

Kenneth Armitage

How Many Miles to Babylon?







Kenneth Armitage

1916–2002

How Many Miles to Babylon?

Jonathan Clark Fine Art

In association with The Kenneth Armitage Foundation



How Many Miles to Babylon?

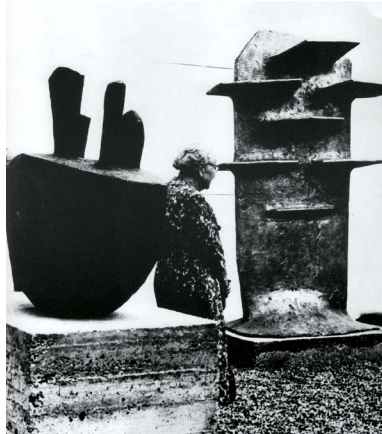
*How many miles to Babylon?
Three score miles and ten.
Can I get there by candle-light?
Yes, and back again.*

Traditional nursery rhyme

It is hard now to imagine the heights of enthusiasm that greeted the British Council's sculpture exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1952. Just like a pack of 1990s YBAs, this group of new generation sculptors - among them Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, William Turnbull, Eduardo Paolozzi and Kenneth Armitage - became front page news that summer. British sculpture had turned out to be edgy and cool, a new choir of voices for the post war world.

For Armitage more than anyone else, it meant being catapulted into the international arena. Even before he had time to return home from Venice, his London studio had been visited by Alfred Barr, the Director of MoMA in New York, who was quickly securing two bronzes for the museum. Peggy Guggenheim and Elsa Schiaparelli also purchased pieces. Academics of the eminence of Herbert Read and Philip Hendy wrote intensely about this new existential art; and for the rest of the 1950s, culminating in his own retrospective at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1959, institutions and private collectors sparred to acquire Armitage's work at a remarkable rate.

It was a golden platform from which to develop the eagerly anticipated next phase of his career. Armitage's work from the 1950s is entirely distinctive, unmistakably his own, and its species of forms would have seemed eminently suitable for later evolution and development. If he had gone in this direction, Armitage would have travelled a well-trodden path, one selected by numerous artists (including sculptor colleagues) who went on to build bountiful careers: the distinguishing idiom that marked their earliest successes - the particular visual language that was each artist's first identifying plumage - is safely re-used, repeated and expanded, and becomes the artist's mother tongue, and eventually his sole route of continuation. The well-trodden path is, often, a narrowing one.



Installation at Documenta III, Kassel, Germany, 1964:
Left: *Figure on its Back* (large version) 1961;
Right: *Mouton Variation* 1964



The Forest 1965, with KA in the background

For Armitage, this behaviour was counterintuitive. His spirit was loyal to the obverse team, the team of those with a specific appetite for risk, for real gear change, of those rare artists with a devotion to deep-rooted innovation, those who relish throwing away their visual phrasebook, who can present us with idiosyncratic rewards, where it is the startling that becomes inspirational, and the meat of art is more to do with a struggle for new ideas than a comfortable reinterpretation of old ones.

The new phases of work that Kenneth Armitage embarked on during the 1960s veered significantly away from the sculpture he was making in the '50s, increasingly to the alarm of devoted collectors. Although he might have been tempted into a wilful reaction to critical success (Armitage was always cussed about art world praise), his fundamental stimulation was that originality in art - the very process of being innovative - was an affirmative act in itself, and was simply and determiningly to be sought out. For the next thirty years Armitage was to maintain an extraordinary degree of purposeful innovation, not solely in the repeated conception of entirely new projects (that often ran against the sculptural tide), but also in his radical approach to new materials.

It is a sometimes unsettling, sometimes astonishing performance, and one with few parallels. Picasso had that same ceaseless fascination with innovation, that same compulsion to look anew - and also had that same experience of his mature art taking many years to be as fully appreciated as his earlier work. Interestingly, Picasso was the one artist whom Armitage repeatedly admired. He had seen his work at the V&A British Council exhibition in 1947 and then met him in Paris in 1953, many years later admitting that 'The thrill of Picasso's constant wizardry never left me'.

Armitage's greatest fascinations - the abiding themes of his work - thread through this radically changing landscape of his later sculpture, emerging discernibly, sometimes obliquely, in recast, novel forms. Themes such as his dogged commitment to the human figure, joyful and unfashionable; his admiration for Neolithic art, first encountered in his Irish childhood; his love of story telling, of the truths inherent in myth and legend; and the conspicuous tenor of his voice, that peculiarly English amalgam of intellectual inquiry and self-effacement, in which serious and arcane ideas are offered up with wit and vivacity, and with a desire to appeal to an audience far broader than one or two art world critics.

The sculptures made for 'The Legend of Skadar', which Armitage began in 1965, drew all these themes together. This project was sparked, so he said, by hearing a blind Yugoslavian folk-singer perform on Radio 3, rendering an ancient tale about a king who tried to build a fort, the walls of which kept collapsing, pulled down by an evil spirit.

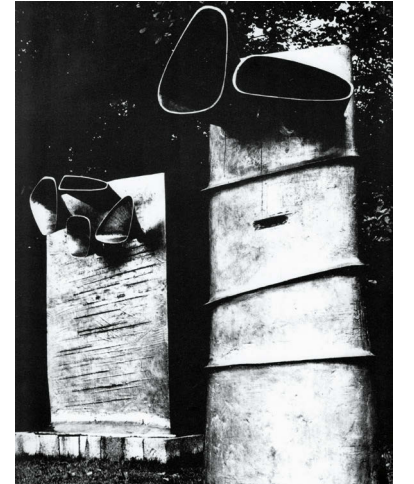
The only way forward was by offering a human sacrifice, so lots were drawn. The choice fell upon the king's daughter, who was to be bricked up in the walls of the fort. However, as she had a new-born child, an aperture was left so that the child could be breast-fed: a startling - and telling - starting point for a series of sculptures, showing something of the layers of resonance that Armitage perceived in mythological subjects, and - in his treatment of the tale - his extraordinary ability to convey something horrifying and intellectually disturbing with characteristic and belligerent wit: the sculptures themselves are as much playful as they are mysterious. The result is a subtly controlled achievement of considerable and confusing power.

