***No Particular Place to Go?*** *- 35 years of sculpture at the Castlefield Gallery*

Curated by Clare O’Dowd (University of Manchester) and John Plowman (Beacon Bureau) <http://beaconartproject.org> <https://beaconbureau.co.uk>

 <https://johnplowman.com>

**Background:**

In 2013, John Plowman was awarded a research fellowship at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds to research aspects of British Sculpture in the 1970’s, in particular a sculpture made in 1976 by Charles Hewlings entitled *‘At the Foot of Borobudur’*.

This culminated in 2014 with a discussion event in front of the sculpture, part of the ACE collection, which Plowman helped Hewlings install in the the Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Following that event common threads of research lead to the ongoing collaboration between Plowman, Hewlings and O’Dowd around the theme of Homeless Sculpture. A second workshop event grew out of this: ‘Homeless Sculpture’, <https://homeless-sculpture.co.uk> at the Whitworth Gallery in October 2016, funded by the University of Manchester, the Henry Moore Foundation and Arts Council England. The workshop event brought together artists, curators, academics and gallery visitors to discuss different interpretations of the essentially nomadic nature of modern and contemporary sculpture. The workshop had three main aims: to further explore and interpret the Whitworth Gallery’s sculpture collection; to bring different theoretical and artistic viewpoints together into an edited volume; and to think about ways to exhibit sculpture which either celebrated or mitigated the ‘homelessness’ of sculptural objects. This proposal represents the next step forward in achieving those aims.

**Rationale:**

From 1984 to the present day Castlefield Gallery has been a home for sculpture, as evidenced by an impressive archive of sculpture exhibitions, each one capturing the sculptural zeitgeist of its time. By welcoming sculptors, both established and emerging, the gallery has provided a critical place for contemporary sculpture to be seen in Manchester.

*‘No Particular Place to Go?’* foregrounds the relationship between the studio, the gallery and the archive, as a way to explore the inherent *‘homelessness’* of sculpture. The term ‘*homelessness’* in relation to sculpture was first used by Rainer Maria Rilke in his famous account of Rodin, initially given as a lecture and later published in 1910. Rilke described the sculptures he saw as he walked through Rodin’s studio as isolated, self-contained things, cut off from the world: *‘His works could not wait; they had to be made. He long foresaw their homelessness.’*

This was later reiterated by Rosalind Krauss in her essay *‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’* when talking about Rodin’s sculptures *Gate of the Kiss* and *Balzac*: *‘With these two sculptural projects, I would say, one crosses the threshold of the logic of the monument, entering the space of what could be called its negative condition-a kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place.’*

With this in mind the exhibition *‘No Particular Place to Go?’* takes as its starting point the first sculpture exhibition at the Castlefield Gallery in 1984 of Anthony Caro’s Table Pieces. These artworks, much smaller and more intimate than Caro’s welded floor sculptures, enable us to explore sculpture and its relation to notions of *place*. In the sense of *place* being the gallery, the studio or the plinth/base. The defining aspect of this group of sculptures is that they have a very definite place to go i.e. the table. Right from the beginning they were made to have a clear relationship with the table or horizontal surface upon which they are displayed, thus making these works seemingly somewhat at odds with sculpture’s condition of being *‘homeless’* as described above. However this exhibition proposal posits that the table as *place* be considered the sculpture’s base and *‘…is thus defined as essentially transportable, the marker of the work's homelessness integrated into the very fibre of the sculpture.’* (Rosalind Krauss)

That these table sculptures have a clear connection to the intimacy of the studio, as the *place* where they were made, was confirmed by Caro in the 1984 exhibition guide:  *‘I used to make table sculptures in the evenings. I prefer to make table sculptures in this garage up at home. There’s something nice about their different size, their smaller size, and by this time I had a studio away from home and used to work on larger things there, then in the evenings come back and it would be rather like drawing. I made a lot, just as one would make a lot of drawings, and drawing has never been easy for me, never been such a pleasure. Making table sculptures is fun, very open and loose.’*