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GALLERY

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MELBOURNE
926-930 High Street
Armadale, VIC 3143

SYDNEY
98 Barcom Avenue
Rushcutters Bay, NSW 2011

www.mossgreen.com.au

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28 Cork Street
W1S 3NG

www.messums.com

MELBOURNE SYDNEY LONDON

Messum's Gallery and Mossgreen Gallery Presents

LAURENCE
EDWARDS

New Works





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GALLERY



“When you see or, more accurately, experience the place where the work is made and the landscape that Laurence has inhabited, you cannot help but sense how informal the relation of his art is to nature. It is as if there is a soft or permeable border between them. Things are never seen singly, purely. All his sculptures conspire to dissolve against varied backgrounds, to be part man, part plant, a place where, in myth, Daphne might preside. It is recognisable as a consistent way of being in the world and the note is personal and authentic.”

Christopher Le Brun
President Royal Academy of Arts, London

INTRODUCTION



It is with great pleasure that Paul Sumner and I present these latest works by Laurence Edwards. It was on a very cold, very damp day in the run up to Christmas that we took the train up into the coastal landscape North and East of London to visit Laurence and select this exhibition. I remember the excitement we felt as we stood shaking on the platform waiting for the train and wondering if our feet would ever warm up.

It is two years since Laurence's work was last seen in Australia and since that time there has been a major exhibition at the Royal Academy entitled *Bronze* which won considerable plaudits. Dedicated to the material, it brought together works of art that celebrated the allure of this medium and also the International ownership of its artistic heritage, with wonderful works from around the world. Laurence's mastery of the casting process and his international training offers a unique and exciting response to this medium that speaks of our times.

Johnny Messum
Messum's, London

Photography
Studio Portraits: Tim Bowden
Works: Doug Atfield

FOREWORD

Laurence first studied bronze casting at the Royal College of Art, training under the famous Sri Lankan sculptor Tissa Ranasinghe. Ranasinghe had himself trained at the RCA in the 1950s under Albert Angeloni, one of a pair of Roman brothers who descended from a line of bronze casters purportedly stretching back to the Renaissance. Having been awarded a Henry Moore Bursary, the Angeloni Prize for Bronze Casting and an Intach Travelling Scholarship, in the summers of 1989 and 1990, Laurence travelled to India and Nepal. While working apprenticeships at the local universities and villages, he lived with families, who had worked for generations as casters. By observing and working alongside these master Indian and Nepalese casters, he gained a wealth of insights into not only their techniques, but also furnace construction, their use of indigenous materials and the basic economics of running a working foundry.

Upon his return to England, he completed his degree at the RCA, and opened his first foundry and studio at Clock House in Bruisyard. There, he pursued his own projects, while casting bronzes for other sculptors, including Eduardo Paolozzi, and editions of works by Degas and Rodin for various London dealers. A few years later, he moved to Laxfield where he set up Yew Tree Farm Studios in a sixteenth-century farmhouse, where he built a foundry, and created studio spaces, making them available to other artists. An open artistic community soon formed and, after he moved from Yew Tree, this ideal was realised even more successfully at his current Butley Mills site; a complex of workshops and studio buildings near an old mill. Laurence shares this solid, if shambolic, cluster of

largely prefabricated buildings with around eighteen other artists, as well as his assistants and students, who come from art colleges around the world to learn bronze casting. The tops of his studio walls are pierced with large vent holes and the whole space is strangely permeable. Seeds, leaves, insects and even birds regularly intrude, leaving behind husks, shells, feathers or guano, and often on the clay models. As his studio conditions at Butley practically illustrate entropy and the tendency towards disorder, Laurence does little to mitigate them and even welcomes the random alteration these natural accidents leave on his surfaces.

While he models many of his smaller works in wax, most of Laurence's bronzes begin with kilos and kilos of clay, often recycled from previous works and shot through with the detritus of the studio floor: dust, bits of wood, straw, hardened clay and the like. After making his forms, depending of course on their scale, he divides them into sections and creates plaster moulds of each section. These sections are then assembled and hot wax is poured in to form a thin layer inside the mould, which can be built up as needed. He then joins the sections together to recreate a wax model of the original clay figure and fills it with a mixture of sand and plaster to form a solid core. Large bronzes can never be single solids due to possible fracturing as the molten alloy first expands and then shrinks as it cools. He attaches wax rods to the wax model to form 'runners' to carry the molten bronze throughout the mould and 'risers' to allow gases to escape. After inserting pins to hold the plaster core of the model in place, he forms another plaster mould, what is called

an investment, layer by layer around the wax model. This investment, still containing the wax model, is then fired in a kiln where the heated wax runs out. When all the wax areas are empty, molten bronze is then poured into the mould. After cooling, the mould is broken open to reveal the original figure, now realised in bronze and branched with the rods formed by the channels. Laurence can then choose to incorporate parts of the rods or remove them altogether, plug the pinholes, and alter the surface using acid, wax, or even exposure to the elements.