The reaction to these works was lively. Armitage recalled that Alan Bowness was 'angry with me for making the pieces, and said that a more terrible legend of human cruelty and stupidity can hardly be imagined'. When the sculptor Bryan Kneale saw the works, he said he could never see light switches again in the same way. Roland Penrose found in them the power of story-telling, and how it breathes life into inanimate matter.

As an indication of how quickly Armitage shifted into near fully abstracted forms within only a few years of his 1959 Whitechapel retrospective, the 'Pandarus' sculptures, begun in 1963, have only the very loosest figurative associations, being more like towers and funnels than body-like shapes. Their interest appears more in the shadows and spaces created by sculptural forms, in the ridges and joins of sections, in the circumstances of their structure. They do seem to hint at some idea of communication - musicians apparently saw them as trumpets - and perhaps the greatest clue is in the name: Pandarus being a character in Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde' who acts as a go-between, trying to bring the two lovers together with rhetoric and linguistic fireworks.

The same year, 1963, Armitage began another Chaucer-inspired undertaking, involving drawings he had been making to illustrate 'The Reeve's Tale', a project that was to occupy him for decades. Armitage had a life-long love of Chaucer - he kept recordings of experts reading his favourite poem 'Troilus and Criseyde' in Middle English, which he himself would read aloud at the drop of a hat. It is an obsession that provides real clues into his taste for narrative, for wit, for an untutored audience, and for the brash delights of bawdiness. The irreverent Englishness of a Canterbury pilgrim, perhaps.

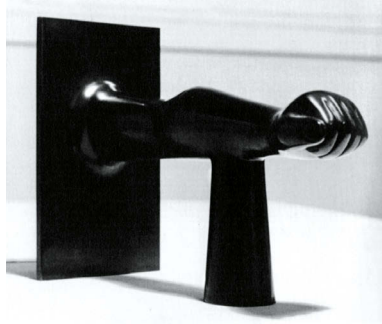
A decade on from the Whitechapel Gallery retrospective, Armitage, then in his 50s, was standing by a desk being cross-examined in the back room of a police station in East Berlin, the wrong side of



Installation at Middelheim Park, Antwerp:
Left: *Wall* 1965; Right: *Pandarus* (version 8) 1963



KA in front of the Reichstag building, Berlin, 1968/9



Arm (small model) 1968



Richmond Oak (large version) at the British Embassy, Brasilia

Checkpoint Charlie. His belongings were scattered on the floor, his West German friends had melted away, and this being part of the Eastern Bloc, there was no diplomatic protection and no certainty of getting back over the border at all. Armitage had just been to see the famous political cabaret artist Wolf Biermann, who was under house arrest, to interview him as part of a film he was making, *Armitage in Berlin*. It took some hours of questioning, of judicious answering, but he did eventually get released and turned up in West Berlin soon after.

It is an episode that not only shines a light on Armitage's approach to risk, but also on the new confluence of ideas he was to find in Berlin in the late '60s (a far more provocative place than the later Berlin of David Bowie). Armitage had set off for Berlin in his car in late 1967, spurred on by a disappointed love affair and a feeling that his own work - with figuration at its heart - was not in step with the London art world's swirling new moods. It was a time of extraordinary intensity: the Berlin Wall was still new and raw, Mies van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie was in the throes of construction (Armitage was to meet van der Rohe and Marino Marini at its opening), and there was a developing, consuming interest in political events and the culture of protest gathering in Europe and the States, soon to boil over, into which Armitage was wading.

His student teacher of German, Sami, spent as much time on radical politics as on sentence structure, before she was picked up by the police carrying a cache of Molotov cocktails. It was through Sami's friends that Armitage ended up making *Armitage in Berlin*. Shortly after returning from his own encounter with the police, Armitage received an invitation from Boston University to be artist in residence there. He decided on the change, but again soon found himself on the edge of simmering political unrest - this was the time of the Kent State shootings, when the Ohio National Guard killed four Vietnam war protesters at Kent State University, and universities, colleges and schools all over the States closed down in dissent. Armitage was in the thick of an American intelligentsia, meeting with John Updike and Philip Guston, and the strength and righteousness of political ideas of this time do enter into his projects (the fist images that occur in his 'Arm' sculptures from the late '60s have direct associations with the black power salutes made by protesting American sprinters in the Mexico Olympics) but this period of his life seems more to have sharpened the nature of his attack than caused any radical shift in subject matter. It is still in the parochial and not the political that he expects to hear his most sonorous truths.

On trips home from Germany and the States, Armitage was finding solace in early morning walks in Richmond Park, a still point in his

turning world. He had always adored this wilderness, but it wasn't until he had spent time abroad and returned home that the Richmond oaks became a significant subject for his art.

One day in 1975 he had his 'revelation'. 'I suddenly saw them. And it was a bright day in spring with blue sky and little white clouds, and everywhere I looked it was a revelation, the trees were alive. There was a slight breeze and they were moving slightly. They looked like huge animals all over the place. And from then on I was hooked absolutely.' For the next eleven years Armitage propagated a wondrous forest of sketches, sculptures, carvings, casts and constructions, culminating in a ten foot high commission to stand outside the British Embassy in Brasilia. It was a project that took him (almost) completely away from figuration and Chaucerian jauntiness (though his trees do sometimes look ready to march), and entwined him with an environmental impetus that ran parallel to the increasingly celebrated ideas of the Land Art movement, and the engagement between sculpture and landscape, steadily becoming one of British art's great new adventures.

