



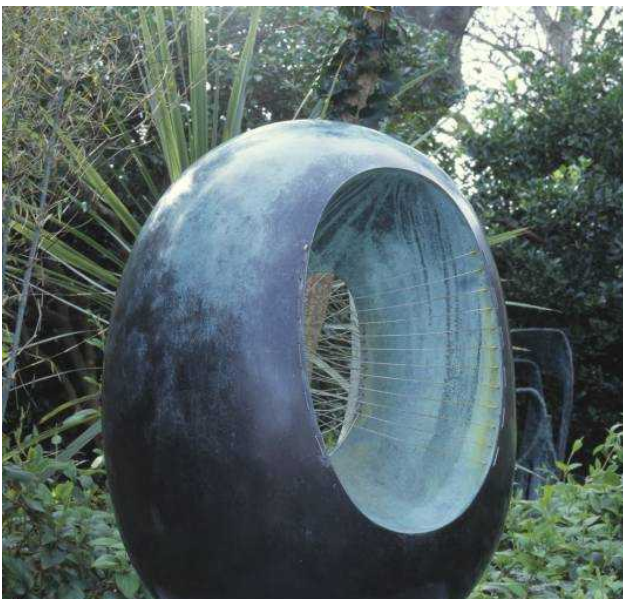
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First written in 2012, this text sets out Phyllida Barlow's initial proposal for the Tate Britain Commission 2014. It was accompanied by a slideshow of images, largely of artworks drawn from Tate's collection. Some are included here, or are represented through links to the artwork pages on Tate's website.

I have been visiting the Tate Gallery – now Tate Britain – for over fifty years. Sculpture has always been the main attraction for me. Witnessing the shifts and changes in what can be identified as sculpture has been a compelling influence on my relationship with this uncompromising and obstreperous fine art discipline.

From the beginning I was keen to keep pace with the rapidly changing art debates and dynamic influences. As the influence of Marcel Duchamp claimed the intellectual high ground during the late 1950s and onwards, the status of invented form and the hand processes of sculpture became symptomatic of old-fashioned and moral attitudes towards producing art. Questions as to what sculpture could or might be came under rigorous scrutiny. The culmination of those debates was the idea that there was no such thing as sculpture: art was art, and that was that.

From the late 1960s I focused on experimenting with materials and processes, but I could not forsake my ways of making initiated in the early 1960s, based on traditional sculpture processes and where clay was my primary resource.



Henry Moore OM, CH



[Animal Head 1951](#)

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Dame Barbara Hepworth

Spring 1966

© Bowness, Hepworth Estate

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At the time, however, there were issues about sculpture that perplexed me. The 'hole' in sculpture, as in Hepworth's sculptures, and Moore's, and its idealisation, did not make sense to me. It was claimed that the 'hole' changed how the sculpture behaved in space. Maybe, but in the end, for me, it was just a hole. I was more interested in the excavated object where breaking through the surface of its materiality had the potential to destroy the very thing being made. And it is this act of destruction and construction, working together, which has made me re-look at the works I was so captivated by from the 1940s to the early 1960s, and which I encountered when I was first at art school, but then so vehemently rejected.

The sculptural object blocks, interrupts, intervenes, straddles, perches, and above all, occupies the space we might otherwise occupy ourselves. Despite its usually static identity, the sculptural object is restless and unpredictable in how it can use space. It is not necessarily a comfortable or comforting experience.

In the Duveen Galleries I intend to generate a physically demanding encounter which can excite questions about experiencing sculpture – how, why, where, what and when.

