

= Alexander Stoddart =

Alexander " Sandy " Stoddart (born 1959) is a Scottish sculptor , who , since 2008 , has been the Queen 's Sculptor in Ordinary in Scotland . He works primarily on figurative sculpture in clay within the neoclassical tradition . Stoddart is best known for his civic monuments , including 10 feet (3 @ . @ 0 m) bronze statues of David Hume and Adam Smith , philosophers during the Scottish Enlightenment , on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh , and others of James Clerk Maxwell and John Witherspoon . Stoddart says of his own motivation , " My great ambition is to do sculpture for Scotland " , primarily through large civic monuments to figures from the country 's past .

Stoddart was born in Edinburgh and raised in Renfrewshire , where he developed an early interest in the arts and music , and later trained in fine art at the Glasgow School of Art (1976 ? 1980) and read the History of Art at the University of Glasgow . During this time he became increasingly critical of contemporary trends in art , such as pop art , and concentrated on creating figurine pieces in clay . Stoddart associates the lack of form in modern art with social decay ; in contrast , his works include many classical allusions .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Stoddart 's grandfather was an evangelical Baptist preacher , and his parents met through that church . He was born in Edinburgh , though his father , also an artist , moved the family to the village of Elderslie in Renfrewshire , where the young Stoddart immediately noticed the monument there at William Wallace 's purported birthplace . Today , Stoddart lives and works in nearby Paisley . At school Stoddart became interested in music (and remains so) but decided he was not good enough to become a professional .

= = = Education = = =

Stoddart went , aged seventeen , to train in fine art at the Glasgow School of Art where he studied from 1976 to 1980 . There he settled on sculpture and initially worked within the modernist vogue . Stoddart has recalled an epiphany moment several times : when , after finishing a riveted metal pop @ - @ art sculpture (praised by his tutors) he found a bust of the Apollo Belvedere , " I thought my pop @ - @ riveted thing was rubbish by comparison . It 's extraordinarily easy to pop @ - @ rivet two bits of metal together and extraordinarily difficult to make a figure like the Apollo , but I thought I had to try . "

Stoddart wrote his undergraduate thesis on the life and work of John Mossman , an English sculptor who worked in Scotland for fifty years . His work remains an influence on Stoddart . Stoddart graduated in 1980 with a Bachelor of Arts degree , first class , though he was demoralised by his peers ' ignorance of the art history : " the name Raphael meant nothing to them " . He went on to read History of Art at the University of Glasgow . Afterwards , he worked for six " difficult " years in the studio of Ian Hamilton Finlay . Although Hamilton Finlay is considered one of the most important Scottish artists of the 20th century , Stoddart profoundly disagrees with his working methods : " Finlay was the godfather of a problem that 's rampant everywhere today . He called the people who made his work ' collaborators ' . What we call them nowadays is ' fabricators ' . They 're talented people who are plastically capable , but they never meet their ' artist ' . They 're grateful , desperate and thwarted . "

He is an Honorary Professor at the University of the West of Scotland . On 30 December 2008 , it was announced that Stoddart had been appointed Her Majesty 's Sculptor in Ordinary in Scotland .

= = Aesthetic viewpoint = =

Stoddart is deeply critical of modernism and contemporary art , and scornful of " public art " , a phrase which makes him search for " a glass of whisky and a revolver " . He has repeatedly criticised winners of the Turner Prize , such as Damien Hirst " there 's plenty of them " , and Tracey Emin , whom he calls " the high priestess of societal decline " . Stoddart said of his own repeated public denouncements , " Somebody will be exhibiting a bunch of bananas in a gallery , and they 'll [radio producers] get me on to talk dirty about it " . Stoddart has characterised modern art as dominated by left @-@ wing politics , to the extent that " certain artistic forms likewise became suspect : the tune ; the rhyme ; the moulding ; the plinth " as coercive and overly traditional . He argued that an equestrian statue of the Mariner King , William IV should be placed on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square , as originally intended .

He developed an interest in music at school , where he learned to play the piano , which he still does daily . He called his own medium , sculpture " an art inferior to the super @-@ art of music " and nominated Wagner as the greatest composer . Stoddart developed his theme on the quietism of monumental art and its relation to Schopenhaurian resignation in a lecture to the Wagner Society of Scotland on 2 March 2008 .

Stoddart works within the neo @-@ classical tradition of art , and believes that greatness and respect for posterity are important considerations . In 2010 he rebuffed a query about his interest in sculpting a memorial to Bill McLaren , a rugby union broadcaster : " I do not do sportsmen and I certainly do not do sports commentators . I do artists , philosophers and poets " , he said , warning that memorials are often hastily erected . Advocates of the memorial described the remarks as insensitive , and said that " To have Bill looking down on the fans at Murrayfield , microphone in hand , would bring a huge smile to so many faces . "

Despite their idiomatic differences , Raymond McKenzie argues that the works of both Ian Hamilton Finlay and Stoddart combine formal and intellectual elegance with sharp , sometimes satirical critiques of contemporary society .

