

The background of the entire image is a vibrant orange color with a fine, leather-like texture. Overlaid on this background is a complex, abstract pattern of thick, black, hand-drawn lines. These lines form a series of interconnected, irregular shapes, including circles, triangles, and polygons, creating a dense and dynamic visual field. The lines vary in thickness and orientation, giving the pattern a sense of movement and depth.

JON BUCK
TIME OF OUR LIVES



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

JON BUCK: LIFE-BOATS

We are anxious these days about what it means to capture something: we worry about representation, about ownership, about appropriation. Having our hand in things seems to have wrecked the world for the rest of life. Having, one way or another, caged our planet, we now feel ourselves a species adrift – we have become unnatural in nature.

What is left, then, for an artist to do – an avowed maker of things, a haptic human or capture-junkie? Jon Buck's new art engages with these challenges by making objects that ask questions about their making and their meaning. He has a series of bronze sculptures that are beautiful but which don't allow their beauty to be the end of them. They are also useful and they are also troubling. Here are preserving vessels, a jar to catch tears in, an ark, a seed bank for bad weather ahead, and bells to toll for all but also to navigate by. The wonder of these assorted domesday chariots is how noisy they look. They are annotated all over with jostle and clamour, with kingdoms of voices and of signatures. Their surface is what they are all about: nothing is going silently to its end and, since we're all in this together, we must sing too.

Within moments of meeting Jon for the first time we were talking about water. We stood at a window at Pangolin Editions – the foundry and gallery that have cast his new work and are showing it in two exhibitions in 2019 – and looked out over the fast flowing shallows of the River Frome. I'd seen a muscled trout butting into the current as I got out of my car

and Jon reported dippers and grey wagtails, birds that endorse clean and quick water, and there are otters too. The industrial works that darkly veined these otherwise rural valleys of Gloucestershire came here for the water and they fouled it for a hundred years or more as they laboured. Along with Pangolin, other contemporary concerns, similarly clean and pollution-conscious, have occupied the old sites. And today art is being made there that tells a comparable story of ruination and of possible recovery.

Jon grew up on the banks of muddier waters – the River Avon, which having fashioned Bristol leaves the city for the Severn Estuary via the great limestone gash of the Gorge. The Avon is tidal between the Severn and Bristol, and the Bucks lived between the rocks and the water, on the south side of the brown river that has run forever thick with West Country runoff. The whole of the Severn Estuary and its contributing rivers amounts to one perpetually unresolved debate between shore and sea, between salt-water and mud-slide, between the full and the empty, between the wild and the managed, between safety and threat, between home and away.

There are eight generations of river pilots in Jon's family: men who went aboard ships in the Severn or the Bristol Channel to guide them into port. His was the first generation to break with the family



Jon Buck in his studio, March 2019

was something he'd long been busy with. Before he became a sculptor, he worked for a time as the Keeper of Birds at Bristol Zoo. He didn't like the title or what it implied but we should remember it. Sometimes he was called away from the zoo to attend to lost and injured birds that people had come across. He once rescued a little auk – a seabird of the Arctic Ocean – that had inadvertently pitched up in the middle of Bristol. He did for it what he could. And he still communes to this day. Nowadays, he knows the otters that have come back to the Frome; but he also knows of the birds that are not at Ham Green on the Avon any longer – he feels and registers what has been called the great thinning of nature.

Two series of sculptures from Jon's recent work explicitly address the anthropocene – this new era that we have created whereby our actions are determining how life goes and will go for the rest of our planet. These sculptures make thoughtful play around two ancient practical objects that have also long

been used to signify where and how we are in the world. There are bells and there are boats – more specifically, there are warning tocsins and there are rescue vessels: bronzes made in the shape of slightly flattened Chinese-style bells; and arks, as Noah would recognise, curved at bow and stern, sea-worthy but also sometimes with legs that might allow them to settle on the land if ever the waters subside.

A patina colours and textures the surfaces of the bells and the arks and they are further marked – thickened, we could say – with crowded raised patterns of what Jon calls glyphs. These are sometimes lines that might be the representation of a wave or a cloud or a horizon or the energetic movement of basic life that we might see enlarged as medical imagery or microscopy; these are sometimes a species of runic writing; these are sometimes the icons and symbols we have become habituated to in our digital lives (there is a lovely joke in a drawing of a yellow-bright oriole in a spring green-leafed

