



Goodwood Steps

Anthony Caro

On display

Title/Description: Goodwood Steps

Artist/Maker: Anthony Caro

Born: 1996 - 1996

Object Type: Outdoor sculpture, Sculpture

Materials: Steel

Accession Number: L.203

Credit Line: Loaned by the Anthony Caro Centre

Goodwood Steps is made from mild steel, it is 33 metres long, almost 7 metres tall and weighs over 20 tonnes. It consists of seven stepped ziggurats, joined by five floor plates that form sweeping arcs. The surface of the sculpture has naturally oxidised to a rich earthy iron-oxide colour so that its dramatic profile contrasts with the sky. It has been purposively placed to relate to Denys Lasdun's campus concrete Brutalist architecture. Its repeating form is a powerful echo of Lasdun's famous ziggurats.

Anthony Caro (1924–2013) liked the ziggurat form because he believed it would reduce the potential dominance of working on such a scale - that is, a form that is 'stepped' complements rather than dominates its environment. In 1959, Caro travelled to New Mexico, USA, and then onto Mexico. He visited Mexico City and the archaeological sites in modern-day San Juan Teotihuacán, notably the Pyramid of the Moon. [1] Lasdun also saw the ziggurat form as the perfect architectural solution to working in the softly undulating landscape of East Anglia, resting comfortably in the gently sloping river valley context. Depending on the vantage point, *Goodwood Steps* can appear monumental or when viewed end-on, dramatically shrinks with each repetitive form hidden from view. The position of *Goodwood Steps* has been guided by the geometry of Lasdun's campus architecture, aligned with its rigorous layout, placed parallel to the ziggurats and University Library.

Caro was fascinated with the architectural implications of *Goodwood Steps* in relation to scale, form and space. He believed this created a very different relationship between spectator and sculpture. Caro called his architectural-scale sculptural works, 'Sculptecture' and they include, *Palma Steps*, 1999 and *Millbank Steps*, 2004. [2] This invented name was given by Caro to certain works that were architectural in scale and examined the relationship with the interior and exterior. They are in no sense functional structures but nevertheless invite the spectator to share the same space. He believed that aesthetic concerns of sculptors and architects had aligned:

'Although the enterprise is different, the materials are often the same or similar. Form and space are the subject of both disciplines. Scale and how the viewer relates to the work are of vital importance.' [3]

Just as a person experiences a building by walking in and through it as well as around it, the sculpture invites visitors to inhabit and walk between its huge forms. Caro explored this theme further in his work, *Promenade*, 1996, created for the Tuileries Gardens in Paris (now at Yorkshire Sculpture Park). This work takes its name from the historical fashion for walking in public places to meet, or be seen by, others. It is hoped that *Goodwood Steps* will create a focal point and meeting place, where people would like to congregate and assemble.

Caro did concede a difference between his large-scale work and that of an architect, in that he worked on a 1:1 scale with no scaling up from models or drawings, 'we work with the real stuff, the real size'. [4]

Goodwood Steps, in its first conception, was created in 1994 at Dean Clough Mill, Halifax and was called 'Halifax Steps'. Caro later decided to re-imagine the ziggurat forms into a new freestanding sculpture. The evolution of the work - by re-purposing metal elements - was a key part of Caro's practice throughout his long career. Reusing the original steel, the new work was first installed at the Cass Foundation at Goodwood at the suggestion of William Cass in 1996 and obtained its title. [5] It was later shown at the Navy Pier in Chicago (USA) in 1998 and at Chatsworth House in 2012. *Goodwood Steps* is one of his most important and monumental works. It is also a work that Caro himself thought was 'one sculpture that I have made that has worked for me outside. [6] It is stark, brooding and wonderfully enigmatic.

Caro is recognised as one of the most important British sculptors and is internationally recognized as one of the masters of twentieth century sculpture. He is perhaps best known for taking sculpture off the plinth. He studied at the Royal Academy School in the early 1950s and worked as a studio assistant to Henry Moore. Initially his work was figurative but by 1960 his work took a dramatic shift and he would completely redefine sculpture in terms of materials, form and scale.

Caro came to public attention in 1963 with a show at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, where he exhibited large brightly-painted abstract sculptures, standing directly on the ground so that they engage the spectator on a one-to-one basis. This was a radical departure and influenced a generation of sculptors, most notably in Britain, with the so-called *New Generation*, such as Phillip King. His role as a teacher at St Martin's School of Art in London (1953-1981) was instrumental in the dissemination of his ideas and thoughts about the possibilities of sculpture. His innovative work and teaching would help to foster the growing importance of three-dimensional art and what became known as sculpture in the expanded field.

Important retrospectives of Caro's work have been held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1975), the Trajan Markets, Rome (1992), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (1995) and Tate Britain, London (2005). In 2015 *Caro in Yorkshire* was his last major (posthumous) exhibition, held at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Hepworth, Wakefield and the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.

Calvin Winner, September 2021

[1] Ian Barker, *Anthony Caro: Quest for the New Sculpture*, (Lund Humphries London: 2004), pp. 86-7.

[2] Claire Lilley, Sarah Collins and Ian Barker, eds., *Caro at Longside: Sculpture and Sculpitecture*, (Yorkshire Sculpture Park: 2001), p.4.

[3] Claire Lilley, Sarah Collins and Ian Barker, eds., *Through the window*, p.65. (edited extract from a lecture given by Anthony Caro at Tate, March 1991, where he discusses his thoughts about sculpture and architecture).

[4] Anthony Caro in conversation with Norman Foster, *Tate ETC*, Issue 3/Spring 2005, p.44.

[5] Claire Lilley, Sarah Collins and Ian Barker, eds., *Caro at Longside: Sculpture and Sculpitecture*, (Yorkshire Sculpture Park: 2001), p.13.

[6] Quoted in an essay by Martina Droth (from a private conversation with the artist in December 2011), *Caro at Chatsworth*, (New Art Centre and Chatsworth: 2012), p.13.

Further Reading

Anthony Caro: Halifax Steps (Henry Moore Institute: 1995)

Claire Lilley, Sarah Collins and Ian Barker, eds., Caro at Longside: Sculpture and Sculpitecture (Yorkshire Sculpture Park: 2001)

Ian Barker, Anthony Caro: Quest for the New Sculpture (Lund Humphries, London: 2004)

Caro In Yorkshire (Yorkshire Sculpture Park & The Hepworth Wakefield: 2015)
