin for bronze
Edition of 5
13.5 x 8 x 2.3 cm

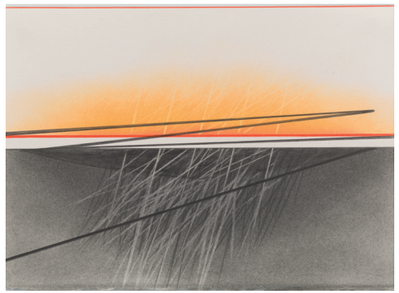
THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE -2 2024
Resin for bronze
Edition of 5
18 x 11.5 x 2.5 cm

THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE -3 2024
Resin for bronze
Edition of 5
15 x 11 x 5.5 cm

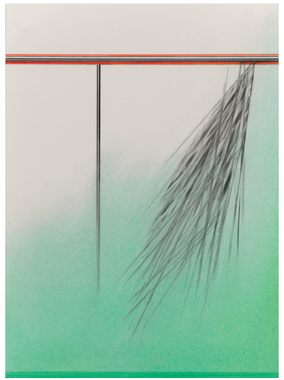


MEMORY LINES -1 (wall) 2024
Aluminium / resin / woven strip / fishing weights
Unique
90.5 x 3 x 7.5 cm



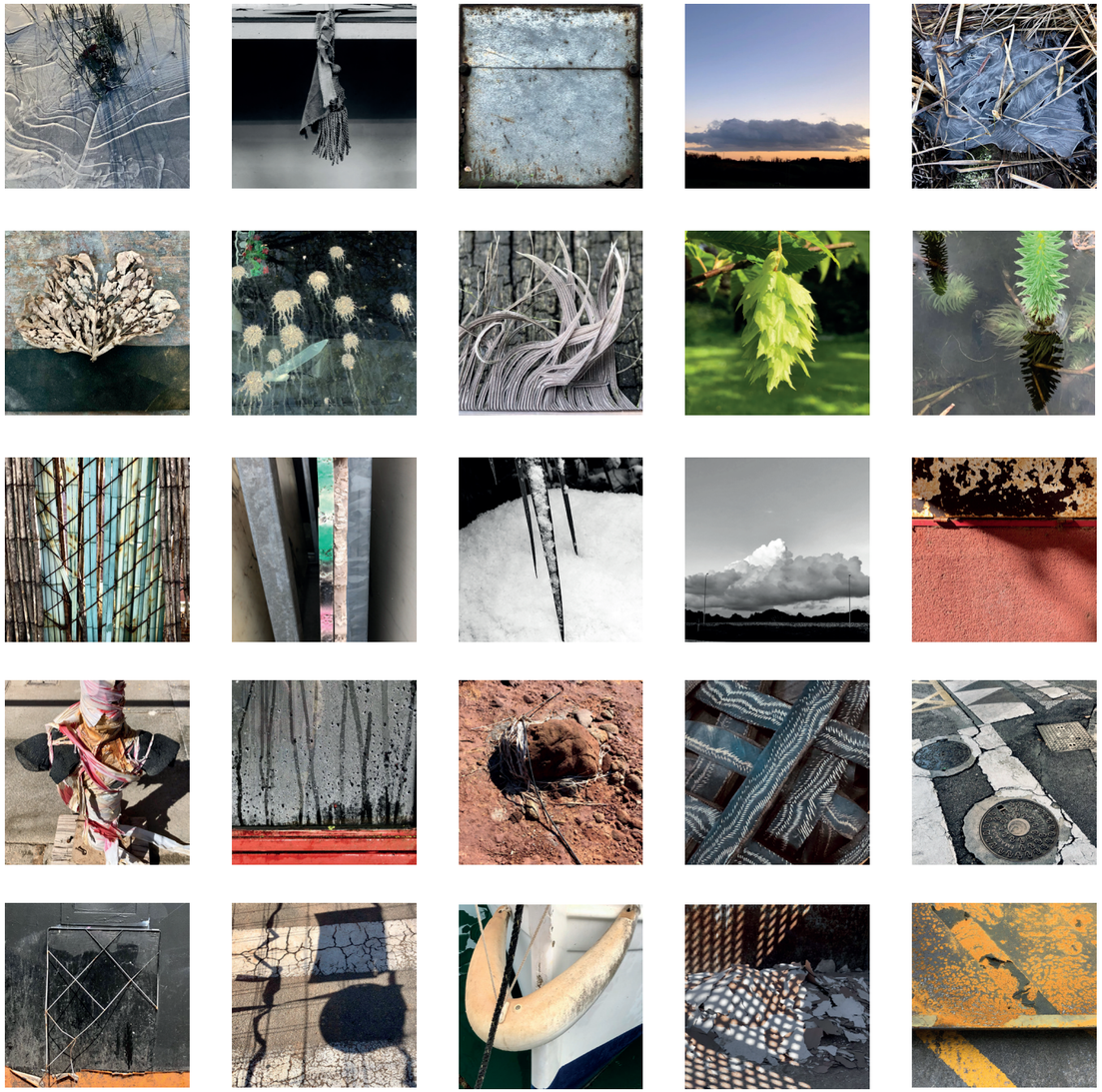


BROKEN TIME 18, 27 2023 - 2024
Pastel / Crayon / Graphite
Unique
29.5 x 38 cm



BROKEN TIME 26, 28 2023 - 2024
Pastel / Crayon / Graphite
Unique
38.5 x 29 cm

MEMORY LINES -2 2024
Aluminium / resin / rubber tyre / slate
unique
86 x 9 x 11cm



ANN CHRISTOPHER

1965/66	Harrow School of Art
1966/69	West of England College of Art - BA Sculpture
1968	Won 1st prize in Harrison-Cowley Sculpture Competition
1971	Prizewinner in Daily Telegraph Magazine, Young Sculptors Competition
	Received Peter Stuyvesant Award
	First exhibited at the Royal Academy, London
1972	Sculpture presented to Daily Telegraph Young Writer of the Year
1973	Received Birds Charity Award
	Arts Council Award, Thornton Bequest
1976	South West Arts Award
1977	Arts Council Grant
1980	Elected Associate of the Royal Academy (ARA)
	Contemporary Art Society purchase
1989	Elected Royal Academician (RA)
1992	Elected Fellow of Royal Society of British Sculptors (FRSS)
1994	Awarded RBS Silver Medal for Sculpture of Outstanding Merit
1996	Frampton Award for sculpture in a public place