If the 'Richmond Oaks' look ready to quip and gesture, Armitage's chair projects from the 1970s specifically invest inanimate pieces of furniture with aspects of the human form - faces, arms, legs - in a wilful championing of figuration and humanity, that is nothing but uplifting, and always at the level of people power, rather than as Michelangesque supermen, or Gormleyesque self-portraits. As he wrote: 'Sculpture should express a liking for ordinary unheroic people who are not idealised in any way. People are funny, their bodies and actions having teasing and tantalising forms, obstinate lovable lumps of flesh continually falling short of their aspirations. I don't seek an idealised form of perfection or what is sometimes called grace. Grace makes an object remote and unattainable.' Chaucer again.

These chair projects proliferated in different versions - those that married two-dimensional art (prints and photographs) with open structures, creating risky experiments in the juxtaposition of materials and formats; great bronze sculptural chair forms, like triumphant Egyptian thrones; and ideas such as 'How Many Miles to Babylon', from 1975, with its trace of an ancient arid culture, and the belief, embodied in its nursery rhyme title, that the journey - the dark, dangerous journey - is the thing.

We must thank our lucky stars that Kenneth Armitage kept on seeking Babylon long after the gold had been laid at his feet.

Sandy Mallet, October 2016



Photograph of an oak tree by KA



Left to right: Big Doll 1969; Table G 1971; Table H (with round arms) 1971

below:

1

How Many Miles to Babylon? 1975

bronze h: 22½ in / 57 cm

right:

2

Richmond Oak 1985

bronze with paint h: 32½ in / 82.5 cm





left (front):

3

Design for a Wilderness Series circa 1974

wood & plaster maquette h: 16½ in / 42 cm

left (back):

4

Design for a Wilderness No.1 1971

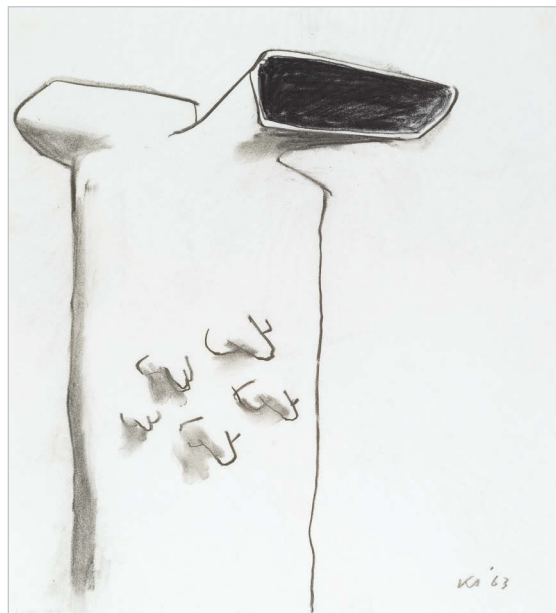
wood, plaster & mixed media maquette h: 13 in / 33 cm

above:

5

Figure on its Back 1963

charcoal & gouache on paper 15 × 19¾ in / 38 × 50 cm



above:
6
Study for Pandarus 1963
charcoal on paper 20 × 16 in / 51 × 40.5 cm

opposite:
(left to right) 7, 8, 9, 10, details on page 32





left:
11
July Figure (Version 2) 1979
bronze h: 34 in / 86 cm



above:
12
Chair (Version 3) 1981
bronze: unique h: 22¼ in / 56.5 cm



left:
13
The Forest 1965
bronze h: 67 in / 170 cm

above:
14
Two Figures Embracing 1969
charcoal & oil on paper 6¼ × 7¼ in / 16 × 18 cm

back:

15

Four Seated Figures circa 1983

wood & plaster maquette h: 12½ in / 32 cm

front:

16

Girl Behaving 1998

bronze h: 9¼ in / 23.5 cm



left to right: 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 details on pages 33-34





above:

24

Girl Stepping Out 1974

charcoal, felt-tip & collage on paper 11½ × 15½ in / 29 × 39.5 cm

opposite (left):

25

Design for a Wilderness No.4 1971

bronze h: 12¾ in / 32.5 cm

opposite (right):

26

Design for a Wilderness No.4 1971

wood & plaster maquette h: 13 in / 33 cm





above:
27
 Study for 'Design for a Wilderness' circa 1974
 charcoal & collage on paper 21½ × 29½ in / 54.5 × 75 cm

opposite:
 (left to right) **28, 29, 30**, details on page 35





far left:

31

Tall Oak, Nobbles (Z4) 1981

bronze: unique h: 24 in / 61 cm

left:

32

Blasted Oak 1986

bronze with paint: unique h: 29 in / 73.5 cm

above:

33

Richmond Oak circa 1977

pastel, gouache & pen on paper 10¾ × 14¾ in / 27.5 × 37.5 cm

left to right: 34, 35, 36, 37, 26, 38, details on pages 34-35





above:

39

Playing Group 1963

gouache & charcoal on paper 15 × 20 in / 38 × 51 cm

right (back):

40

Return to Eden Variation circa 1988

wood & plaster maquette h: 12 in / 30.5 cm

right (front):

41

Alice Through the Looking Glass 1974

nickel bronze with paint h: 7¾ in / 19.5 cm



List of Works

1

How Many Miles to Babylon? 1975

bronze

initialled, dated & numbered 1/1

h: 22½ in / 57 cm

cast: Noack 1991

Exhibited

City Museum & Art Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage: Richmond oaks and other works*, Stoke-on-Trent, 1980, no. 25, illus., touring to Gimpel Fils, London, (another cast)

Literature

T. Woollcombe (ed.), *Kenneth Armitage Life and Work*, Much Hadham, London, with The Henry Moore Foundation & Lund Humphries, 1997, p. 116, no. KA208, illus. (another cast)
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 70, no. 41 & p. 168, pl. 224, illus. (another cast)

2

Richmond Oak 1985

bronze with point

initialled, dated & numbered 2/6

h: 22½ in / 82 cm

cast: Noack 1987

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 190, pl. 278, illus.