In casting his work, he has always exploited the expressive potential of pitted surfaces, inspired partly by the work of Germaine Richier, a sculptor he particularly admires. But whereas the French artist used such casting "flaws" to make a deliberate statement about post-war society waking up to the remains of their former world, Laurence's use of process marks is not just symbolic. The almost infinite variety of pits, drips, and bumps, not to mention changes to the surface and colour of the bronze throughout many of his larger figures allows them to actually communicate how and why they came to be. Moreover, it is worth noting that one of his favourite sculptors is Charles Sargeant Jagger, best known for his classically composed, but brutally realistic war monuments which highlight soldiering as hard, dangerous work.

A glance at the photographs and clippings papering Laurence's studio at Butley Mill show various other core inspirations, like the primeval woodlands at Staverton Park. Views of ancient pollard oaks, often overgrown by vines into vaguely monstrous forms hang alongside postcards of academic masterpieces like the

Riace Warrior, and even pop culture icons like the famous "Bigfoot" hoax photograph. But whether Laurence's conception of his figures is inspired by nature, art history or popular culture, in the end they are all born of bronze; it is simply integral. Apart from the fact that he casts his own work (as relatively few sculptors actually do), he looks beyond the alloy's inherent malleability to use it in arguably unique ways. To Laurence, bronze is more than a vehicle for form based on a plastic medium. The alloy itself and its casting process are the engine behind both his figures and their expressive surfaces.

Andrea Gates
Director, Archivist and Art Historian
for Messum's

▶ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Catcher
bronze
94 x 119 x 25 cm



LAURENCE EDWARDS*Crouching Man III*

bronze

100 x 75 x 43 cm



▶ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Loaded
bronze
60 x 125 x 41 cm



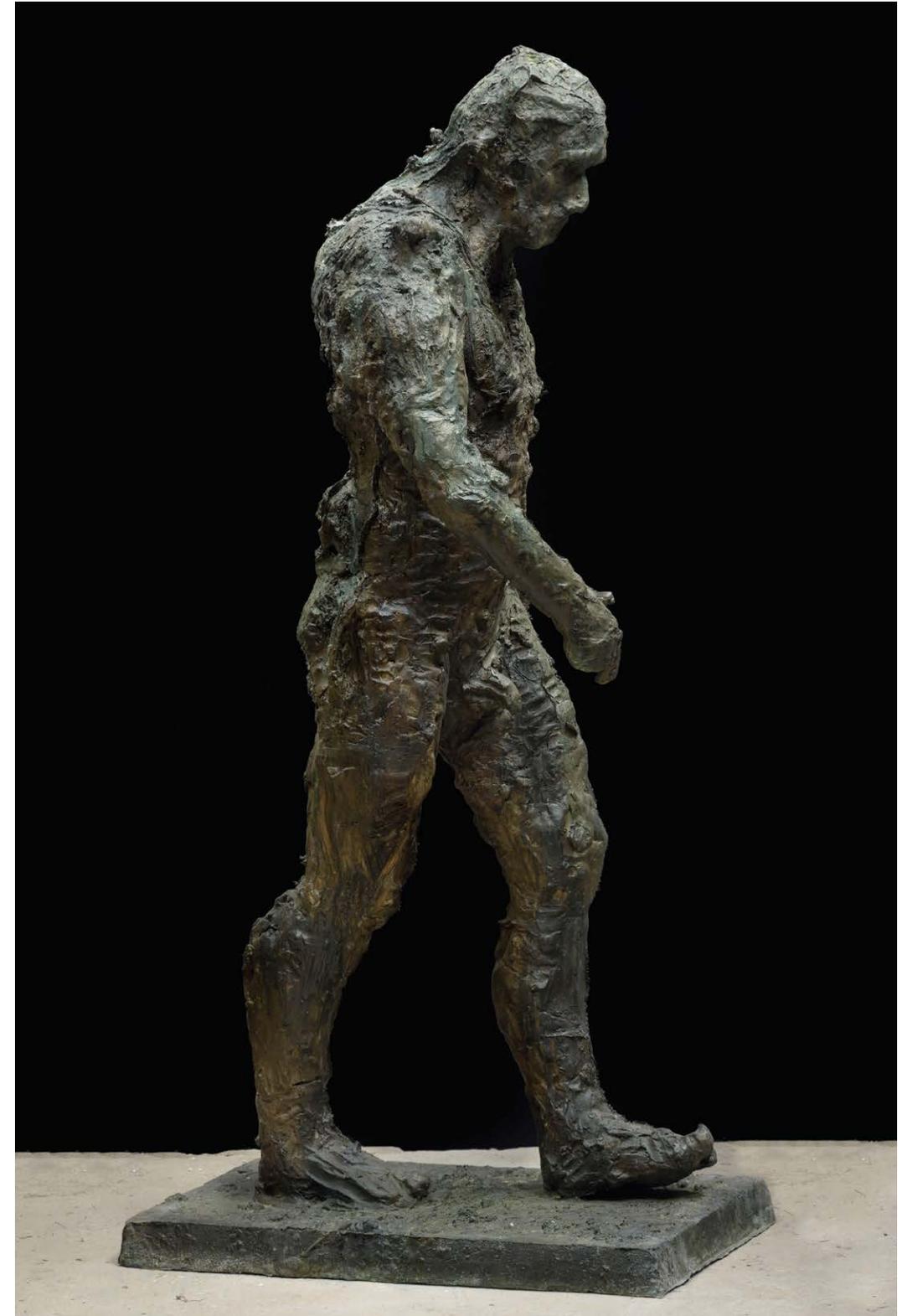
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LAURENCE EDWARDS

