

Nigel Hall:

Sculpture + drawings 1965 - 2008

Space, time and meaning. Nigel Hall is one of the finest sculptors in Britain today. His work invites viewers to enter a world with lines and edges, abstract concepts and introspection. This Spring, Yorkshire Sculpture Park hosts this major exhibition in the Underground Gallery, Garden Gallery and open air spaces.

Nigel Hall's work pushes the boundaries of space and meaning. After four decades of dedicated practice, Nigel has redefined his work to articulate a sophisticated understanding of space, and how sculptural object and viewer may occupy it. His current exhibition is on at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, which highlights his tremendous career.

Nigel was born in 1943 in Bristol and studied at the West of England College of Art, Bristol and The Royal College of Art, London, as well as in the USA from 1967-1969 on the Harkness Fellowship. He has exhibited extensively worldwide and is represented in important public and private collections in the USA, Asia, Australia and Europe, some of which are lending to the exhibition.

"I became interested in sculpture because I come from a family that is quite visual. My mother went to art school, and there was a lot of visual stimulus in my life. Her father was a stonemason, restoring buildings in the West Country and it always intrigued me. This informed the way that I visually deal with sculpture and drawing. I found that when I put a chisel on piece of stone and hit it with a mallet it produced a line and an edge, which creates a shadow — you get a line, edge and shadow all at the same time. This is the type of precision that has informed the work that I do. In that atmosphere, it was inevitable that I would be drawn to the visual arts. I never had much doubt that it would be sculpture."

Through an extensive survey of sculpture and works on paper, this major exhibition will reassess Hall's work. Hall was an early artist to develop installations, because he wanted to create a sculptural space that could be physically entered, such as *Magnet* 1966, via which visitors will enter the Underground Gallery.

"As an adolescent, I spent a lot of time walking in the countryside. *Magnet* is a response to that. It is a landscape image brought indoors. I wanted to use spaces that were used by sculptors in the 1950s and 1960s, but sculpture was still very much a pedestal-based art form,

you looked at it on eye level, walked around and that was about it. I thought there must be more to sculpture and space than that. In *Magnet* you have two carpets or mats that use the area under one's foot, and then there are two suspended cloud forms, which use the area of space above one's head. Then an archway that you can walk through, it's a totally involved, three-dimensional space. That started me thinking about how forms change as you get different view points."

Nigel's sculpture became increasingly abstract after a visit to the Mojave Desert in 1967. The experience of space and silence had a profound effect on him, "*Soda Lake* was a response to the real physical geometry of a landscape in America... The scale was vast and the place had sparse features, so sparse that they only served as minimal markers, an occasional rock, plant or telegraph pole in an otherwise empty landscape." Much of Nigel's work of this period has a sense of weightlessness, often fabricated from aluminium and suspended from ceilings. In the mid 1980s, there is a perceptible shift toward solidity; sculpture that is grounded by its physical density, or fixed to a wall. Nigel says, "In the intervening 40 years, if you were to take the images of my works and make a flicker book, it would be like an animated film where one frame would be similar to the next, but if looked at decade by decade the structural and visual changes would be rather dramatic. There is something about place that triggers ideas for sculptures. Many of the sculptures that I made over the years have names and titles that refer to particular places." Throughout Nigel's career, a conceptual concern with an object's occupation and use of space has been present; how a drawn line can envelop and bisect volume or how the viewer enters or views the work.

Nigel enthuses, "When I'm making a sculpture, it's about tracking it around the room or across a wall. Seeing how one element relates to another, how one sees in landscape. As you walk through a landscape, the whole landscape and elements within



Nigel Hall *Soda Lake*.

it are shifting and moving at different speeds depending on how close they are to you. It's a dance that is set up by your movement through landscape, you create a dance with the sculpture, yet when you're still, it is still. I think stillness can't oppose with that kinetic movement that sculpture has, it's my ideal balance between stillness and movement."

Several monumental works will be shown outdoors at YSP, including *Crossing* (horizontal) and *Crossing* (vertical), two major corten steel sculptures from 2006, which are respectively ten metres long and high. Nigel takes great inspiration from landscape and has recorded sketches and notes from places for over forty years, a selection of which will be on view at YSP. He describes such drawings as "Portraits of a place for future reference and sculptures, which seek to reflect his experience of that place, often with reference to the sky, weather and time of day or year, rather than be directly representational."

The exhibition presents a career of refined and geometric form, but Nigel's work is more complex than a simple abstract exercise. He made *Hour of Dusk* 2000 in response to the death of his father; it is not only a beautiful encapsulation of a moment but shares with all the works in the exhibition a sense of poetry and above all a sense of order and calm.

The exhibition runs until 8 June 2008. For more details please see www.yssp.org.uk.

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