

ABOUT: ANTHONY SCOTT



The material in which sculptural work is made carries levels of expectation. Ceramic sculpture is perceptually linked to the idea of craft, and this is both embraced and resisted by those working in clay. Work in bronze, however, is more likely to be displayed and sold as fine art. There is an irony in this since a piece in bronze, which requires the support of a foundry and the skills of those working within it, cannot be made without craft processes. The Fermanagh-born artist Anthony Scott, who has made sculptural work in both media, has explored the potential of ceramic and bronze consecutively.

Above and below / Bran height 4ft 7 inches high



“Many of his pieces are made with the intention of capturing a moment in time. He has just finished Bran, a life-size hound named for the hunting dog of Fionn Mac Cumhail. The piece captures the instant of conflict when the hound, hunting with Diarmuid, hears the sound of a wild boar crashing through the undergrowth.”



Above / Elk height 16ft

Scott, who began his professional life as a ceramist, studied initially at the University of Ulster, completing an MA in ceramics at Cardiff in 1993. The following year, with a grant from LEDU, he bought a kiln and set up a workshop in Enniskillen, where he

worked until 1999. Then, moving to a larger studio in County Sligo, Scott began to work in bronze. ‘Thematically the work didn’t change, although I hope that it matured,’ he said. ‘The same personality runs through all the pieces, from the ▶



Above / Aoife height 18 inches



Above / Grainne height 19 inches.

▶ clay into the metalwork; the same fingerprint on each and every one despite the medium. But there are still people who would see the move into bronze as a betrayal of ceramics.’

For a young artist it was a risky move. Bronze is an expensive material to work in, but the medium had qualities that appealed to Scott. ‘I loved its durability and longevity. The brittleness of ceramic was a constant frustration, especially when moving and transporting the work,’ he said. He also knew that his aspirations to make very large pieces were, for practical reasons, unlikely to be realised in ceramic. Still, there were sacrifices to be made: clay offers spontaneity and allows control over all stages of the process. Bronze, in contrast, requires the artist to relinquish control to the craftspeople in charge of casting and patination. ‘You hand a lot of the work over to a third party, and you’re hovering around them to make sure that that the work is made to your specifications,’ he explained. ‘Once you build up a relationship with the foundry,



Above / Therianthrope height 25 inches



Above / Luchar and Lucharba bronze height 4ft 7 inches

it becomes a lot less fractious. I’ve been working with Cast in Dublin for many years, and they do accommodate the most ridiculous demands.’

Over the last five years, Scott has made more than a dozen life-size pieces, including Ram, Emissary of Connacht, a thickset bronze sheep with an aura of influential masculinity. The strength and ductility of the material has made it possible for him to make some very large pieces, although this is not without practical challenges. ‘You have to carry the essence of the piece onto a larger scale,’ he said. ‘It has to be dismantled and rebuilt during the casting process. It’s a complex procedure and, if you lose the line of a piece, then you have lost control. The head, the eye, the turn of the neck; it all has to be right.’

Elk, a commission for a private estate in County Down stands 16 foot at

antler-tip. It was cast in sections, assembled on site, and embedded in concrete. Unlike most of Scott’s work, which relates to Irish mythology, the elk is made in response to its setting. More typically, it takes anatomical liberties. Labharacam, a life-sized horse situated at Kelly’s Hotel, County Wexford, is similarly both real and unreal. The conformation, the ▶



Above / Lir bronze Height 60cm



Above / Labharacam height 7ft

► breadth of chest and slope of bone, are nothing like those of a living horse. Scott has no interest in making a representational beast. 'What would be the point? I want to capture the essence of the animal; its personality and spirit,' he said. Like most of his work, the piece takes its name and character from ancient legend. The mythical Labharacam was the nurse and teacher of Deirdre of the Sorrows, the only survivor at the story's tumultuous end. For Scott she is a character of immense integrity and loyalty, the embodiment of honour and trust. The piece is patinated in a coppery green, textured like lichen: 'a very earthed patina – the essence of everything that is maternal.'

Many of his pieces are made with the intention of capturing a moment in time. He has just finished Bran, a life-size hound named for the hunting dog of Fionn Mac Cumhaill. The piece captures the instant of conflict when the hound, hunting with Diarmuid, hears the sound of a wild boar crashing through the undergrowth. 'The story is fanciful and embroidered with superstition, but it has so many levels of human emotion,' Scott explained. 'Bran went back to find the Fianna, rather than stay and fight, because on his own he hadn't a hope. So the emotion is one of trepidation. But he was still ultimately Fionn's dog and this

gives the piece a sense of conflict and despair. It's a textured piece, not smooth like some of the others.'

Although the legendary Bran was a wolfhound Scott has, for reasons of form and line, depicted him as a greyhound. Similarly, his rendering of the brothers Iuchar and Iucharba as a pair of Doberman Pinschers is chosen for the sake of menace rather than historical accuracy. The piece responds to the shape-changing within Irish



Above / Ram Emissary of Connacht 4ft high.

legend – the brothers become hunting dogs in order to commit murder. 'It is a dark and troubling story full of bloodshed and savagery they didn't spare the sensitive predilections of any time. That is why they have so much resonance now.'

Scott's work will be on show at 20:20 in the Royal College of Art in September 2011; at Art London Chelsea, in October; and will then travel to the Beaux Arts Gallery, Bath, for a solo exhibition. ●

Eleanor Flegg
Craft NI



Above / Elk height 16ft