



Two triangular forms

Robert Adams

Not on display

Title/Description: Two triangular forms

Artist/Maker: Robert Adams

Born: 1957

Accession Number: 31550

Historic Period: 20th century

Credit Line: Bequeathed by Joyce and Michael Morris, 2014

During the past year, forms in my work have changed from rectangular to curvilinear, solid mass and weight has given way to light linear forms and curved planes, and a fresh element - counterbalance - has appeared... In the new linear works the place of the screen is taken either by a cone or a rod. Upon these, curved planes or lines balance and react upon each other, but their movement this time is not held back, the cone or rod acting only a stationary object or point in space around which one might describe an arc, and their direction is outwards to infinity. I speak of the cone or the rod as being stationary and the curved planes as having movement, when in fact the whole sculpture is quite static. I am of course speaking of implied movement which is brought into being when a form, plane or line is placed on a certain relationship to another. [1]

Adams published the above statement in 1957, in the Royal College of Art's journal, *Ark*. Created in the same year, he is clearly describing works such as *Two Triangular Forms*, in which the triangle planes curve around and intersect the vertical rods. Two rods extend directly upwards, whilst a third curves around the triangles, enclosing the form.

The sculpture is made from welded rods and sheet steel. In Paris from 1948 onwards, Adams had seen the work of Spanish sculptor Julio González, who pioneered welded sculpture. In Britain, Adams' contemporaries Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick and Geoffrey Clarke all welded sculpture, having learnt the technique on a course with the British Oxygen Company in 1950. The technique was new to sculpture, which was why they partook in the industrial course. In a catalogue about British sculpture from this period, *Exorcising the Fear*, Gallery Director Polly Bielecka explains how advances in technology in the 1940s and '50s meant the processes were available to sculptors in terms of efficiency and economy. [2] Whilst Butler, Chadwick and Clarke remained committed to figuration through their welded sculptures, Adams was alone in creating purely abstract forms through welding.

The Sainsbury Centre has the most important body of work by Robert Adams in a public collection in the UK with 27 sculptures and 8 works on paper. They were acquired by collectors Joyce and Michael Morris and bequeathed to the Sainsbury Centre in 2016.

Tania Moore, April 2021

[1] Robert Adams, 'Personal Statement' in *Ark, Journal of the Royal College of Art*, no. 19, 1957, p.29.

[2] Polly Bielecka, *Exorcising the Fear* (London: Pangolin London, 2012), p.11.

Further Reading

Alastair Grieve, *The Sculpture of Robert Adams* (London: Lund Humphries, 1992)

Alastair Grieve, *Constructed Abstract Art in England: A Neglected Avant-Garde* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005)

Provenance

Bought by Michael Morris from the artist in 1960.

In October 1984, the University of East Anglia accepted a planned bequest from Joyce and Michael Morris (UEA Alumni). Michael died in 2009 and Joyce in December 2014 when the couple's wishes were implemented.
