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Biography



London 1914 - Stroud 2003

Lynn Chadwick was born in London on 24 November 1914. After attending the Merchant Taylor School and a stay in France, Chadwick worked for several London architect's practices between 1933 and 1939. At that time he focused on techniques of draftsmanship and watercolor as well as oil painting.

Chadwick's independent development of the mobile derived from his experience in exhibition design. These elegant objects demonstrate a sophisticated fusion of sculptural form and engineering. Alongside the mobiles he developed so-called stabiles, one of which was among the most important sculptures at the Festival of Britain. He brought the two elements, static and mobile forms, together in a number of major works.

He came late to sculpture, but showed two major works at the Festival of Britain in London in 1951, following his WWII service as a Royal Navy pilot, and was launched onto the international stage as one of a new generation of British sculptors shown at the Venice Biennale in 1952. His co-exhibitors included Reg Butler, Bernard Meadows and Eduardo Paolozzi. When he beat Alberto Giacometti to win the International Prize for Sculpture in Venice in 1956 it was the sensation of the Biennale. He went on to secure an international reputation with works in many of the great public collections of Europe, North and South America and Japan. Despite such a reputation, prior to the major Tate retrospective in 2003, shortly following his death, he had previously only had one major retrospective exhibition in Britain.

During the 1950s he developed a new way of working that involved welding an iron armature which was filled with Stolit, an artificial stone compound of gypsum and iron filings. This material provided an evocative, textured surface which would, over time, acquire a rich ferrous colouring. It was this technique which he used when developing the candelabra collection over the following decades. While he retained this working method, he later cast his works in bronze. Bronze dominated his work until the 1990s when he made a number of monumental sculptures in polished steel.

Long since a Commander of the British Empire (1964), Chadwick was also made an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1985. Although his work was in its heyday in the 1950s, Chadwick continued to develop his figures within the context of his material idiom until the century closed. By the time Lynn Chadwick died in Stroud, Gloucestershire on 25 April 2003, he was one of the best-known sculptors of the post-war era.