3

Design for a Wilderness Series circa 1974

wood & plaster maquette

h: 16½ in / 42 cm

4

Design for a Wilderness No.1 1971

wood, plaster & mixed media maquette

h: 13 in / 33 cm

Literature

C. Spencer, *Kenneth Armitage (Alecto Monographs 1)*, Academy Editions, London, with Editions Electo Ltd, 1973, p. 13, illus.
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 157, pl. 199, illus.

5

Figure on its Back 1963

charcoal & gouache on paper 15 × 19¾ in / 38 × 50 cm

initialled & dated lower right

6

Study for Pandarus 1963

charcoal on paper

initialled & dated lower right

20 × 16 in / 51 × 40.5 cm

7

Mouton Variation

(*Small Model with Five Flanges*) 1963

brass: unique

initialled, dated & numbered 1/1

h: 13 in / 33 cm

cast: Fiorini

Exhibited

Marlborough New London Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage*, 1965, no. 13, illus.

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 137, pl. 136, illus.

8

Pandarus VI 1963

brass: unique

initialled

h: 28 in / 71 cm

cast: Fiorini

Exhibited

Galerie Charles Lienhard, *Kenneth Armitage*, Zurich, 1963, no. 1441
Marlborough New London Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage*, London, 1965, no. 8, illus.

Literature

R. McLean (ed.), *Motif 11*, Shenval Press, London, Winter 1963-64, p. 63, illus.
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 135, pl. 131, illus.

9

Wall (*Small Version Model A*) 1965

wood & plaster maquette

initialled

8 in / 20.5 cm

10

Wall (*Small Version Model A*) 1965

bronze

initialled, dated & numbered 3/6

8 in / 20.5 cm

cast: RCA Foundry 1978

Exhibited

Marlborough New London Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage*, 1965, no. 21, illus. (another cast)

Literature

A. Elliott (ed.), with J. McEwen, J. Wood, J. Benington & T. Woollcombe, *Kenneth Armitage Sculptor; A Centenary Celebration*, Sansom & Co, Bristol, supported by The Kenneth Armitage Foundation & The Henry Moore Foundation, 2016, p. 95, pl. 70, illus. (another cast)
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 142, pl. 146, illus.

11

July Figure (*Version 2*) 1979

bronze

initialled, dated & numbered 3/6

h: 34 in / 86 cm

cast: Noack 1987

Exhibited

City Museum & Art Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage: Richmond oaks and other works*, Stoke-on-Trent, 1980, no. 25, illus., touring to Gimpel Fils, London, (another cast)
Sala Mendoza, *Kenneth Armitage*, Caracas, 1982, illus.
Artcurial, *Kenneth Armitage: Sculptures and Drawings 1948-1984*, Paris, 1985, no. 36, illus. (another cast)

Literature

T. Woollcombe (ed.), *Kenneth Armitage Life and Work*, Much Hadham, London, with The Henry Moore Foundation & Lund Humphries, 1997, p. 119, no. KA224, illus. (another cast)
A. Elliott (ed.), with J. McEwen, J. Wood, J. Benington & T. Woollcombe, *Kenneth Armitage Sculptor; A Centenary Celebration*, Sansom & Co, Bristol, with The Kenneth Armitage Foundation & The Henry Moore Foundation, 2016, p. 88, pl. 61, illus. (another cast)
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 71 & p. 168, pl. 226, illus. (another cast)

12

Chair (*Version 3*) 1981

bronze: unique

initialled, dated & inscribed

h: 22¼ in / 56.5 cm

cast: Burleighfield

Exhibited

Artcurial, *Kenneth Armitage: Sculptures and Drawings 1948-1984*, Paris, 1985, no. 43, illus.

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 182, pl. 260, illus.

13

The Forest 1965

bronze

initialled, edition of 5 (3 cast)

h: 67 in / 170 cm

cast: Noack

Exhibited

Arts Council, *Kenneth Armitage*, 1972-73, no. 20, touring to Norwich, Bolton, Oldham, Kettering, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Llanelli, Leeds, & Hull, (another cast)
City Museum & Art Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage: Richmond oaks and other works*, Stoke-on-Trent, 1980, no. 33 (another cast)
Marlborough New London Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage*, 1965, no. 28, illus. (another cast)

Literature

C. Spencer, *Kenneth Armitage (Alecto Monographs 1)*, Academy Editions, London, with Editions Electo Ltd, 1973, p. 12, illus. (another cast)
Artcurial, *Kenneth Armitage: Sculptures and Drawings 1948-1984*, Paris, 1985, p.9, illus. (another cast)

T. Woollcombe (ed.), *Kenneth Armitage Life and Work*, Much Hadham, London, with The Henry Moore Foundation & Lund Humphries, 1997, p. 89, no. KA154, illus. (another cast)
A. Elliott (ed.), with J. McEwen, J. Wood, J. Benington & T. Woollcombe, *Kenneth Armitage Sculptor; A Centenary Celebration*, Sansom & Co, Bristol, with The Kenneth Armitage Foundation and The Henry Moore Foundation, 2016, p. 25, illus. (another cast)
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 143, pl. 153, illus. (another cast)

14

Two Figures Embracing 1969

charcoal & oil on paper

initialled & dated lower left

6¼ × 7¼ in / 16 × 18 cm

15

Four Seated Figures circa 1983

wood & plaster maquette

h: 12½ in / 32 cm

Literature

T. Woollcombe (ed.), with A. Bowness, *Kenneth Armitage Life and Work*, Much Hadham, London, with The Henry Moore Foundation & Lund Humphries, 1997, p. 134, no. KA267, illus. (as ‘Isolated Seated Figures’ 1990)
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 189, pl. 274, illus.

