



# Pierced Relief

Robert Adams

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**Not on display**

**Title/Description:** Pierced Relief

**Artist/Maker:** Robert Adams

**Born:** 1952

**Object Type:** Sculpture

**Materials:** Wood

**Accession Number:** 31586

**Historic Period:** 20th century

**Production Place:** Britain, England, Europe

**Credit Line:** Bequeathed by Joyce and Michael Morris, 2014

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*Pierced Relief* is composed of four wooden pegs intersecting a flat disc of wood. The length of the pegs mean that the relief stands proud of the wall, so the oval disc creates a plane parallel to the wall. Two holes in the disc have not been plugged by pegs; the holes visually connect the sculpture to the wall and emphasise its three-dimensionality. Three slender pegs which taper towards the viewer at the top right balance the larger peg at the bottom left, which is viewed at its blunt end. The sculpture is a careful balance of positive and negative space and interconnected forms.

*Pierced Relief* was exhibited at Adrian Heath's studio in the first of three weekend-long exhibitions he staged in 1952. In his catalogue raisonné of Robert Adams' sculpture, Grieve argues that *Pierced Relief* and another relief were the two most original of Adams' works in this exhibition. [1] In the exhibition, abstract artworks were presented in dialogue with each other to create a complete environment. The studio offers a domestic environment and the relief was displayed above a fireplace surrounded by paintings by Adrian Heath and Terry Frost and a lithograph by Kenneth Martin. Adams was the only sculptor in the exhibition, although some of the other artists were moving from painting into reliefs and mobiles. The artists worked with architects on the design, paving the way for more ambitious collaborations such as the *This Is Tomorrow* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1956. Heath's exhibitions are comprehensively described by Alastair Grieve in his *Constructed Abstract Art in England: A Neglected Avant-Garde*. [2]

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, March 2021

[1] Alastair Grieve, *The Sculpture of Robert Adams* (London: Lund Humphries, 1992), p.49.

[2] Alastair Grieve, *Constructed Abstract Art in England: A Neglected Avant-Garde* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp.13-16.

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## Exhibitions

Second Fitzroy Street exhibition, Adrian Heath's studio in Fitzroy Street, March 1952.

'Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951', Sainsbury Centre, UK, 02/10/2021 - 17/07/2022

'Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951', Djanogly Art Gallery, UK, 07/03/2023 - 23/07/2023

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## **Further Reading**

Tania Moore and Calvin Winner (eds.), *Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre, 2021), p.108.

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## **Provenance**

Michael Morris bought *Pierced Relief* from the artist in 1956.

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.

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