

Embers 1995



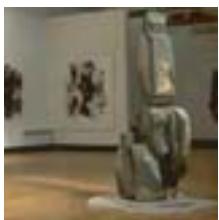
As I referred to earlier, drawing had always been fundamental to the way in which I developed my ideas. It was a research tool that had applications in sketchbook studies as well as being an outcome in its own right!

For a sustained period after I arrived back from my fourth and final visit to Australia, I developed a series of drawings that increasingly focussed on a hitherto undeveloped formal language that was secreted within all of my earlier work.



My practice had always been to look at the environment that I was working in to see if it could provide fresh stimulus for my research and I was about to discover that this method of enquiry was about to stimulate another fresh body of work.

The Textiles Industry was to be the flux that prompted a series of drawings and sculptures that re-contextualised pattern blocks from the Fashion and Textile Industry within the framework of my multi disciplined approach to Fine Art practice.



These elegant shapes, suspended from the ceiling of the factory where they were stored, (and where I had a studio), were used as a source for raw material for sculptures and drawings that I was working on. One of the interesting qualities about these paper patterns was that they had clear reverberations to do with the human figure - fragments of the figure, almost like human carcasses. In this sense, an absence of the figure.

The paper patterns were also found objects and fitted into the conceptual framework I had been developing since making The Room in 1980.



These computer generated shapes were also useful in terms of the continuing interest that I had in collage and were subsequently used to build up thickly laminated layers for developing drawings, masking out and correcting. As these drawings developed, the actual shapes of the paper patterns, glued onto the surfaces of the drawings, assumed a much more independent role and suggested sculptural propositions that I was about to explore.

The outcomes of this research were first exhibited at the Crossley Galleries at Dean Clough, Halifax. The relationships between the exhibited wall based works and object based sculptures stimulated a great deal of interest that eventuated in other solo exhibitions at Durham Art Gallery, 1995, the Atkinson Gallery, Millfield, 1995 and Harriet Green Gallery in London, 1996.



Sculptures were also constructed from pattern block templates using sheet plywood. The detritus of this activity, assembled on the studio floor and fastened together with bolts, became the series of wall based sculptures also entitled Embers.



"Matisse described the act of scissoring in his 'decoupages' as 'drawings into colour with line'. The fret-sawn edges of the shapes and planes in Atkin's wall reliefs have a similar and incisive graphic quality. While the shapes and planes have actual contours at their edges, there are also contours or boundaries drawn onto their surfaces. Lines drawn or edges established on the surface of the planes frequently contradict (as in Cubist collage) the literal space between them. Real space is challenged by illusionist space.

Peter Wheeler

Embers 1995



Sculptures and Wall Reliefs - 1995

The method of fastening of these wall-based sculptures was also important. Each cut out shape was carefully positioned in a way that enhanced the formal qualities of the work. At the time of making these pieces I was also thinking about the Ocean Park series of paintings by Richard Diebenkorn. These paintings cleverly articulated ideas to do with the Californian landscape within bold abstract formats.



The Embers series of wall relief's worked in similar ways to Diebenkorns Ocean Park series, except where he would use areas of paint to suggest flat planes of space, I would use sheet timber, separating each plane with bolts fixed vertically through each strata of layering.



The Exotic Birds series of wall relief's by the American artist, Frank Stella were also important in terms of helping me to formulate a reductive formal vocabulary for the work I was developing.

The landscape, which was also a part of my childhood and very much to do with my fathers background began to have a significance on the next body of work that I was about to produce.

"In his early days as a student of painting, Atkin's subject had been landscape. While the wall relief's are not landscapes as such, they do nevertheless allude to the land, the surface of the earth, in a variety of ways. The apparently accidental agglomeration of the constituent shapes carries a suggestion of the way the land is marked by man's activity. The boundaries of the shapes, either actual or illusionist, within the natural silhouette suggest cartographic territories. The shapes within the reliefs can also be sensed as the unstable tectonic plates that make up the surface of the earth."



Peter Wheeler