16

Girl Behaving 1998

bronze

initialled, dated & numbered 1/6

foundry mark

h: 9¼ in / 23.5 cm

cast: Burleighfield

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 194, pl. 286, illus.

17

Little Prophet (*Small Version II*) 1962

yellow bronze

initialled, dated & numbered 4/6

foundry stamp

h: 12½ in / 32 cm

cast: Morris Singer 1985

Exhibited

Marlborough Fine Art, *Kenneth Armitage*, London, 1962, no. 22 (another cast)
Galerie Charles Lienhard, *Kenneth Armitage*, Zurich, 1963, no. 1433 (another cast)
Arnofini Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage*, Bristol, 1965, no. 10 (another cast)
Fuji Television Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage*, Tokyo (& touring to Nagoya & Osaka), 1978, no. 1, illus. (another cast)

Literature

R. McLean (ed.), *Motif 11*, Shenval Press, London, Winter 1963-64, p.64, illus. (another cast)
T. Woolcombe (ed.), with A. Bowness, *Kenneth Armitage Life and Work*, Much Hadham, London, with The Henry Moore Foundation & Lund Humphries, 1997, p. 64, no. KA115, illus. (another cast)
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 131, pl. 120, illus. (another cast)

18

Little Prophet I 1962

plaster maquette
h: 14½ in / 37 cm

19

Night Visitor 1998

bronze
initialled, dated & numbered 1/6
foundry mark
h: 15½ in / 39.5 cm
cast: Burleighfield

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 195, pl. 290, illus.

20

Little Prophet II 1962

plaster maquette
initialled
h: 12½ in / 32 cm

21

Little Prophet (*Small Version I*) 1962

yellow bronze
initialled, dated & numbered 5/6
h: 14½ in / 37 cm
cast: Morris Singer 1988

Exhibited

Marlborough Fine Art, *Kenneth Armitage*, London, 1962, no. 21 (another cast)
Galleria Blu, *2 Scultori Inglesi: Chadwick e Armitage*, Milan, 1963, no. 5, illus. (another cast)
Galerie Charles Lienhard, *Kenneth Armitage*, Zurich, 1963, no. 1432 (another cast)
Arnofini Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage*, Bristol, 1965, no. 9 (another cast)

Literature

R. McLean (ed.), *Motif 11*, Shenval Press, London, Winter 1963-64, p.64, illus. (another cast)
A. Elliott (ed.), with J. McEwen, J. Wood, J. Benington & T. Woolcombe, *Kenneth Armitage Sculptor; A Centenary Celebration*, Sansom & Co, Bristol, supported by The Kenneth Armitage Foundation & The Henry Moore Foundation, 2016, p. 86, pl. 59, illus. (another cast)
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 131, pl. 119, illus. (another cast)

22

Self Divided 1998

bronze
initialled, dated & numbered 1/6
foundry mark
h: 10¼ in / 26 cm
cast: Noack

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 195, pl. 287, illus.

23

Half Man 1998

bronze
initialled, dated & numbered 1/6
foundry mark
h: 9½ in / 24 cm
cast: Burleighfield

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 194, pl. 285, illus.

24

Girl Stepping Out 1974

charcoal, felt-tip & collage on paper
11½ × 15½ in / 29 × 39.5 cm

25

Design for a Wilderness No. 4 1971

bronze
initialled, dated & numbered 0/6
foundry mark
h: 12¾ in / 32.5 cm
cast: Morris Singer 1988

Exhibited

Arts Council, *Kenneth Armitage*, 1972-73, no. 40, touring to Norwich, Bolton, Oldham, Kettering, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Llanelli, Leeds, & Hull, (another cast)
Gallery Kasahara, *Kenneth Armitage*, Osaka, 1974, no.7, (another cast)

Literature

T. Woolcombe (ed.), with A. Bowness, *Kenneth Armitage Life and Work*, Much Hadham, London, with The Henry Moore Foundation & Lund Humphries, 1997, p. 117, no. KA190, illus.
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 67, no. 37 & p. 159, pl. 202, illus.

26

Design for a Wilderness No. 4 1971

wood & plaster maquette
initialled, dated & inscribed
h: 13 in / 33 cm

27

Study for ‘Design for a Wilderness’ circa 1974

charcoal & collage on paper
21½ × 29½ in / 54.5 × 75 cm

28

The Dagda 1992

wood & plaster maquette
h: 10½ in / 27 cm

29

Little Winged Figure 1961

bronze on beechwood stand
initialled & dated, edition of 8
h: 10 in / 25.5 cm
cast: Burleighfield 1989

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 126, pl. 106, illus. (another cast)

30

Fleeing Figure circa 1976

wood & plaster maquette
h: 9¼ in / 23.5 cm

31

Tall Oak, Nobbles (Z4) 1981

bronze: unique
initialled, dated & inscribed
h: 24 in / 61 cm
cast: Burleighfield

Exhibited

City Museum & Art Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage: Richmond oaks and other works*, Stoke-on-Trent, 1980, no. 23, illus.