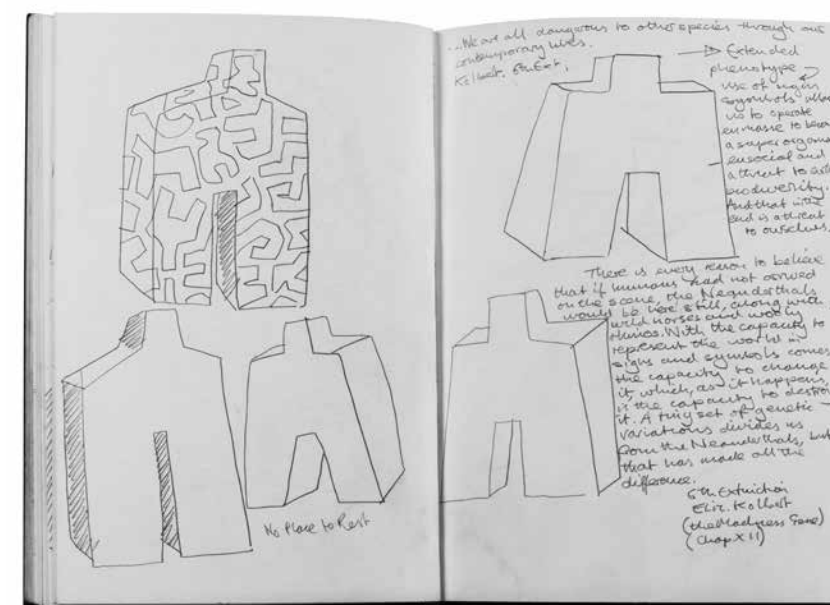
tradition. It was good business but it was also a humane calling. Very few of us can walk on water and making landfall is still the goal for all.

With something like this in mind, Jon has been building arks for some time. He dates his new work that we see in these two shows back to 2015 but in many ways his whole life has prepared him for it. One three-dimensional example of this is a sculpture he made in 1988 of nature's first pilot – a head of Noah capped by a magnificent raven. More recently, the sometime riverside boy came to boat building as something like an emergency measure, in the stark light of a global catastrophe that too many of us are still in the dark about: life is grievously wounded and all of it is under threat. The scale of the calamity is so large that

we cannot see it, although it is right there in front of us, like a last elephant in the room that is our world. Species extinctions, ecosystem collapse, habitat loss, climate crisis – the words blot out the sun, drown the moon, screw up the seas, and parch the land.

What can anyone do against them? And, what can one artist add to the world so that we might better feel these woes, so that we might mend them?

Jon has been alive to the natural world around him all his life. He told me that he remembers, as a child, standing in the fields at Ham Green on the Avon: "Just standing and taking it in." Later he came across the phrase 'to commune with nature' and he realised he knew what it meant and that it



'...We are all dangerous to other species through our contemporary lives.'
'Extended phenotype - use of signs symbols allow us to operate en masse to become a super organised eusocial and a threat to earth's biodiversity. And that in the end is a threat to ourselves.'
'There is every reason to believe that if humans had not arrived on the scene, the Neanderthals would be here still, along with wild horses and woolly rhinos. With the capacity to represent the world in signs and symbols comes the capacity to change it, which as it happens, is the capacity to destroy it. A tiny set of genetic variations divides us from the Neanderthals, but that has made all the difference.'

Extracts from *The Sixth Extinction*, Elizabeth Kolbert



*Making a Difference:
Red is for Rhino*
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm



*Taste for the Beautiful:
Refresh, Refresh, Refresh*
2017, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm

world surrounded by the refresh symbols we know from computing); but, most of all of these glyphs are of animals – outlines that a child or a toy-maker or a Palaeolithic cave-painter or a graffiti-tagger might sketch – an ibis, a gorilla, a salamander, a rhinoceros, and many more. All these glyphs show Jon to be an arkivist, or a keeper as much as he ever was. Darwin ended his *Origin of Species* with a joyous panoramic image of all life living together on an ‘entangled bank’. Jon’s decorated bells and arks give us the same, with an added sense of pressing threat. These biodiverse scenes are on a bell that might toll for all of their life, or they are netted on the side of an ark that might be required to fetch their threatened forms to safety.

Jon has previously said that he thinks of sculpture as ‘the silent song’. His new work is articulate in a new way for him, perhaps, and

it will speak to all who encounter it. The bells that Jon has made do sound – bluesy plangent domesday chimes – but we should think also of the navigating bells on the River Severn, tolling as the tide turns, when the silt of all the land is run out to sea, and think of an ark rocking on the waters there, the slap of the waves against the hull, and from within its hold the fantastic riot of noisy life, that marvellous party, awaiting a haven and first steps back on to the land. The raven Noah released never returned to the ark, but a pair now breeds in the Avon Gorge and they fly over Jon Buck’s old haunts most days. They weren’t there when he was a boy. Some stories out of the ark make for happier news than others and Jon’s bronze life-boats are loud and freighted with good things that we must try to keep.

Will there be – asks a poem by Bertolt Brecht – singing in the dark times? Yes, it answers, there will be singing about the dark times.

