



Planes through a curve

Robert Adams

Not on display

Title/Description: Planes through a curve

Artist/Maker: Robert Adams

Born: 1957

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Steel

Accession Number: 31576

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

Credit Line: Bequeathed by Joyce and Michael Morris, 2014

Five steel quadrilateral sheets have been welded together making the ascending sweeping shape of *Planes Through a Curve*. Although the planes themselves are flat, together they form a dynamic curve, delicately poised on a curved stand. Adams was interested in creating the suggestion of movement through intricately balanced forms. The steel has been finished with a layer of bronze. The surface was first mechanically cleaned, in a process known as shot blasting, before being sprayed with molten zinc and then bronze at a workshop. To make it look like steel again, Adams treated the surface with a chemical solution to give the dark colour of steel, rather than the orange of bronze. [1]

The sculpture is smaller than other works made by Adams in the same year, also in the Sainsbury Centre collection (*Two Curves/ Reacting Curved Form No. 1* 31551 and *Two Triangular Forms* 31550), which would stand on the floor. This sculpture is a more compact table-top piece, and Alastair Grieve believes that it was designed to be viewed from two sides, rather than in the round. [2] Adams was very interested in silhouette, most notable in his *Screen Forms* from 1961, which were almost completely flat to be viewed from only two aspects (*Screen*, 31552).

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. [3] 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] Alastair Grieve, *The Sculpture of Robert Adams* (London: Lund Humphries, 1992), p.82.

[2] Ibid., p.81.

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

Further Reading

Alastair Grieve, *Constructed Abstract Art in England: A Neglected Avant-Garde* (New Haven and

London: Yale University Press, 2005)

Provenance

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.
