



# Small Head

Dame Elisabeth Frink

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## Not on display

**Title/Description:** Small Head

**Artist/Maker:** Dame Elisabeth Frink

**Born:** 1959 - 1959

**Measurements:** h. 242 x w. 201 x d. 145 mm Weight: 4 kg

**Accession Number:** 50818

**Copyright:** © Frink Estate

**Credit Line:** Provided to the Sainsbury Centre in accordance with the wishes of the artist's late son, Lin Jammet

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Frink's sculpture *Small Head*, 1959, is one of the most remarkable of her hybrid human-animal sculptures. Ambiguously human or animal, this head suggests both fear and menace as if screeching and exposing vicious teeth. It resonates with the sense of violence in the post-war period, recalling Germaine Richier's skull-like human-animal heads. Open-jawed and displaying pronounced fangs, it has much in common with Bacon's early biomorphic creations, such as *Triptych*, 1944, and *Fury*, 1944 as well as his animal-primate paintings of the late 1940s to early 1950s. Such works express the darker side of human-animal behaviour with heightened psychological drama. Like Bacon, Frink's head sculpture seems to anticipate later science-fiction creations.

Elisabeth Frink (1930- 1993) is one of the most important British sculptors of the twentieth century. Her expressionist sculptures address some of the more fundamental questions concerning aspects of human behaviour such as aggression and vulnerability. Known for both human and animal forms, she was also fascinated by the symbiotic relationship between humans and animals. Frink made hundreds of sculptures, virtually single-handed (she rarely used assistants) and worked tirelessly at her craft.

Frink was born in Great Thurlow in Suffolk and spent her formative years in war-time East Anglia. She studied at the Guildford School of Art (1946-49) and at the Chelsea School of Art (1949-53) and remained resolutely an expressionist figurative artist against the prevailing trends of her time. She died prematurely in 1993 at the young age of 62 and was widely admired in her lifetime, a Royal Academician, a Dame and a Companion of Honour.

Calvin Winner, January 2022

[1] Calvin Winner (ed) Elisabeth Frink - Humans and Other Animals, Sainsbury Centre, 2018, p.37

TO-BE-REPLACED-WITH-A-GAP This human-animal hybrid head suggests both fear and menace as if screeching and exposing vicious teeth. It resonates with the sense of violence in the post-war period, notably the screaming figures of Francis Bacon as well as his early animal/primate paintings.

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## Further Reading

Elisabeth Frink - Humans and Other Animals, Calvin Winner (ed), Tania Moore, Annette Ratuszniak, Sainsbury Centre, 2018

Stephen Gardiner, The Official Biography of Elisabeth Frink, HarperCollins, 1998

Elisabeth Frink Catalogue Raisonné of Sculpture 1947-93 by Annette Ratuszniak, published by Lund Humphries, 2013

Elisabeth Frink: Sculpture, Catalogue Raisonné, Harpvale Books, 1984, Interview with Bryan Robertson

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