	Curated 'A Sculptors Choice' Royal Academy, London
1997	St Cuthbert's Mill print award
2001	First studio residency in France
2005	Quarter leader in Drawing Quarters a practise-based Symposium, UWE, Bristol
2012	Residency at Ruwenzori Sculpture Foundation, Uganda
	Fellow - Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Co Mayo, Ireland
2015	Published Drawing Lines a book of own photographs from Ireland
2016	Royal Academy publication – Ann Christopher
2023	Elected Honorary member of the Royal West of England Academy
2024	Co-ordinator of Royal Academy Summer Exhibition
	Currently lives and works near Bath
	Represented by Pangolin London

LEFT
Selection of images from Ann Christopher's Instagram page 2020 - 2024

SOLO EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE

2024	SILENCE IS A POWERFUL SOUND Pangolin London, Kings Place, London
2021	BROKEN TIME Gallery Pangolin, Chalford
2019	IF YOU STOP ASKING QUESTIONS - - - Pangolin London, Kings Place, London
2019	EDGE + LINE Rosenberg & Co, New York, USA
2018	CHANGING SPACES Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Ballycastle Co.Mayo
2018	Sculpture at Chez Bras Laguiole, France
2016/17	ALL THE CAGES HAVE OPEN DOORS Pangolin London, Kings Place, London
2016	DRAWING – THE LINES OF TIME Fine Rooms, Royal Academy, London
2014	MARKS ON THE EDGE OF SPACE Rabley Drawing Centre
2013	TO KNOW WITHOUT REMEMBERING Pangolin London
2010	MARKS ON THE EDGE OF SPACE Pangolin London, Kings Place, London
2007/08	THE POWER OF PLACE Sir Hugh Casson Room, Royal Academy
2004	STILL LINES Jubilee Park, Canary Wharf, London