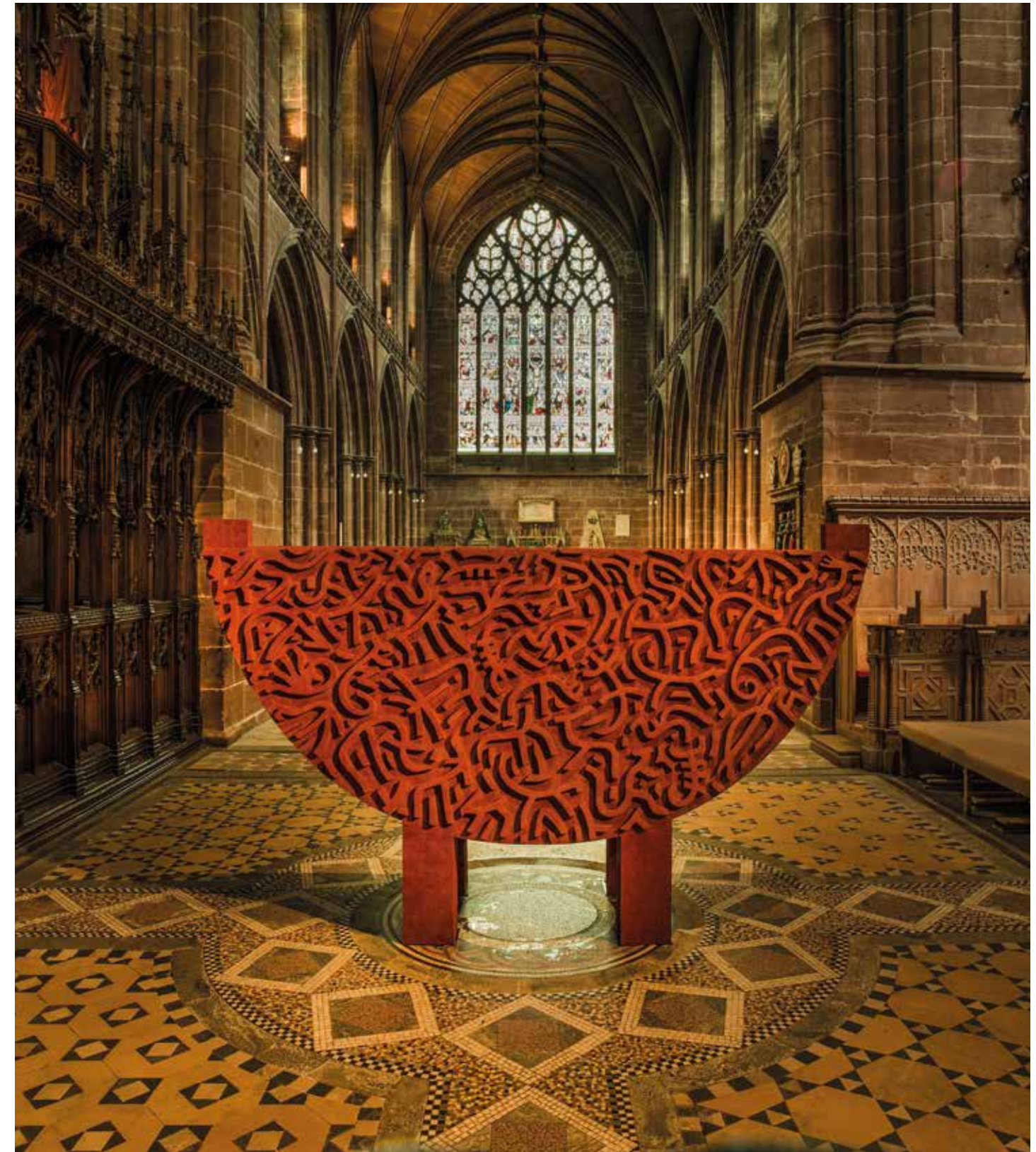
Tim Dee

Tim Dee writes on birds, nature, people and places. He wrote *The Running Sky* and *Four Fields*. His last book *Landfill* was about gulls and rubbish and the organising of both; his next book, *Greenery*, will be about the spring.



(LEFT)
Argentum Vivum
2016, Sterling Silver
Edition of 10
22.5 x 10 x 10 cm

(RIGHT)
Ark: High and Dry
2017, Bronze
Edition of 3
212.5 x 363.5 x 93.5 cm
Installed at Chester Cathedral
from July - October 2017





CATALOGUE

“We have to regain our experience of connectedness
with the entire web of life.”

