



Divided Column

Robert Adams

Not on display

Title/Description: Divided Column

Artist/Maker: Robert Adams

Born: 1952

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Wood

Accession Number: 31548

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

Credit Line: Bequeathed by Joyce and Michael Morris, 2014

In 1954, writer and curator Lawrence Alloway published *Nine Abstract Artists, their Work and Theory*, spotlighting artists who worked in a range of abstract styles. He had been asked to write this by the artists themselves, who felt that their work may otherwise have been overlooked. Writing about Adams' series of *Divided Column* works, Alloway wrote:

A motive he has explored is a divided column which is rather like a tower on piloti. Angular or curved blocks are arranged in storeys that read as a spiral movement: solids are lightened by being perforated and separated from each other by pegs. Thus the surrounding space is brought into active relation with the volumes, without loosening the central form. This kind of equilibrium is characteristic of his best work. [1]

Alloway picks out a number of features that are important to Adams' work and some of the British Constructivist artists who were featured in *Nine Abstract Artists*, including Kenneth Martin, Mary Martin and Victor Pasmore. These features are the relationship to architecture, a sense of movement, and the relationship with the surrounding space.

Divided Column relates to two earlier works by Adams, titled *Divided Pillar* (1950). One of these, like *Divided Column*, is topped with a cylinder sliced through the centre. The proportions of the earlier work, with a shorter cylinder on top of a slender form, above three round segments, is more suggestive of a human anatomy. In this later version from 1952, such figurative associations are less clear. Adams experimented with positive and negative forms in a number of works. Another sculpture, *Divided Form* (1951) in the British Council collection, is slightly smaller, but much simpler, as it suggests a ball form that has been sliced in each direction.

The Sainsbury Centre has the most important body of work by Robert Adams in a public collection in the UK with 27 sculptures and 8 works on paper. They were acquired by collectors Joyce and Michael Morris and bequeathed to the Sainsbury Centre in 2016.

Tania Moore, February 2021

[1] Lawrence Alloway, *Nine Abstract Artists, their Work and Theory* (London: A Tiranti, 1954), p.15.

Exhibitions

'Robert Adams', Gimpels Fils, March 1953.

'Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951', Sainsbury Centre, UK, 02/10/2021 - 17/07/2022

'Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951', Djanogly Art Gallery, UK, 07/03/2023 - 23/07/2023

Further Reading

Alastair Grieve, *The Sculpture of Robert Adams* (London: The Henry Moore Foundation and Lund Humphries, 1992)

Alastair Grieve, *Constructed Abstract Art in England: A Neglected Avant-Garde* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005)

Tania Moore and Calvin Winner (eds.), *Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre, 2021), p.21.

Provenance

Bought by Michael Morris from Robert Adams in 1960.

In October 1984, the University of East Anglia accepted a planned bequest from Joyce and Michael Morris (UEA Alumni). Michael died in 2009 and Joyce in December 2014 when the couple's wishes were implemented.