Walk Away

bronze

185 x 51 x 91 cm



▼ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Bubble Wrap I
bronze
89 x 66 x 36 cm



LAURENCE EDWARDS*Bubble Wrap II (working title)*

bronze

83 x 41 x 43 cm



▼ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**

Talisman 1
bronze
66 x 41 x 23 cm



▼ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**

Ragged Road III
bronze
H 28 x W 16 x D 14 cm

▼ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**

Ragged Road II
bronze
H 30 x W 15 x D 14 cm

▼ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**

Ragged Road I
bronze
H 26 x W 15 x D 13 cm





▶ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
The Long Wait (study)
bronze
50 x 87 x 28 cm



▶ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Rush I
bronze
75 x 50 x 25 cm



▼ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**

Walking Men - five figure studies

bronze
25 x 40 cm



▶ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**

Man of Stones

bronze
94 x 33 x 25 cm





◀ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Crystal Man
 bronze
 58 x 18 x 18 cm

▶ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Star Jump (Green)
 bronze
 25 x 27 x 12 cm





▼
LAURENCE EDWARDS
Snap Study I
 bronze
 29 x 48 x 13 cm



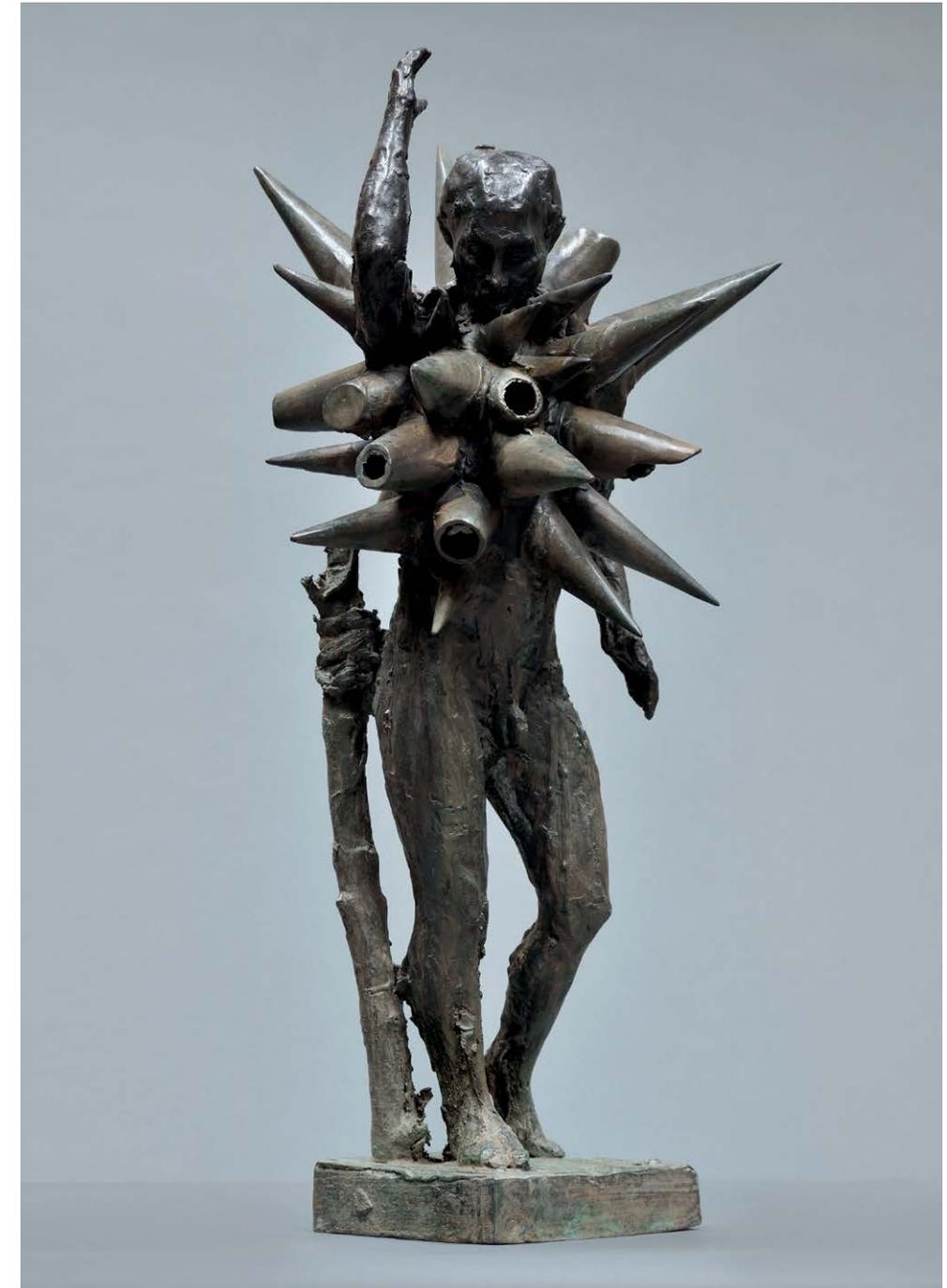
▶
LAURENCE EDWARDS
Healing Hands
 bronze
 94 x 53 x 20 cm