Stoddart himself outspoken about Modernism , and its contemporary failures and historical misunderstandings , without hesitation , makes clear that his work stems from a Modernism born in neo @-@ classicism , " And yet , after having said all this about Modernism , I consider myself a Modernist ? but in the context of a vast application of the term extending miles beyond the pokey wee official area to which usually it is confined . For in truth there are really two kinds of Modernism to be uncovered in the space of the last two and a half centuries , and it is to the first and largest of these that I belong and to which , in my small way , I contribute . This is the Modernism that was born in neo @-@ classicism and has , as its great central titan , the mighty Richard Wagner . "

= = Works = =

= = = Civic monuments = = =

In his own work , Stoddart has developed " heroic @-@ realist " neo @-@ classical representations of historical figures . Stoddart works as a civic @-@ monumentalist for Scotland , and described the need his work fills thus : " We need serious monuments which don 't have the Braveheart touch . If we 're to be a nation , we need that . Fletcher of Saltoun is absolutely urgent if we 're to show we mean business . We don 't do it with a stupid Parliament building that looks like a Barcelona @-@ inspired cafeteria . It 's a bloody outrage . "

He has made sculptures of David Hume and Adam Smith , philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment , which stand in the Royal Mile in Edinburgh . Hume is depicted in a philosopher 's toga , representing the timelessness of philosophical thought , a decision which was criticised as atavistic after the unveiling in 1996 , though Stoddart remained stoic , " So here I discovered that the right thing , done in public , will often earn one great disapproval : a lesson for life ? in the modern age at least . " Local philosophy students soon began a tradition of rubbing the statue 's toe to absorb some of his knowledge . Though Stoddart placed the foot over the edge of the plinth to encourage such engagement , the irony of the practice given Hume 's critiques of superstition has

been remarked upon .

Smith , a philosopher who forged the new discipline of economics , is , by contrast , depicted in contemporary attire , showing his concern for the practical matters of economic activity , a gown draped over his shoulder retains the connection to philosophy and academia . Smith 's economic ideas are also encoded into the statue : the plough behind him represents the agrarian economics he supplanted , the beehive before , is a symbol of the industry he predicted would come . His hand , resting on a globe , is obscured by the gown : a literal presentation of Smith 's famous metaphor of the invisible hand . The life @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half size statue of Smith , is cast in bronze from a plaster model by the sculptor and was unveiled in 2008 . It was funded by private subscriptions organised by the Adam Smith Institute .

Stoddart 's statue of James Clerk Maxwell , a physicist , stands in George Street in Edinburgh and a memorial to Robert Louis Stevenson , a novelist , is on Corstorphine Road . His monument to John Witherspoon stands in Paisley , with a copy outside Princeton University .

There are several pieces by Stoddart in Glasgow 's Merchant City quarter . Italia , a 2 @. @ 6 metre , glass re @-@ in @-@ forced polymer statue on top of Ingram Street represents the contribution of Italian traders to the area . Classical in style , the female form is swathed in a chiton and carries symbols of ancient Italy : a palm branch in her right hand and an inverted cornucopia in her left . On John Street , a trio of figures , Mercury , Mercurius and Mercurial form a triangle . The first two , identical figures , sit above the John St. façade of the Italian centre ; their English and Roman names signify the two different manifestations of the deity in Roman mythology . Here , they embody a " dialogue " between ancient lore and modern city life . Opposite , on a plinth on the street , stands Mercurial , cast in bronze and with the adjectival form of the name , it complements the duality of the other two with an underlying unity .

Putative projects include a monument to Willie Gallacher , the Paisley @-@ born Communist MP , championed by Tony Benn and funded by a public appeal and " Oscar " , an amphitheatre carved into the rock on the Scottish coast dedicated to Ossian , the mythical Scot bard .

= = = Busts , cabinet displays and architectural sculpture = = =

During 2000 to 2002 the Queen 's Gallery at Buckingham Palace was renovated in the neo @-@ classical style under the direction of John Simpson , envisioned as " building visible history " . For the walls in the two @-@ storied entrance hall , Stoddart made architectural friezes which interpret Homeric themes in twentieth century Britain . For the Sackler Library in Oxford University , he made a 6 feet (1 @. @ 8 m) by 25 feet (7 @. @ 6 m) bronze frieze , depicting an allegory of traditionalist and modernist values . Stoddart has also worked on busts of living figures whom he admires , often fellow @-@ classicists including Roger Scruton , a philosopher , Robert Adam and John Simpson , architects , the architectural historian David Watkin , and Tony Benn , the politician .