The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision,
Fritjof Capra and Pier Luigi Luisi, 2014



Wellhead
2019, Bronze
Edition of 10
50.5 x 66 x 23 cm



Seeds of Doubt
2018, Bronze
Edition of 10
32.5 x 73 x 18 cm

Taking the Toll
2019, Bronze
Edition of 5
200 x 140 x 64 cm



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





Matrices: Webs of Diversity V
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm

Matrices: Webs of Diversity VI
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm

Matrices: Webs of Diversity I
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm



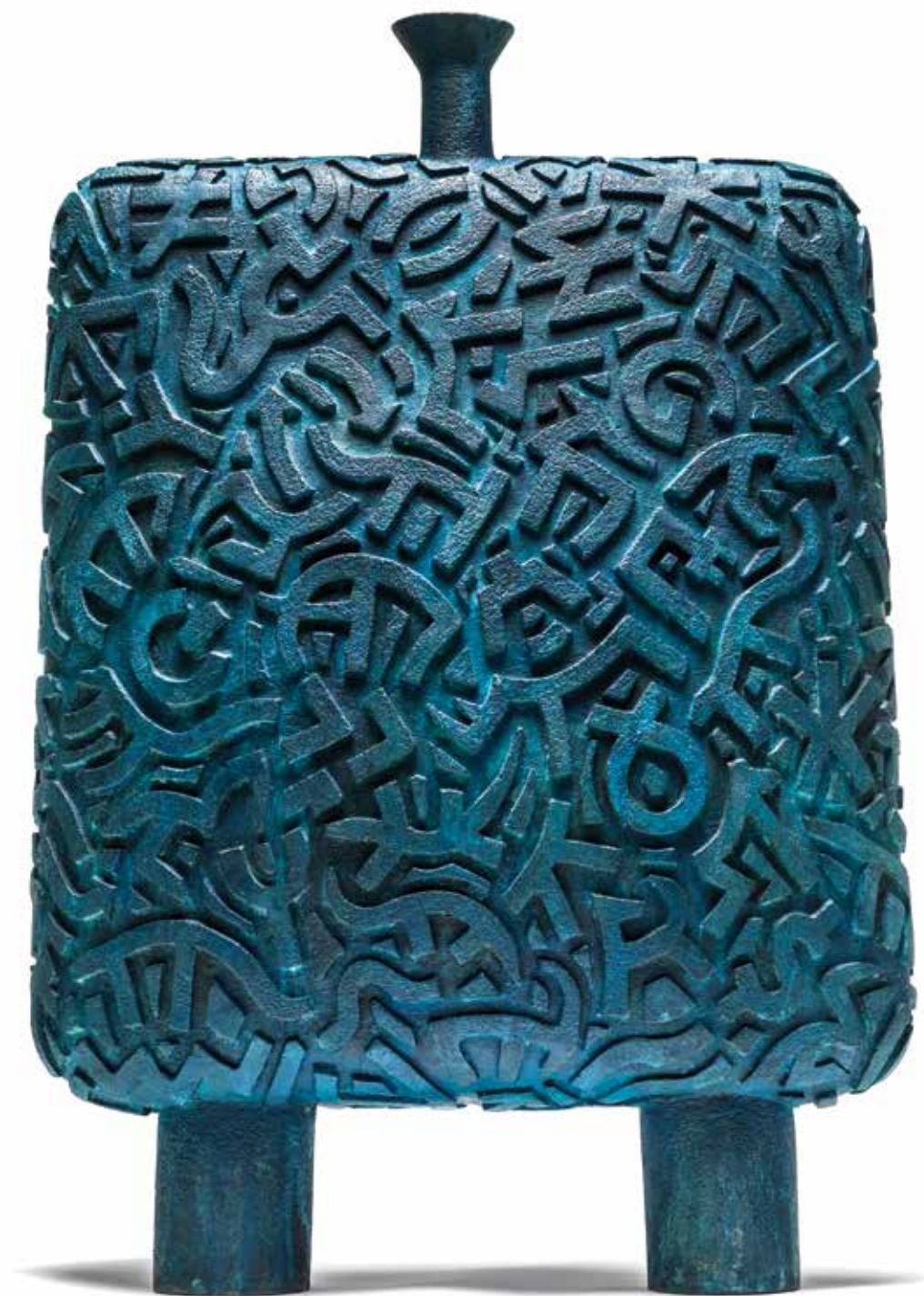
Sculpture: Melting Point
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm



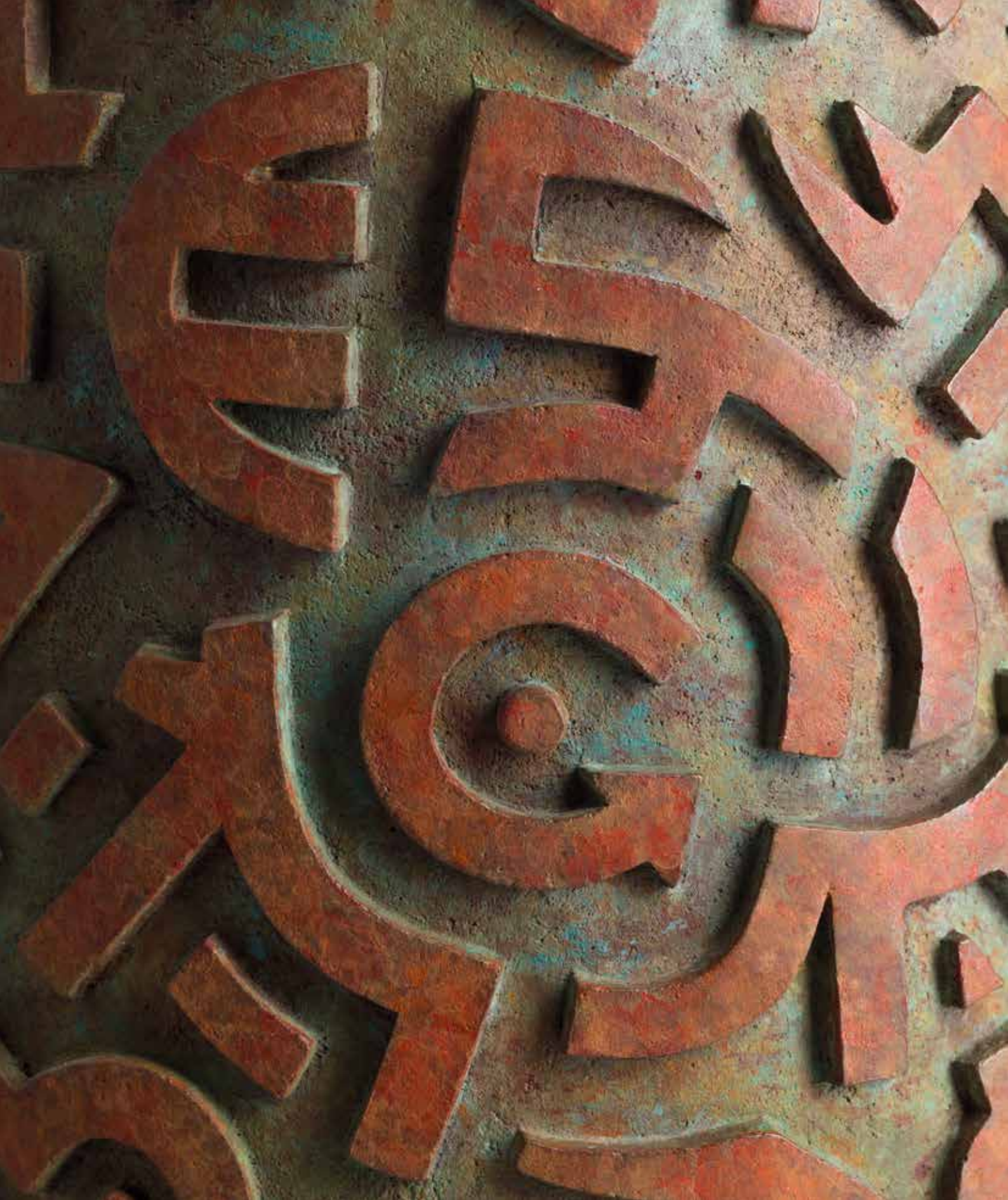
The Whole Caboodle
2018, Bronze
Edition of 10
45 x 54 x 27 cm



Full of Life
2018, Bronze
Edition of 10
28.5 x 69.5 x 23 cm



In Ferment
2018, Bronze
Edition of 10
74 x 52 x 16 cm



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



A World of Difference
2019, Bronze
Edition of 10
22.5 x 41 x 11 cm



Transmutation
2011, Bronze
Edition of 10
44.5 x 49.5 x 30 cm

Bigger Beast
2019, Bronze
Edition of 10
27 x 34 x 8 cm





Sculpture: Strange Fruit
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm



Sculpture: Bigger Beast
2019, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm



