

Press Release

Elisabeth Frink: Natural Connection

20 July 2024 – 23 February 2025

The Weston Gallery and Outdoors

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) presents work of Dame Elisabeth Frink (1930-1993) bequeathed to the arts charity, for the first time.

Gifted to YSP – a registered charity and accredited museum – the varied and timeless selection of works by the late renowned artist, famed for her sculptures and prints of animals and the human figure, celebrates her connection to the natural world.

Frink's approach to animals and humans means that their complex and intertwined themes of vulnerability, nature connection, pain, joy and loss all endure – speaking to today's audiences just as clearly as when she made them in the latter half of the 20th century.

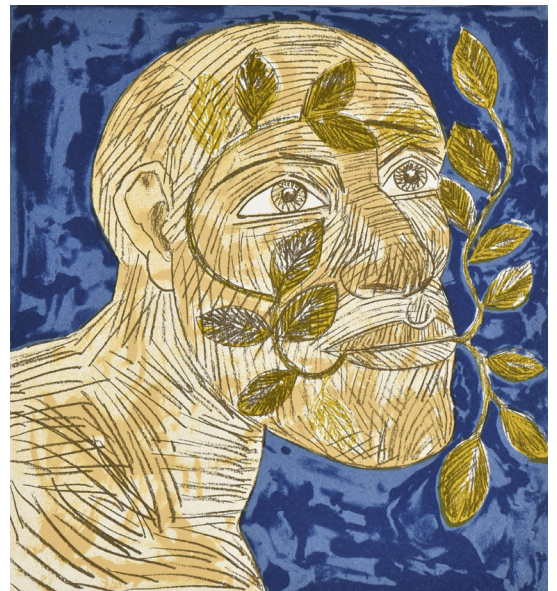
For Frink, animals symbolised powerful natural forces and showed both the struggles and celebration of life. The wildness, strangeness and freedom of birds was a notable fascination. Similarly, horses and dogs were enduring; particularly their nobility in labour. Her prints and sculptures resonate with the deep connection that she felt for the forms and personalities of animals.

The animal works displayed at The Weston Gallery show the dynamic way that Frink investigated shape and movement. Plaster models of some of the bronze works allow us to observe the artist's process and create an immediate connection with her practice. The prints, too,

have a direct connection to the artist's thinking through vibrant mark-making. The transformation of one idea through plaster, bronze and paper shows how Frink's thoughts could transfer through different ways of working.

A similar transformative energy is found in the artist's *Green Men* – exploring the ancient mythological form in sculpture and print. The Green Man symbolises the power of nature and a deep and complex relationship to people. The understanding of natural forces through myth is also found in Frink's prints illustrating Greek legends.

Frink's human figures were rarely portraits, instead they represent meditations on the complexities of humanity itself: suffering and resilience, anger and defiance, the mechanical and the natural, and sometimes embodying a spirit of place. She often used plaster to build the form over a metal wire armature, which was then cast in bronze, a technique that means the artist's touch is visible. The connection between material and process is highlighted in this exhibition with many plaster works on view.



Elisabeth Frink. *Green Man (blue)*, 1992. Photo © Frink Estate, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park



Elisabeth Frink, *Seated Man II*, 1986. Photo © Jonty Wilde, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Installed outdoors, several bronze sculptures explore humanity and its histories, habits and tragedies. *Atlas* (1983) is a towering mythological figure holding the weight of the earth above him and the *Riace* figures were inspired by the archaeological discovery of ancient Greek bronzes. Together, these and other figures reflect on the universality of the male form through history, representing power and vulnerability. This collection of works will be joining two life-sized bronzes, *Protomartyr* (1976) and *Standing Man* (1984–6), installed amongst the trees on the far side of the Park and are part of the collection of sculptures sited outdoors at YSP.

Frink had a longstanding relationship with YSP, which included her outdoor retrospective in 1983. A major exhibition had been in the planning when she passed away, resulting in a poignant memorial in 1993, and her work has regularly been shown nationally and internationally since.

Frink's late son, Lin Jammet, arranged for 200 significant works to enter the YSP collection in 2020, comprising larger-than-life-size bronze figures, watercolours, domestic-scale bronzes and related plasters. The selection illustrates his mother's deep understanding of different aspects of humanity in relation with animals – both wild and domesticated.

Alex Hodby, YSP's Interim Head of Programmes: "Elisabeth Frink is such an important figure for YSP. She was a pioneer of form and purpose in sculpture and print, and her work has been part of the outdoor displays here for many years. In 2020 we were grateful recipients of a generous gift of bronzes, plasters and works on paper from her estate, which we care for and research."

She added: "In *Natural Connection*, we focus on animals and mythological figures that capture the energy of life and landscapes. Now, as it was during her lifetime, Frink's concern with animals, humanity and natural forces has a powerful resonance with contemporary life."

All works provided to Yorkshire Sculpture Park in accordance with the wishes of the artist's late son, Lin Jammet, 2020.

