

OBJECTS & SCULPTURE.

'In September 1978 I went on a trip to the States; throughout the period before I left, I had been growing increasingly dissatisfied with my sculpture. When I arrived in America, I found I had no facilities available for making sculpture, and so I turned to drawing. I became interested in the notion of a non-rectilinear geometry - in my mind there were ideas of using a thin wall, a skin, an enclosure, an opening. I began to work on drawings, by starting at the centre of the paper, creating geometric figures, for example a square, diamond, rectangle or circle. I then used this figure as the basis for constructing a network of spirals, moving a series of curves around to try and clear the centre and to build up from there. I was qualifying what are quite harsh shapes by retaining the tracery of earlier possibilities - these acted like construction lines, like a map which locates the drawing on the paper. I eventually became concerned with pictorial departures, the relationship between image and reflection, form and shadow, perspectival illusions. I found at the same time, I was drawing in anticipation of making a sculpture.'

'Whilst making the drawings I had been reading extensively the poetry of Rilke, and the lines came to represent elements of his poetry. I was particularly interested in his transformation of objects, the way they stand for other things. Unlike symbolist poetry, where objects seem to be seen more in a two dimensional, illusory way, the objects that appear in Rilke's poetry, whilst taking on connotations, retain the quality of actuality. Working on the drawings a number of associations sprang to mind. The most obvious specific reference was to an Orpheus figure, or a singing or listening head. The aperture within the enclosure, functioning either as mouth or ear - other groups which were emblem, shield, container vessel, head, mouth, ear, eye, flower, fruit, shoes, hats, hands. I suppose there is a degree of implicit sexuality in a number of these forms. How conscious, I don't know - I certainly became interested in the concept of containers, and the inherent sexual reference.

'For a while, ceramics, making pots, seemed an obvious next step, but I found them too opaque, too recognisable. What I did eventually, was to start using some thin strips of wood I had around the studio for a long time. The process of laminating became extremely interesting to me. It seems to have an affinity, however tenuous, with the process of metaphor, that I found in Rilke's poetry. It also enabled me to work with a form without making prior structural decisions, about the nature of the shape I might arrive at subsequently. It's a very low technology business - I don't have to become overtly structural.'

'I think this way of working, its lack of overcrafting, overtechnicality, adds a great deal to the quality of the object. I'm excited also by the flexibility of working with these small strips of wood. They have a neutrality and minimal, but sufficient, structural potential, unlike larger pieces of timber, 2 x 2's which seem to me to be too structurally specific. The way of working they allow makes for a very intimate relationship with the form; in the case of, for example the large framelike construction which is on a fairly massive scale, this is very important - it allows an intimacy with the spectator without dominating. I like the way, with this piece, one can move around it, from outside to inside - when you're facing the very large openings you actually feel like you're inside. When you see it from the other side you're conscious of the form in general, moving away from you. I'm very pleased with that sort of changeover.'

'I don't work simultaneously on a number of pieces, rather I work in a similar way on one piece of sculpture in succession. They do seem to maintain some sort of pattern - for instance at one stage the sculptures were alternately rectilinear and curved. Now they seem to alternate between being made in laminated wood and in galvanised steel, again, an exciting material for me, in that the process of rolling enables that same freedom in evolving a form.'