



Triangulated form

Robert Adams

Not on display

Title/Description: Triangulated form

Artist/Maker: Robert Adams

Born: 1960

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Aluminium, Steel

Accession Number: 31553

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

Credit Line: Bequeathed by Joyce and Michael Morris, 2014

Triangulated Form is composed of a construction of rods creating pyramid shapes. They emanate from a central point suggesting growth. In this, the sculpture refers to D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's *On Growth and Form*, published in 1917 and republished in 1942. In the influential book, the mathematical biologist identified how the shape of living organisms conforms to mathematical laws, evidencing why patterns emerge in nature. The triangulated form of Adams' sculpture refers to crystalline structures. The book was very influential in science, but also on abstract artists working from the 1950s, particularly those like Adams working within the constructivist tradition, such as Kenneth Martin, Mary Martin and Adrian Heath.

Adams made a series of triangulated works, one of which was exhibited in the open air exhibition at Battersea Park in 1960. In his introductory essay 'Sculpture Today' in the catalogue, Philip James described the various new trends in sculpture. Relating to Adams' style in this work, he wrote of:

...a new repertory of images which spring from modern industry and technology. Microphotography, for instance, has created a new set of visual patterns and forms which are surprisingly similar to the signs and symbols of the non-figurative painter; and a completely unconscious but close resemblance occurs between the work of some abstract sculptors and the solid three-dimensional representation of mathematical equations. [1]

James' quote above suggests an unconscious response, but for Adams' and many of the other Constructivist artists, the reference to science and to Wentworth Thompson in particular was likely to be a conscious one.

The welded nature of the work relates to the sculpture that is described as 'drawing in space'. Like the graphic lines of a pencil, the linear rods describe contour and enclose space. The notion of 'drawing in space' has been associated with the welded sculptures of the Spanish artist González, but is also applicable to the works of some of the Russian constructivist artists Naum Gabo and Antione Pevsner. Adams follows in the constructivist tradition, which is particularly evident in works such as *Triangulated Form*. It particularly has resonance with some of the constructions of Max Bill, a Swiss artist who founded the Concrete Art movement.

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, May 2021

[1] Philip James, 'Sculpture Today' in *Sculpture in the Open Air: Battersea Park, 1960* (London: London County Council, 1960), unpag.

Further Reading

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

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

Provenance

Bought by Michael Morris from the artist in 1964.

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.