Standing By
2019, Bronze
Edition of 10
30 x 48 x 13 cm



Touch of Nature
2018, Ceramic
Unique
62.5 x 45 x 16 cm

Lexicon
2008, Sterling Silver
Edition of 10
18 x 13 x 8 cm





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





Ark: High and Dry Maquette
2018, Bronze
Edition of 10
41.5 x 71.5 x 19 cm





Taking the Toll Maquette
2018, Bronze
Edition of 10
59.5 x 43 x 17 cm

Catatonic
2019, Bronze
Edition of 10
33 x 27 x 7 cm





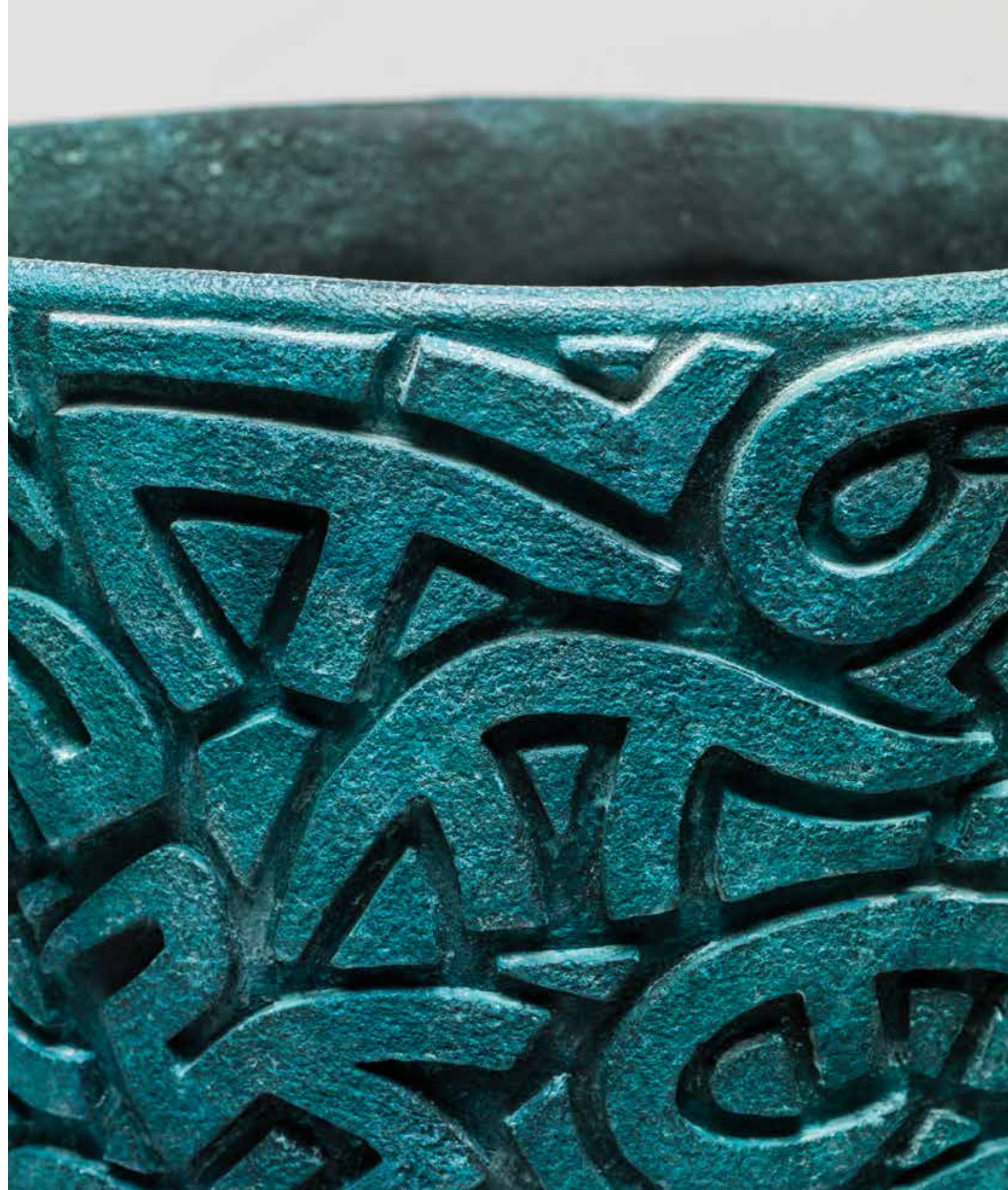
Less Than No Time
2018, Ceramic
Unique
48.5 x 30 x 30 cm