TATE'S COLLECTION



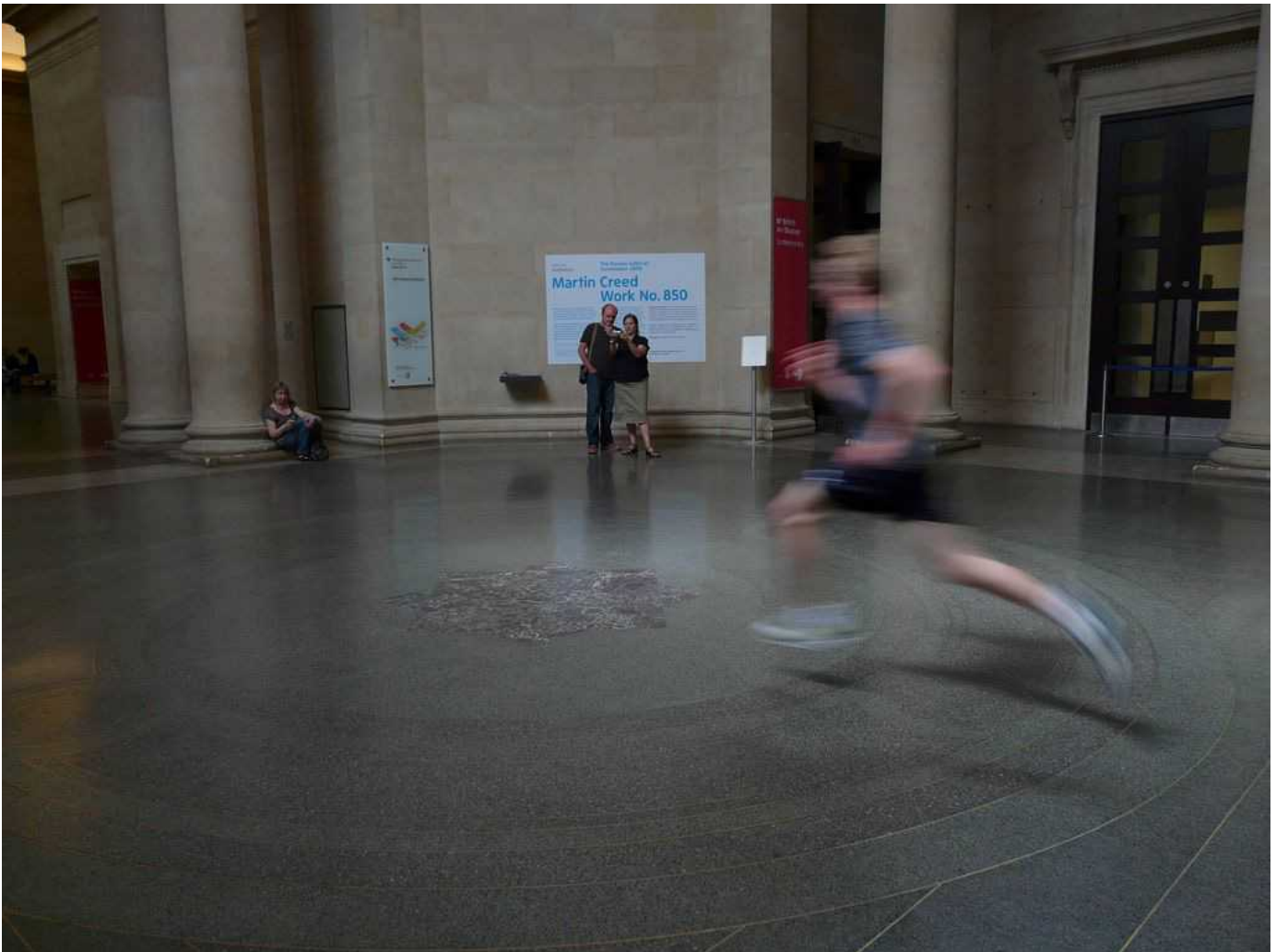


Duveen Galleries at Tate Britain
© Tate



Duveen Galleries at Tate Britain
© Tate

I am fascinated by the space of the Duveen Galleries, especially the high vaulted roof and the natural light from the windows in the roof and along one side of the galleries.



Martin Creed
Work No.850 2008
Duveen Galleries, Tate Britain