

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

For immediate release

Tony Cragg

26 April – 29 June 2024

Opening reception: Friday, 26 April, 5-8 pm

Marian Goodman Gallery is pleased to announce our first solo exhibition of the distinguished British sculptor Tony Cragg in Los Angeles. For this occasion, Cragg will present recent sculptures in bronze, wood, stone, and steel, and selected works on paper.

In the late 1960s, Cragg, intrigued by the observation and study of the material world, left the field of science to pursue a career as an artist. Over half a century and more than 400 solo exhibitions later, Cragg has established himself as one of the most influential sculptors working today, widely recognized for his lifelong fascination and virtuosity with materials. Marian Goodman Gallery has had the honor of representing Cragg for over forty years and is thrilled to bring this new exhibition of his work to Los Angeles.

A significant presentation of works will be shown throughout the galleries, lobby, and garden, demonstrating the formal, material, and emotive range of sculpture that Cragg has been working on since 2018. As is distinctive of his oeuvre, these works are the outcome of a profound and restless fascination with material properties. Cragg works to capture the emotion, meaning, and beauty of a material, as well as the rational structure that is used to express its form beyond its modern utilitarian principles. As seen across the exhibition, the artist notably works in ‘families’ of sculpture—continuously inventing new forms in series that often share a single title. His works encourage us to think sculpturally, to consider material as an extension of the self.

“For Tony Cragg, an engagement with material is an investigation into seeing beneath and beyond the surface of all things. In an epoch of information overload ... we are caught between the production of a flattened universe, where the forms we encounter are geometrically dull and predictable, and a materially active universe, where we are engaged with the structural and voluminous dynamics of all kinds of phenomena. What we believe to be seeing and what is happening at a microscopic level, that is between the world of surface impressions and the world of material engagements, is part of Cragg’s continued practice.” (from *Thinking Sculpturally in Tony Cragg: A Rare Category of Objects*)

Accumulations and communities of forms are often present in Cragg’s work, as evidenced in the work *In No Time* (2018) a wood sculpture made of abstracted forms in aggregate turning variably along an axis. Cragg’s interest in geological forms and his strategies of stratification, layering, and compilation can be seen here. Similarly, the parity between a sculptural object and rocky landscape is evoked in the stone works, *Off the Mountain* (2023).

In the Main Gallery, Cragg presents the anthropomorphic, interlocked forms of the *Integers* (2022) and the stratified layers of *Masks* (2021) which summon an ancient and contemporary past. The new black *Masks* (2023), made from stacked planes of bog oak wood compressed to form striations of rounded strata, resembles organic structures, expressing its material substance in constructive form.

The *Incident* works (2022-3) comprise a newer series that has recently provided a great fascination for the artist. Exclusively made in both Corten and stainless steel, they draw from the industrial, dominant presence of these materials in our built environment, but intrinsically resist their legacy of pre-formatted materials. In the *Incidents*, Cragg deliberately subverts our experience of them through vibrant, organic, and gravity-resisting forms that embody energy and verticality, and a free range of expression.

The newest forms, *Stand* (2023), in Corten steel and stainless steel, represent the exploration of a silhouette, or a profile that enlarges and expands into space on a human scale. As a sculptural form, it expresses a large volume outside of itself which becomes an extension of ourselves or can be seen as a tangible object.

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Cragg's *Hedge* (2023) is from a series based originally on the artist's childhood memory of playing in the hedgerows found in the English countryside. These Corten works take the literal form of a single or double hedge, which, at once organic and landscaped, is conveyed as a lively, interwoven tangle of rounded planes of steel. Proposing a counter-narrative to steel's industrial past, the sculpture, with its lyrical nature, offers an entirely new strain of organic forms in Cragg's work.

In a complementary method, *Versus* (2023), a brilliant sculpture in bronze in a seemingly arrested state of movement, utilizes numerous patterned forms to radiate the energy of shifting profiles or jagged bodies in motion. This assemblage of dynamic elements expresses the significance of constituent parts to a whole, as well as the nature of mutability and the human experience. *Versus* plays on perceived realities, and represents a transient world in flux.

Also on view will be several works on paper from 2009-2021. For Cragg, drawing is an essential activity, often existing autonomously from the practice of sculpture, as a daily process or the expression of a concrete idea. Drawing allows visualization of a complex material world, or can be a step into the unknown. As Cragg says, "In contrast to sculpture, drawing never demands a real world scenario. Drawing steps into the world of dreams."

The artist currently has a solo exhibition, *Please Touch!*, on view at Museum Kunstpalast Düsseldorf through 26 May 2024. Upcoming projects include a forthcoming exhibition at Castle Howard, UK, in early May which will be on view through September 2024.

Tony Cragg was born in Liverpool, England, and has lived and worked in Wuppertal, Germany, since 1977. He has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Order of Merit of North Rhine-Westphalia, 2018; Lifetime Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award, The International Sculpture Center, 2017; the Barnett Newman Foundation Award in 2016; the Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, (CBE) in 2016, the Rheinischer Kulturpreis, Sparkassen Kulturstiftung, Rhineland in 2013; the Cologne Fine Art Award in 2012; the prestigious Praemium Imperiale Award, Tokyo in 2007, he represented Britain at the 43rd Venice Biennale in 1988, and the same year was awarded the Turner Prize at the Tate Gallery, London. He served as Director of the Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf, after having been a Professor there since 1988.

Cragg has had recent solo exhibitions at Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany (2024); Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon, Portugal (2023); Graphische Sammlung Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2023); Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria (2022); HEART Museum, Herning, Denmark (2022); Museo del Vetro, Murano, Italy (2021); Houghton Hall, Norfolk, UK (2021); Museum Belvedere, Heerenveen, Netherlands (2021); Schlossmuseum Wolfenbüttel, Germany (2020); MON Museo Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba (2020); Museu Brasileiro da Escultura e Ecologia, São Paulo (2019); Boboli Gardens, Uffizi Galleries, Florence (2019); Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See, Germany (2019); Istanbul Modern (2018), Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2017); Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana (2017); and The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (2016).

Please join us at the opening reception in Los Angeles on Friday, 26 April, from 5-8 pm at 1120 Seward Street in Los Angeles, CA 90038.

For further information, please visit our website: mariangoodman.com, or contact Linda Pellegrini, Head of Communications and Events, at linda@mariangoodman.com or (212) 977-7160.