Man Oh Man
2019, Bronze
Edition of 10
29.5 x 19 x 7 cm





Lachrymal Vase
2018, Bronze
Edition of 10
52 x 34.5 x 33 cm



Barking
2019, Bronze
Edition of 10
28 x 39 x 7 cm





Cast Adrift
 2019, Bronze
 Edition of 10
 24.5 x 39 x 14 cm

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

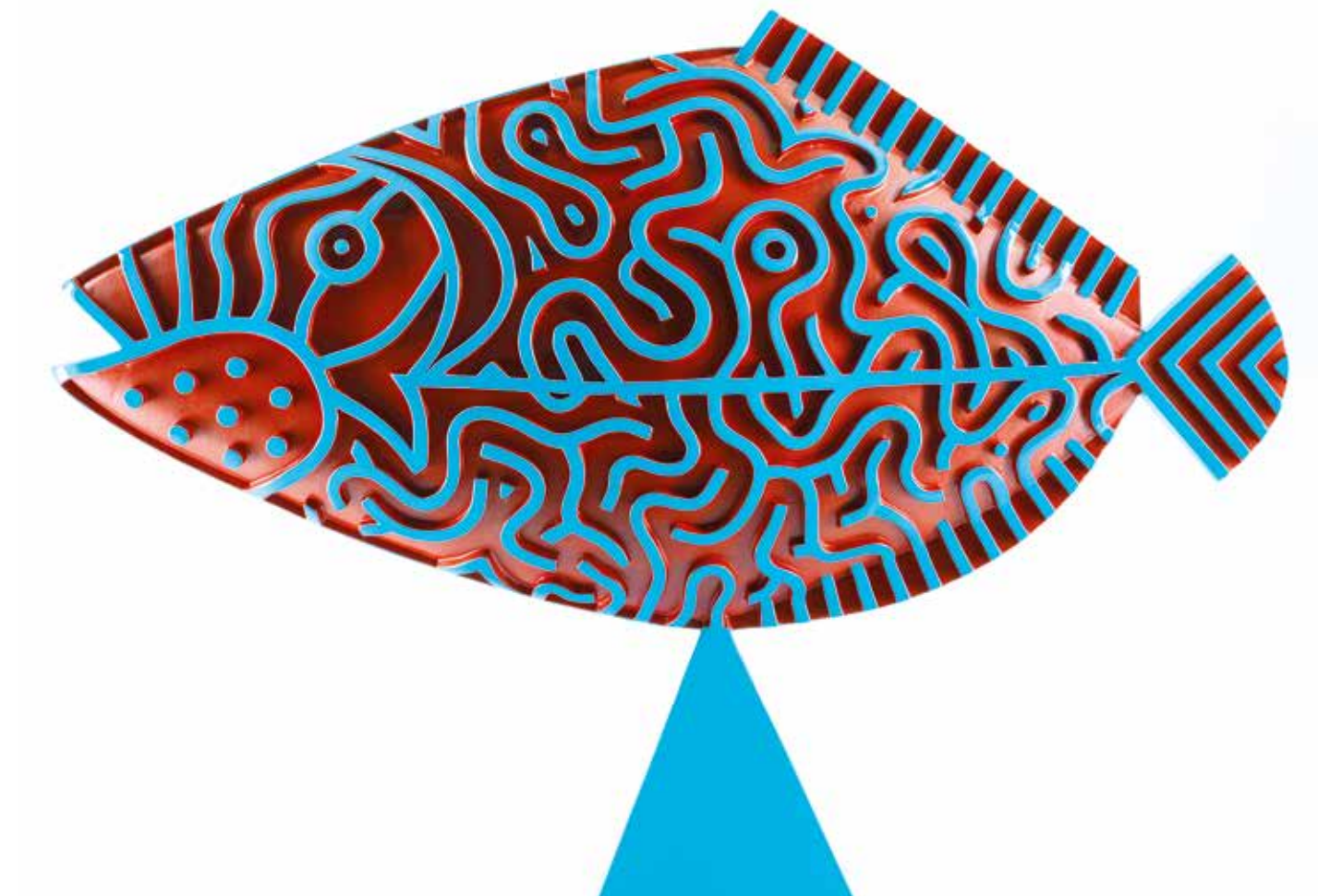




(LEFT)
Eidos VII
2012, Bronze
Edition of 10
30 x 38 x 5 cm

Eidos XIV
2012, Bronze
Edition of 10
26.5 x 36.5 x 5 cm

(RIGHT)
Part of the Puzzle
2012, Bronze
Edition of 10
60 x 71.5 x 15 cm





(LEFT)
Red Queen Rules
 2012, Bronze
 Edition of 10
 70 x 51 x 11 cm

(RIGHT)
Marked Cat
 2015, Bronze
 Edition of 10
 28 x 45 x 20 cm



Symphysis
2011, Bronze
Edition of 10
32.5 x 39.5 x 16.5 cm





Animal Glyphs
2019, Glazed ceramic
Unique
Heights ranging from
9.5 to 26 cm



Curved Cat
2019, Bronze
Edition of 10
16 x 26 x 19 cm

Preserving Vessel
2018, Ceramic
Unique
38 x 31 x 31 cm





Sculpture: Cast Adrift
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm

*Arks for the Anthropocene:
All Adrift III*
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm

*Arks for the Anthropocene:
Standing By*
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm



*Arks for the Anthropocene:
Seeds for a Future I*
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm



Few and Far Between
2016, Bronze
Edition of 10
34.5 x 58 x 18 cm

JON BUCK

b. 1951

1970-75	Employed as Keeper of Birds at Bristol Zoo
1975	Fine Art Foundation Cardiff University
1976-79	BA (Hons) Fine Art, Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham
1979-80	MA Fine Art, Manchester Polytechnic
1980-81	Fellow in Sculpture, Gloucester College Art and Technology, Cheltenham
1984	Artist in Residence, Borough of Thamesdown, Swindon
1990	Elected Member of Royal West of England Academy
1991-2011	Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Southampton Solent University
1994	Elected Associate of Royal Society of Sculptors
1995	Artist consultant for Caerphilly Town Centre Enhancement Scheme
1998	Artist consultant for the refurbishment of Deal Pier
1999	Wins Rouse Kent Award for Public Art
2004-09	Three projects with Ruwenzori Sculpture Foundation, Uganda
2012	Elected Fellow of Royal Society of Sculptors

RECENT SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019	'Jon Buck: Time of Our Lives', Pangolin London, Kings Place & Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire
2015	'Coded for Colour', Pangolin London, Kings Place
2014	'Without Words', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire
2012	'Turning Inside Out', Pangolin London, Kings Place
2011	'Making a Point: the Point of Making', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire
2009	'Behind the Lines', Pangolin London, Kings Place
2005	'Odd Birds and Other Selves', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire

2000 'Intimate Connections', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019	'Sculpture Open', Royal West of England Academy, Bristol
2018	'Sculptors' Maquettes', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire 'Decade: 10 Year Anniversary', Pangolin London, Kings Place
2017	'ARK', Chester Cathedral, Chester
2016	'Jubilee', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire 'Nature of the Beast', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire 'Sculpture in the Garden', Pangolin London, Kings Place
2015	'Toro', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire 'Sculptors' Prints & Drawings', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire
2014	'Crucible 2', Gloucester Cathedral, Gloucester 'Sculptors' Prints & Drawings', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire
2013	'Sculptors' Prints & Drawings', Part of Impress '13 International Printmaking Festival, Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire (also in 2011 and 2009) 'Drawn', Royal West of England Academy, Bristol
2012	'Sculptors' Drawings & Works on Paper', Pangolin London, Kings Place
2010	'Crucible – the Sculpture Show of the Decade', Gloucester Cathedral 'Figuring it Out', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire 'Stirred for a Bird', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire
2009	'A Celebration of British Sculpture', Harold Martin Botanic Gardens, Leicester 'Fire and Brimstone', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire
2008	'Sterling Stuff II', Pangolin London, Kings Place 'Image', Steve Russell at the Campden Gallery, Gloucestershire
2006	'Animals and Birds', Jubilee Park, Canary Wharf, London 'Out of the Melting Pot', Dexia Banque Internationale, Parc Heintz, Luxembourg
2003	'BLOK', Festival of Sculpture, Canterbury 'Sterling Stuff', Gallery Pangolin, Gloucestershire, also travelled to Sigurjon Olafsson Museum, Reykjavik, Iceland and the Royal Academy, London
2002	'Fantastic Animals', Donjon de Vez, Paris, France 'Thinking Big: Small Work for Large Projects', Peggy Guggenheim Museum, Venice, Italy
1999	'The Shape of the Century: 100 years of Sculpture in Britain', Salisbury Cathedral & Canary Wharf
1980-85	'Superhumanism', Nicholas Treadwell Gallery

COMMISSIONS

2018	<i>In Man's Nature</i> , 240cm high bronze, Unicity Sculpture Park, Mauritius
2007	<i>Ship to Shore</i> , 300cm high bronze, Portishead Quays, North Somerset
2005	<i>Aurora</i> , 50cm high bronze, Haberdasher's Livery Hall, City of London
2004	<i>Flat Out</i> , 200cm high bronze, Centre for Sport, Exercise and Health, Bristol University
2002	<i>Family</i> , 170cm high bronze, Paddington Central Development, London
2001	<i>Equilibrium</i> , 165cm high bronze, Milton Keynes General Hospital <i>Goodwood Goddess</i> , 220cm high bronze, Cass Sculpture Foundation, East Sussex
2000	<i>In the Swim</i> , 200 cm high bronze, West Quay Shopping Centre, Southampton <i>Family</i> , 170cm high bronze, Milton Keynes General Hospital
1999	<i>Returning to Embrace</i> , 150cm high bronze, Canary Wharf, London
1998	<i>Embracing the Sea</i> , 300cm high bronze, Deal Pier, Kent
1996	<i>New Age</i> , 90cm high bronze, New Consulate General Building, Hong Kong

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(COVER IMAGE)
Fractured: Cracked Earth II
2018, Pastel on paper
Unique
49.5 x 65 cm

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