Literature

T. Woolcombe (ed.), with A. Bowness, *Kenneth Armitage Life and Work*, Much Hadham, London, with The Henry Moore Foundation & Lund Humphries, 1997, p. 122, no. KA241, illus.
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 177, pl. 252, illus.

32

Blasted Oak 1986

bronze with paint: unique
initialled, dated & inscribed
h: 29 in / 73.5 cm
cast: Burleighfield

Exhibited

Victoria Art Gallery, *Kenneth Armitage Centenary Sculpture Exhibition*, Bath, 2016

Literature

T. Woolcombe (ed.), with A. Bowness, *Kenneth Armitage Life and Work*, Much Hadham, London, with The Henry Moore Foundation & Lund Humphries, 1997, p. 125, no. KA264, illus.
A. Elliott (ed.), with J. McEwen, J. Wood, J. Benington & T. Woolcombe, *Kenneth Armitage Sculptor; A Centenary Celebration*, Sansom & Co, Bristol, with The Kenneth Armitage Foundation & The Henry Moore Foundation, 2016, p. 100, pl. 78, illus.
J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 190, pl. 279, illus.

33

Richmond Oak circa 1977

pastel, gouache & pen on paper
10¾ × 14¾ in / 27.5 × 37.5 cm

34

Design for a Wilderness No. 2 1971

wood & plaster maquette
h: 12 in / 30.5 cm

35

Legend of Skadar (*Version 6*) 1965

wood & plaster maquette
initialled & inscribed
h: 16¾ in / 42.5 cm

36

Fleeing Figure circa 1977

plaster maquette
initialled
h: 17 in / 43 cm

37

Legend of Skadar (*Version 3*) 1965

wood & plaster maquette
initialled, titled & inscribed
h: 17¼ in / 44 cm

38

Legend of Skadar (*Version 1*) 1965

plaster maquette
initialled
h: 16¼ in / 41.5 cm

39

Playing Group 1963

gouache & charcoal on paper
initialled & dated lower right
15 × 20 in / 38 × 51 cm

40

Return to Eden Variation circa 1988

wood & plaster maquette
h: 12 in / 30.5 cm

41

Alice Through the Looking Glass 1974

nickel bronze with paint
initialled, dated & numbered 2/6
foundry mark
h: 7¾ in / 19.5 cm
cast: Noack 1984

Exhibited

Artcurial, *Kenneth Armitage: Sculptures and Drawings 1948-1984*, Paris, 1985, no. 35

Literature

J. Scott, with C. Milburn, M. Bird & A. Gormley, *The Sculpture of Kenneth Armitage*, Lund Humphries, London, 2016, p. 167, pl. 223, illus.

Kenneth Armitage

Kenneth Armitage (1916-2002) first attracted an international reputation at the Venice Biennale of 1952 as one of a group of new British sculptors that included Butler, Chadwick, Paolozzi and Turnbull. His distinctive focus on the human figure, his use of wit and movement, and his connection to ancient forms were ingredients in an approach to sculpture that won him a far-reaching public audience, as well as numerous early awards. A further Biennale appearance in 1958 was followed the next year by a retrospective at the Whitechapel Gallery.

Armitage’s work in the following decade had an equally radical and relevant edge, the artist developing his commitment to the human figure, exploring mythological sources, and broadening his use of materials to include wax, resins and aluminium. The ’60s also saw Armitage take up critical teaching posts in Caracas, Berlin and Boston, which provided cultural and political ingredients for his sculpture, allowing it to remain insistently contemporary, pertinent and sharp-witted.

By the early 1970s he had introduced the Chair Figures, marrying flat art (drawings, screen-prints and photography) to three-dimensional sculptural structures. From the late 1970s onwards he generated a succession of radical phases of new work, each forceful and distinctive: including monumental figures influenced by ancient Egypt, an environmentally focused group - The Richmond Oaks - and a culminating series of massive arms and legs for public spaces, acknowledging - one final time, and on the grandest scale - his profound commitment to the human form.

- 1916 Born 18th July, Leeds
- 1933-7 Leeds College of Art
- 1937-9 Slade School of Art, London
- 1939-46 H M forces, Royal Artillery
- 1940 Married Joan Moore
- 1946-56 Appointed Head of Sculpture, Bath Academy of Art, Corsham, Wiltshire
- 1952 First solo exhibition, Gimpel Fils, London
Work included in ‘New Aspects of British Sculpture’ XXV Venice Biennale
- 1953-55 Awarded Gregory Fellowship in Sculpture, Leeds University
- 1954 First solo exhibition in New York, Bertha Schaefer Gallery
- 1956 Awarded first prize, International War Memorial Competition, Krefeld, West Germany
- 1958 David E. Bright Foundation Award, XXIX Venice Biennale
- 1959 Retrospective exhibition, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
- 1962 Solo exhibitions at Marlborough Gallery (London) and Paul Rosenberg & Co. (New York)
- 1963 *The Reve’s Tale* drawings project begun
Visiting Professor, Caracas, Venezuela
- 1967-9 Berlin Artists’ Programme Fellowship, West Germany
Armitage in Berlin film
- 1969 Awarded CBE
- 1970 Visiting Professor, Boston University, Massachusetts
- 1972-3 Touring exhibition, Arts Council, UK
- 1974-9 Visiting Tutor, Royal College of Art, London
- 1975-81 *Richmond Oaks* sculptures created
- 1985 Retrospective exhibition, Artcurial, Paris
- 1994 Elected R.A., Royal Academy, London
- 1996-7 Retrospective exhibition, Yorkshire Sculpture Park
- 2001 Installation of ‘Both Arms’, Millennium Square, Leeds
- 2002 Died 22nd January, London

SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

- 1952-7**
Exhibitions at Gimpel Fils, London
- 1954-6**
Exhibitions at Bertha Schaefer Gallery, New York
- 1958**
Paul Rosenberg & Co., New York;
XXIX Venice Biennale, British Pavilion (with William Scott and S W Hayter), toured by the British Council 1958-9 to Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris; Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne; Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels; Kunsthaus, Zürich; and Boijmans Museum, Rotterdam
- 1959**
‘Retrospective’, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
- 1960-1**
Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover (with Lynn Chadwick), touring to Ulm, Duisburg, Berlin, Nuremberg, Copenhagen, Gothenburg and Stockholm
- 1962**
Paul Rosenberg & Co., New York;
Marlborough Fine Art, London;
Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti, Zagreb
Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura
- 1963**
Galerie Charles Lienhard, Zürich;
Galerie Wilhelm Grosshennig, Düsseldorf;
Galleria Blu, Milan
- 1965**
Marlborough Fine Art, London;
Arnolfini, Bristol
- 1970**
Touring: Havana, Santiago de Cuba and Matzanas, Cuba
- 1972-3**
Arts Council exhibition touring to Norwich, Bolton, Oldham, Kettering, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Llanelli, Leeds and Hull
- 1974**
‘Kenneth Armitage: Drawings’, Hester van Royen Gallery, London;
Gallery Kasahara, Osaka and Tokyo
- 1975**
New Art Centre, London
- 1978**
Fuji Television Gallery, Tokyo;
Galerie Humanité, Nagoya;
Gallery Kasahara, Osaka
- 1980**
‘Richmond Oaks and other works’, Stoke-on-Trent City Museum and Art Gallery, and Gimpel Fils, London
- 1982**
Sala Mendoza, Caracas;
Taranman, London;
Gallery Kasahara, Osaka

- 1985**
‘Retrospective’, Artcurial, Paris
- 1996**
‘Works on Paper’, Friends Room, Royal Academy of Arts, London
- 1996-7**
‘Kenneth Armitage: 80th Birthday Survey’, Yorkshire Sculpture Park
- 1997**
‘Works on Paper’, Victoria Art Gallery, Bath
- 2000**
Werkstattgalerie Hermann Noack, Berlin
- 2001**
‘Kenneth Armitage: Sculptures, Maquettes and Drawings’, Jonathan Clark Fine Art, London
- 2005**
‘Kenneth Armitage’, New Art Centre, Salisbury;
‘Kenneth Armitage: Drawings for Geoffrey Chaucer’s The Reve’s Tale’, Jonathan Clark Fine Art, London
- 2016-17**
‘Kenneth Armitage Centenary Sculpture Exhibition’, Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, and touring to Leeds
- SELECTED GROUP SHOWS**
- 1938**
Imperial Gallery, London
Scholarship exhibition for the British School in Rome
- 1944**
London group wartime exhibition,
Royal Academy, London
- 1949**
London group exhibition
- 1951**
Second International Exhibition of Sculpture in Battersea Park, London
- 1952**
ICA, London;
XXVI Venice Biennale, British Pavilion (with Robert Adams, Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, Geoffrey Clarke, Bernard Meadows, Henry Moore, Eduardo Paolozzi, Graham Sutherland, William Turnbull and Edward Wadsworth)
- 1953**
Second Open Air Sculpture Exhibition, Middelheim Sculpture Park, Antwerp
Industrial Design Exhibition, Zurich
- 1954**
‘Documenta I’, Kassel, Germany;
‘Recent British Drawings’, ICA, London
Exhibition of The Gregory Fellows, Leeds
Whitechapel Gallery, London

1955
‘The New Decade’, Museum of Modern Art, New York
‘The Seasons’ Tate Gallery, London
‘Young British Sculptors’, British Council touring exhibition, to Chicago, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Buffalo and Toronto

1956
‘The Seasons’, Tate Gallery, London

1957
4a Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (with Robert Adams, Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, F E McWilliam, Bernard Meadows, Eduardo Paolozzi, Leslie Thornton, William Turnbull and Austin Wright, including paintings by Ben Nicholson), touring through South America
‘An exhibition of Yorkshire Artists’, City Art Gallery, Leeds
‘Sculpture in the Open Air’, Holland Park, London

1958
5th International Drawing and Engraving Exhibition, Lugano
Galeria Blu, Milan
‘Modern Sculpture’, City Art Gallery, Leeds

1959
‘New Images of Man’, Museum of Modern Art, New York;
‘Documenta II’, Kassel, Germany
British Council Exhibition in Venezuela

1960
‘International Sculpture Exhibition’, di Tella Institute, Buenos Aires
‘Open Air Exhibition’ Battersea Park, London

1961
‘Second International Contemporary Sculpture Exhibition’, Musee Rodin, Paris
‘Contemporary British Sculpture’, Arts Council touring, Birmingham and Bradford

1962
‘British Sculpture Today’, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (and US tour)

1963
VII Biennale, Tokyo

1964
‘Contemporary British Painting and Sculpture’, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York;
‘Documenta III’, Kassel, Germany;
‘54-64: Painting and Sculpture of a Decade’, Tate Gallery, London (organised by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation)
‘Peggy Guggenheim Exhibition’, Tate Gallery, London
Gregory Fellows Exhibition, Leeds

1965
‘British Sculpture in the Sixties’, Tate Gallery, London
‘Five British Sculptors’, IBM Gallery of Science and Art, New York

1966
‘Sculpture in the Open Air’, Battersea Park, London
Sonsbeek, The Netherlands

1967
International Sculpture Exhibition, Guggenheim Museum, New York

1967-70
‘British Sculpture (1950-62) from the Arts Council Collection’, Belfast and touring to Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromso

1968
‘Sculpture Anglaise Contemporaine’, British Council, Toulouse to Lille and Forcalquier

1969
‘First International Open Air Sculpture Exhibition’, Hakone

1971
Second International Open Air Sculpture Exhibition’, Hakone

1972
‘British Sculptors ‘72’, Royal Academy of Arts, London

1974
‘Marlborough en Caracas’, Arte Contacto Galerie de Arte, Caracas

1975
‘Drawings and Small Sculptures’, New Art Centre, Salisbury
‘Sculpture in Holland Park’, London

1976
‘Escultura Inglesa Contemporanea’, Arte Contacto Galeria de Arte, Caracas

1977
‘Silver Jubilee Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture’, Battersea Park, London
Opening exhibition of Yorkshire Sculpture Park

1978-9
‘The Strange Nature of Money’, Museum des Geldes, Düsseldorf

1981
‘British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century’, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
‘100 Years of Art in Britain’, Leeds City Art Gallery

1984
‘The Folding Image’, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

1987
‘British Art in the 20th Century’, The Royal Academy of Arts, London
‘The Blasted Oak’, Herbert Gallery, Coventry (and touring)

1988
World Expo 88, Brisbane, Australia;
Seoul Olympiad of Art, Korea
‘British Figurative Sculpture’, Flowers East, London

1989
‘Figures in Sculpture’, Artcurial, Paris

1990
‘Human Figuration in Twentieth Century Sculpture’, Berkeley Square Gallery, London;
‘Escultura Contemporánea’, Galería Freites, Caracas

1992
‘New Realities: Art in Western Europe 1945-68’, Tate Liverpool

1993
Chelsea Harbour Sculpture Exhibition, London

1995-6
Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London
New Art Centre, Salisbury

1997
‘From Blast to Pop: Aspects of British Art 1915 to 1965’, Chicago

1998
‘Fifty Years of British Sculpture: Works from the Collection of the Arts Council’, Lothbury Gallery, London

2000
‘Bronze: Contemporary British Sculpture’, Holland Park, London

2001
‘Vitalism: British Sculpture of the ‘50s’, Gallery Pangolin, Chalford

2002
‘Transition: The London Art Scene in the Fifties’, Barbican Art Gallery, London;
‘Henry Moore and the Geometry of Fear’, James Hyman Fine Art, London

2005
‘Body Language’, Gallery Pangolin, Chalford

2008
‘Figure, Landscape, Still Life’, Jonathan Clark Fine Art, London;
‘2D3D Sculpture from the Chris Ingram Collection’, The Lightbox, Woking

2011
‘Modern British Sculpture’, Robert Bowman Modern, London

2012
‘Tomorrow Was Already Here’, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City

2016
‘Shaping a Century: Works by Modern British Sculptors’, New Art Centre, Salisbury

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Australia
City Hall, Brisbane
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Belgium
Middelheim Sculpture Park, Antwerp
Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels

Finland
Ateneum Art Museum - Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki

France
FRAC - Basse-Normandie, Caen
Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris

Germany
Berlin Opera House
Nationalgalerie, Berlin
Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg
Kunstmuseum, Duisburg
Kunsthalle, Hamburg
Sammlung Sprengel, Hanover
Städtische Galerie, Hanover
Von-der-Heydt Museum, Wuppertal

Israel
Billy Rose Sculpture Garden, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Italy
Municipal Museum of Modern Arts, Carrara
Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, Roma
Museo Civico, Turin
Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice

Japan
Hakone Open Air Museum
Museum of Modern Art, Hyogo
National Museum of Art, Osaka
Civic Commission, Yokohama

Korea
Seoul Olympic National Park

Mexico
Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City

Netherlands
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Portugal
Berardo Museum, Lisbon

Sweden
Konstmuseet, Gothenburg

Switzerland
Villa Ciani, Lugano

United Kingdom
The Victoria Art Gallery, Bath
Ulster Museum, Belfast
Bristol Museums and Art Galleries
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
National Museum Cardiff
Cass Sculpture Foundation, Chichester
Ferens Art Gallery, Hull
Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds
Tate Britain, London
Arts Council of England, London
British Council, London
Government Art Collection, London
Royal Academy of Arts, London
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester
Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
The Hepworth, Wakefield

United States
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Wichita State University, Kansas
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Brooklyn Museum, New York
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Museum of Modern Art, Philadelphia
Hirshhorn Museum and Art Gallery, Washington DC
Kreeger Museum, Washington, DC

Venezuela
City Metro, Caracas
Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas

Endpapers (front to back):
The Reve's Tale – The Wife Restrains Her Daughter circa 1966
The Reve's Tale – Molly the Miller's Daughter 1969
Dancer 1962
The Reve's Tale – Simpkin the Miller circa 1969

Archival image (page 6):
Arm 1968, bronze with black patina, initialled, h: 21 cm

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With many thanks to The Kenneth Armitage Foundation

Photography by: Dan Stevens
Archival images © The Kenneth Armitage Foundation
& Jonathan Clark Fine Art

Text © Sandy Mallet
& Jonathan Clark Fine Art

Designed by Graham Rees
Printed by The Five Castles Press

Catalogue © Jonathan Clark Fine Art
Published by Jonathan Clark Fine Art, London

All rights reserved.
No part of this book may be reproduced
or transmitted in any form or by any means,
electronic or mechanical, including
photocopying, recording or any other
information storage or retrieval system
without prior permission in writing
from the gallery.

jonathan clark fine art
18 park walk SW10 0AQ | info@jcfa.co.uk
london +44 (0)20 7351 3555 | www.jcfa.co.uk





