

CUSTOM MADE.

Habit – Duty – Adaptation – Ritual – Business

Some things happen by chance. Six years ago the steel fabricators that I work with miscalculated and over-ordered the quantity of large-diameter, stainless-steel tube we needed to make a commissioned sculpture. After the project had been finished there were three full six-metre lengths and some shorter pieces left over, about twenty-five metres in total, a considerable amount of material. The tube was stored in the roof space of the factory and I would look at it from time to time, feeling that, since I'd already paid for it, I should use it. Finally, last year, I began to think seriously about doing so and started to make models, using cardboard tube to build frameworks, like the drawn outlines of solids. However, although twenty-five metres is a lot, you have to remember that the diameter was also quite large, so once I began cutting tube into shorter lengths, at the scale required it quite soon got used up for forms that really I didn't find very interesting. Next, and again using cardboard, I tried cutting the tubes at an angle, joining the cut ends at a slight twist, trying to see if I could make one continuous line like a knot or a folded loop. That didn't seem to work either. Finally I had the idea of cutting the tubes down their lengths into smaller curved sections that I could turn inside to outside, convex to concave, to build up complex forms. I was happier with this and began to make drawings in this way. Although the rippled shapes that resulted were fascinating, I didn't really like their open ends, they still seemed like tubes! Filling the ends with a blank plate didn't appeal, but developing the fluidity of surface implied by the rippling section did. I have a bit of a fetish about surface and I think that that leads me to want to make a surface continuous. The same urge seems to arrive for car customizers, the builders of surf boards or even, in different ways, body builders. So that's what we did, we made the surfaces continuous by drawing the ends together by cutting and fitting sections

of spun forms, and then ground and polished away the evidence of the joints. To me, in that we had taken something standard and adapted it, I felt that the resulting sculptures were customized rather than made, and that each had its own style. The titles therefore relate to that idea of stylisation and to ways that language employs stylistic descriptions, in this case *Original*, *Contemporary* and *Five Star*. Funnily enough, since this was all very exploratory, we did the work on pipe of a smaller diameter; the leftovers are still in the roof of the factory, ready to provoke another bout of my thinking I should do something. It's a strange custom, but an interesting one.

Richard Deacon

6 June 2012