COMMISSIONS INCLUDE

2024	THE CHARLOTTE bronze award for the Women's Non-Fiction Prize
2018	THE SHAPE OF TIME 2m bronze for the Rwenzori Sculpture Foundation, Uganda
2017	FOLLOWING THE JOURNEY 5m resin/wood for RA Keepers House Garden
2007	BEYOND THE EDGE 12 x 46 cm bronze sculptures for Parabola Land Ltd
2004	IN THE SKY THERE IS NO EAST OR WEST medal for BAMS
2002	THE EDGE OF LIGHT 2.2m bronze for private site nr Albi, France
2001	SHADOW LINE 48cm bronze for 'New Concepts' Cass Sculpture Foundation, Goodwood
2000/01	TOWARDS THE SKY - 5.5m corten sculpture at Portmarine, Portishead
1998	THE SILENCE OF SHADOWS 3.3m bronze for private garden, Great Barrington, USA
1997	SILENT SHADOW 2.4m bronze for Linklaters, Silk Street, London
1996	CUTTING LINE 4.8m Corten Steel sculpture at Marsh Mills, Plymouth
1994	BEYOND SILENCE 2.3m bronze for private site Washington DC, USA
1993	LINE FROM WITHIN 4.6m bronze at Castle Park, Bristol

WORKS IN COLLECTIONS

Ballinglen Museum of Contemporary Art, Co.Mayo, Ireland
Bristol University
British Museum, London
Cass Sculpture Foundation, Goodwood
Chantrey Bequest, London
City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery
Contemporary Arts Society, London
Corcoran Legacy Collection, American University, Washington DC
Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea
Granville Holdings Plc, London
Grosvenor Square Properties, London
Gruss & Co, New York, USA
Harrison Weir Collection, London
Holburne Museum, Bath
Linklaters, London
Evelyn Stefansson Nef, Washington DC USA
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Parabola Art Collection, Edinburgh
Prior's Court School, Newbury
Royal Academy, London
Royal Collection, Windsor Castle
Royal West of England Academy, Bristol
Rwenzori Sculpture Foundation, Uganda
Salisbury Art Gallery, The John Creasey Museum
Sharjar Art Museum UAE
Talboys Bequest, Bristol
Victoria Art Gallery, Bath
World Wide Business Centres Inc, Philadelphia USA
and private collections in Europe and USA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE:

2023	IF NOT NOW WHEN Saatchi Gallery, London
	CONTEMPORARY PRINT + THE INK ON PAPER PRESS Chippenham Museum
2022	ANN CHRISTOPHER & DOROTHY DEHNER Rosenberg & Co, New York
	BACK TO THE CAVE Clearwell Caves, Coleford
2020	SCULPTORS DRAWINGS AND WORKS ON PAPER Pangolin London
2019	PARALLEL LINES – DRAWING AND SCULPTURE The Lightbox, Woking
2018	THE SLEEPING PROCESSION Cass Sculpture Foundation, Goodwood
2017	SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL XXXIV Flowers, Cork Street, London
2016	MADE IN UGANDA Museum of Uganda, Kampala
	JUBILEE Gallery Pangolin Chalford
	LINES + COLOURS Gustavo Bacarisas Gallery, Gibraltar
2015	SCULPTORS DRAWINGS Keepers House Royal Academy
	SCULPTURE AT ST WITHIEL Lemon St Gallery, St Withiel
2014	RECENT PRINT ACQUISITIONS Golder-Thompson Gift, Pallant House Gallery
	CRUCIBLE -2 Gloucester Cathedral (Gallery Pangolin)
	SCULPTORS' JEWELLERY Pangolin London
2013	HERE, THERE AND SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN Hatfield House
	GIFTED: FROM THE ROYAL ACADEMY TO THE QUEEN Queens Gallery, London
2012	INTERESTING TIMES Leicester University Botanical Garden
	SCULPTORS DRAWINGS + WORKS ON PAPER Pangolin London
	RA NOW Burlington Gardens, Royal Academy
2011	WOMEN MAKE SCULPTURE Pangolin London
	THE FORCE AND FORM OF MEMORY Cyril Gerber Gallery,Glasgow
	DRIVEN TO DRAW Tennant Gallery, Royal Academy
2010	SCULPTURE PROMENADE 2010 Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
	SCULTURA INTERNAZIONALE A RACCONIGI 2010 Racconigi, Italy
2009	IN THE MIX Pangolin London
2003	STERLING STUFF Royal Academy, London & Sigurion Olafsson Museum, Reykjavik

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ANN CHRISTOPHER
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