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| Caro, Anthony (1924-2013) |
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| Anthony Caro played a pivotal role in the development of sculpture in the twentieth century. He began his career as an assistant to Henry Moore, and made his name with a ground breaking exhibition of work at London’s Whitechapel Gallery in 1963, in which large, abstract, brightly-coloured steel sculptures were displayed standing directly on the ground. His role in art education was of equal significance; teaching at Saint Martin’s School of Art from 1953 to 1981, he introduced a new approach to sculpture that questioned the boundaries of the medium, and encouraged a new generation of British artists. Over his long career he continued to experiment with technique and materials — though steel remained his preferred medium — and from the mid-sixties on he often worked in series, inspired by time he spent in metal factories in Europe and the United States. Unlike most other sculptors, Caro was inspired by painting. His later work drew on the Old and Modern Masters, reinterpreting them in three dimensions. A visit to Greece led to a series based on classical pediments in 1986, and a 1992 piece entitled *The Trojan War*. In the 1990s, Caro began using architectural elements in his sculpture, a concept he dubbed ‘sculptitecture,’ allowing visitors to interact with the work. His achievements have been widely recognised, resulting in many public commissions, honours, and awards. |
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His later work drew on the Old and Modern Masters, reinterpreting them in three dimensions. A visit to Greece led to a series based on classical pediments in 1986, and a 1992 piece entitled *The Trojan War*. In the 1990s, Caro began using architectural elements in his sculpture, a concept he dubbed ‘sculptitecture,’ allowing visitors to interact with the work. His achievements have been widely recognised, resulting in many public commissions, honours, and awards.  Born on 8March 1924 in New Malden, Surrey, Caro came from a distinguished Jewish family. His father, Alfred, was a stockbroker, and Caro attended Charterhouse before applying to Christ’s College Cambridge to study engineering. However, having been introduced to the sculptor Charles Wheeler while in school, Caro began assisting him in his studio and began studying sculpture at Farnham School of Art while at Cambridge during the holidays. After serving in the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy during the Second World War, Caro was determined to pursue a career as a sculptor, and enrolled at the Regent Street Polytechnic, after which he won a place at the Royal Academy Schools in 1947. While still a student, he approached Henry Moore — the leading British sculptor at the time — and six months later started work as his assistant.  Moore introduced Caro to African and Oceanic art, Cubism, and Surrealism. While influenced by Moore’s style, Caro experimented. For instance, he incorporated found objects into his sculpture. He initially produced figurative works in clay and plaster with rough, expressive surfaces such as ‘Woman in Pregnancy’ (1955). These woks gained publicity in the mid-1950s in solo exhibitions at the Galleria del Naviglio, Milan (1956) and Gimpel Fils, London (1957), and were also included in group shows at the ICA (1955) and at the Venice Biennale (1958). In 1953, Caro moved to Hampstead with his wife — the artist Sheila Girling (m. 1949) — where he began teaching part-time at Saint Martin’s School of Art. He continued in this role until 1981, and is credited with transforming the department and curriculum by integrating sculpture and drawing classes, and promoting innovation and debate among his students.  The year 1959 was a turning point in Caro’s career; he met the influential American critic Clement Greenberg, and subsequently travelled to the US for the first time where he met David Smith, Kenneth Noland, and many other artists associated with Abstract Expressionism. Upon his return, he began creating abstract sculptures in steel, which culminated in a large solo exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1963. The impact of this show cemented Caro’s reputation. His approach of using industrial materials and techniques in conjunction with brightly-coloured paint (a direct rebuttal to Moore’s principle of ‘truth to materials’) was extremely innovative, and established Caro’s distinct artistic persona. Moreover, his works physically stood on the floor of the gallery without a mediating plinth to separate them from the spectator’s space. ‘Early One Morning’ (1962) is a typical example — a light, open arrangement of planes and lines along a horizontal axis, akin to a musical composition.  [Image: Early.jpg]  Figure *Early One Morning*. 1962. Painted steel and aluminium, 289.6 x 619.8 x 335.3 cm, London: Tate (<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/caro-early-one-morning-t00805>)  Henceforth, Caro worked and exhibited frequently in America; he spent 1963 to 1965 teaching at Bennington College, Vermont (where Kenneth Noland suggested working in series) and, in 1966, developed his first table sculptures. In the 1970s, Caro worked at the Ripamonte factory in Italy where he produced the *Straight* series based on the H-beam. Following this, he worked at the York Steel Company factory in Toronto, where he produced the *Flats* series from heavy steel-handling equipment, and later at the Can Company factory (part of Syracuse University) using bronze in the *Can Co* and *Water Street* series. He produced further sculptural series in lead, wood, and handmade paper. In 1985 Caro visited Greece, and his subsequent works demonstrate the influence of classical architecture. A meeting with Frank Gehry in 1987 further spurred Caro to explore the interrelationship between sculpture and architecture. Their meeting resulted in large-scale works, which incorporated interior spaces such as the ‘Tower of Discovery,’ displayed at the Tate Gallery in 1991. The ziggurat design of the ‘Millbank Steps’ (2004) tests this disciplinary boundary. Its internal spaces invite the viewer inside while also proclaiming an architectural formality in contrast to the surrounding countryside.  Caro was knighted in 1987, and received the Order of Merit in 2000.  [Image: Steps.jpg]  Figure Millbank Steps. 2004. Rusted steel, 534 x 780 x 2307.3 cm, exhibited at New Art Centre, Roche Court, Wiltshire in 2008  <http://sculpture.uk.com/artists/anthony_caro/>) - contact [nac@sculpture.uk.com](mailto:nac@sculpture.uk.com) or tel: 01980 862244. |
| Further reading:  (Barker and Caro)  (Bryant)  (Moorhouse, Fried and Hickey) |