- ENDS -



Elisabeth Frink, *Standing Man*, 1984. Photo © Jonty Wilde, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park



Elisabeth Frink. *Dog II*, 1980. Photo © Frink Estate, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Notes for Editors

Press enquiries

Mana Merikhy, Sutton / +44 (0)20 7183 3577 / mana@suttoncomms.com

Gemma Donovan, Communications Officer, YSP / +44 (0)1924 832 515 / comms@ysp.org.uk

Download images at ysp.org.uk/press

Listings information

Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield WF4 4LG

Near Wakefield and Barnsley – M1 Junction 38

+44 (0)1924 832631 | ysp.org.uk | @YSPsculpture

Book tickets at ysp.org.uk

Open Monday – Sunday until 29 September 2024, closed on Mondays thereafter (except bank holidays and Wakefield school holidays) and 24–25 December.

The Weston is open Tuesday–Sunday and bank holidays. The gallery, restaurant and shop are free to enter without purchasing a ticket.

Social media

Instagram and X: @YSPsculpture

Facebook: @YorkshireSculpturePark

LinkedIn: Yorkshire Sculpture Park

#YSPSculpture

About Dame Elisabeth Frink

The career of Dame Elisabeth Frink (1930-1993) has in recent years been reappraised and her significant contribution to British art is widely acknowledged.

She was a leading figure in British sculpture during the second half of the 20th century and spent her childhood living near a military airbase during the Second World War, which had a great impact on her world view and artwork. She studied at the Guildford School of Art and Chelsea School of Art and was part of a postwar group of British sculptors described as the Geometry of Fear school.

This latest exhibition is drawn from the YSP collection: bronzes, plasters and works on paper in The Weston Gallery share different aspects of Frink's exceptional output as well as insight into her process. The artist made sculptures by first creating a metal or wood armature, which she built up with layers of plaster before shaping them through carving and chiselling. These models would then be cast in bronze, retaining the raw vitality of the artist's hand. Two of her key subjects were dogs and horses, noble animals humbled by labour or injured as unwilling participants in warfare. These are shown in the gallery alongside beautiful lithographs that reflect the artist's care for the natural world including native British species such as hares, badgers and kestrels. Also on display is a series of etchings representing ancient Greek myths – a salutary reminder of the repeated histories, habits and tragedies of our species.

Frink was one of the post-war British artists who reflected lived experience of warfare and throughout her life she had nightmares of black wings beating around her. She was left with a deep understanding of the complexities of man, our capacity for evil and the ways it can be masked.

She made many sculptures of male figures which often embodied a conflict between strength and vulnerability. This is embodied by the three *Riace* figures shown in the landscape, inspired by two fifth-century BCE Greek statues known as the Riace Warriors.

She was both intrigued and repelled by these symbols of violence and explained that the painted masks are "*a way of showing that their beauty in a sense hides what they are up to*". Also in the landscape is the iconic sculpture of Judas who for Frink embodied the frailties of human behaviour and the violence of its consequences.

About Yorkshire Sculpture Park

In 2023 YSP was awarded Visitor Attraction of the Year and Cultural Award in the Yorkshire Post Tourism Awards and awarded VisitEngland's gold accolade in 2021-22 for an outstanding visitor attraction.

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP), Art Fund Museum of the Year 2014, is the UK's leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture. Welcoming around 380,000 visitors each year, YSP is a registered charity and an accredited museum situated in the 500-acre, 18th century Bretton Hall estate in West and South Yorkshire.

YSP is led by Clare Lilley, and was founded in 1977 by Sir Peter Murray CBE, and it is the largest sculpture park of its kind in Europe. It is the only place in Europe to see Barbara Hepworth's *The Family of Man* in its entirety, alongside a significant collection of sculpture, including bronzes by Henry Moore, important pieces by Hemali Bhuta, Roger Hiorns, Damien Hirst, Kimsooja and Erwin Wurm, and site-specific works by Katrina Palmer, Andy Goldsworthy, Alfredo Jaar, David Nash, Sam Scully and James Turrell.

YSP mounts a year-round temporary exhibitions programme including some of the world's leading artists across six indoor galleries and the outdoors. Highlights include exhibitions by Leilah Babirye, Fiona Banner, Anthony Caro, Tony Cragg, Leonardo Drew, Robert Indiana, Amar Kanwar, KAWS, Bharti Kher, Joan Miró, Henry Moore, Lindsey Mendick, Annie Morris, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Sean Scully, Yinka Shonibare CBE, Chiharu Shiota, David Smith, Joana Vasconcelos, Bill Viola and Erwin Wurm.

Across its 47-year history, YSP has worked with over 1,000 artists from more than 40 countries, on varied projects from short-term residencies to major surveys. YSP supports artists at vital stages in their careers and is rare in having the accommodation, workshops and expertise to enable open-ended and risk-taking practice, giving artists space, time and support to think and to develop new ideas.

Over this time, YSP has sought to ignite, nurture and sustain interest in and debate around contemporary art and sculpture, especially with those for whom art participation is not habitual or familiar. It enables open access to art, situations and ideas, and continues to re-evaluate and expand the approach to considering art's role and relevance in society.

Supporting 40,000 people each year through YSP's learning programme, this innovative work develops ability, confidence and life aspiration in participants. YSP's core work is made possible by investment from Arts Council England, Wakefield Council, the Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation and Sakurako and William Fisher through the Sakana Foundation.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

wakefieldcouncil

**LIZ AND TERRY
BRAMALL FOUNDATION**

**SAKANA
FOUNDATION**

**ROGER
EVANS**