



Horizontal movement No.1

Robert Adams

Not on display

Title/Description: Horizontal movement No.1

Artist/Maker: Robert Adams

Born: 1959

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Steel

Accession Number: 31568

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Britain, England, Europe

Credit Line: Bequeathed by Joyce and Michael Morris, 2014

Horizontal Movement No. 1 has been composed of seven sheets of steel welded together making a curved, flat form. The composition of planes that gently rise and fall give the dynamic movement of the title. Adams was very interested in how he could convey movement through a static sculpture. Adams explained 'I am concerned with energy, a physical property inherent in metal. A major aim I would say, is movement, which I seem to get through asymmetry.' [1] In 1960 Adams made another series of works titled *Horizontal Movement*, which were composed of planes of steel on a stand, but the planes were triangles at different angles so were more three-dimensional. Finally in 1960, *Horizontal Movement No. 4* was composed of rods of steel.

Horizontal Movement No. 1 is very two-dimensional, other than two of the planes which break out of the flat sequence, one being curved over the other planes. Compiler of Robert Adams' catalogue raisonné, Alastair Grieve, writes how Adams exploited welding in sculpture: 'He brought out the linearity of iron rods, the thin planarity of steel sheets, the beaded seams of joined plates and the sparse strength of spot welds.' [2] In this work and others of this series, Adams emphasises the properties of the welded steel as Grieve describes.

Adams welded the sheets of steel together before the sculpture was covered with a layer of bronze at a workshop where the surface was mechanically cleaned, in a process known as shot blasting, before being sprayed with molten zinc and then bronze. To make it look like steel again, Adams treated the surface with a chemical solution to give the dark colour of steel, rather than the orange of bronze.

The relative flatness of the work connects it to Adams' later series of screens beginning in 1960 (for example 31552 in the Sainsbury Centre collection). *Horizontal Movement No. 1* was bought from the artist by Joyce and Michael Morris and bequeathed to the Sainsbury Centre along with 34 other works by Adams. In his own copy of the catalogue raisonné, next to this work, Michael Morris has annotated '? Earliest screen'. [3] This demonstrates how connected the two series were in Morris' mind, and how pivotal he considered this work to be. The bequest from Joyce and Michael Morris in 2016 means the Sainsbury Centre now has the most important body of work by Robert Adams in a public collection in the UK.

Tania Moore, May 2021

[1] Alastair Grieve, *The Sculpture of Robert Adams* (London: Lund Humphries, 1992), p.76.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid. p.186, copy in the Sainsbury Centre archive.

Exhibitions

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

Further Reading

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.