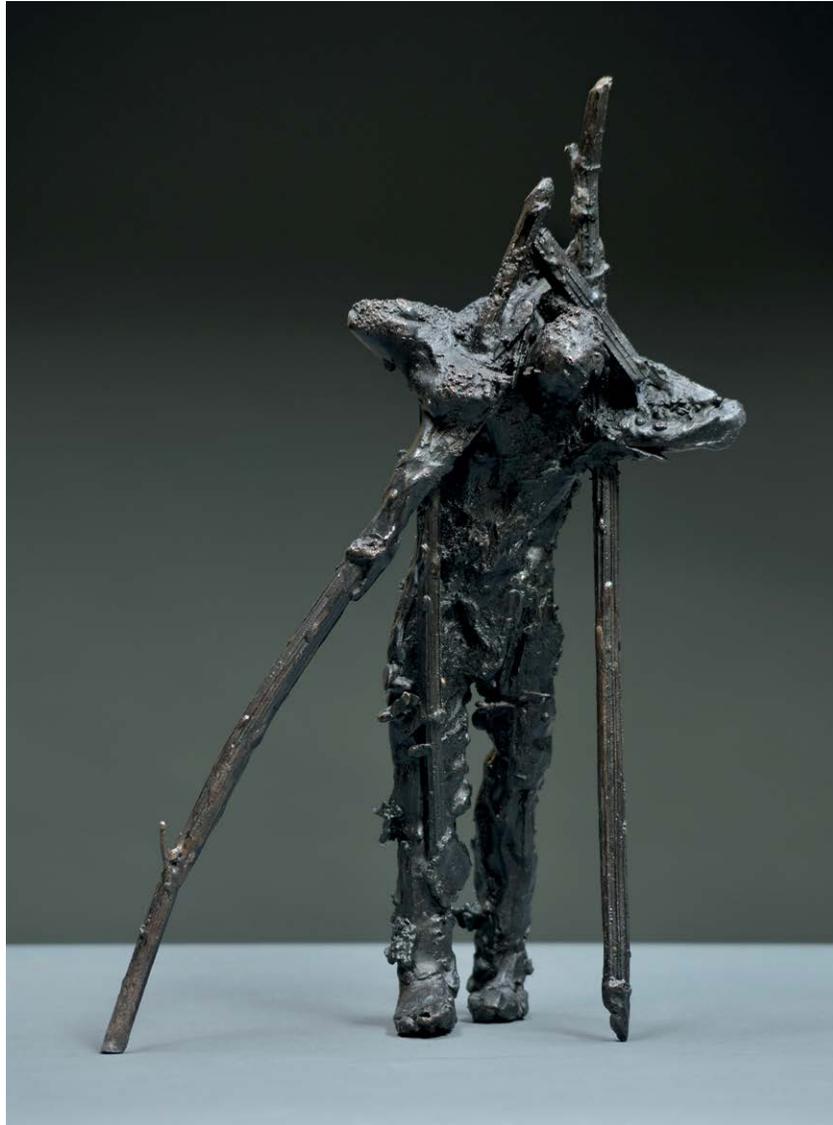
▼ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Star Jump (Black)
 bronze
 31 x 33 x 10 cm



▶ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Indignant Man
 bronze
 64 x 31 x 25 cm



▼ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Breaking Sticks II
 bronze
 31 x 20 x 10 cm



▶ **LAURENCE EDWARDS**
Duet
 bronze
 53 x 31 x 19 cm

