

Press release

# Tony Cragg *New Sculptures*

7 September—10 October 2024  
Opening Saturday 7 September 2024, 6—8pm

Thaddaeus Ropac  
Paris Marais  
7, rue Debelleye, 75003 Paris



Tony Cragg, *Untitled*, 2023  
Bronze. 100 x 53 x 82 cm (39.37 x 20.87 x 32.28 in)  
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Focusing on his most recent bodies of work, this exhibition offers a view into the breadth of Tony Cragg's latest formal developments, which are defined by the British artist's continual investigation into the possibilities of a wide range of materials and his exploration of both the natural and the man-made worlds. 'His work has the accumulated effect of subtly unsettling the

certainities of such categories, whilst allowing us to think – through sculpture – about the complex material connectivities between [...] culture and nature,' writes art historian Jon Wood. Cragg's abstract sculptures manifest entirely unprecedented forms that nevertheless spark a sense of recognition as they gesture to the world around us.



Tony Cragg, *Untitled*, 2023  
Stainless steel. 90 x 39 x 58 cm (35.43 x 15.35 x 22.83 in)  
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The works on view testify to several of his recent series, including his detailed steel *Incidents*: svelte works that stand upright to belie the weight and strength of the material they are made from. With curvaceous yet strikingly spare forms jutting upwards to give a stark contrast between positive and negative space, the sculptures hold positions that, as if stopped mid-movement, give an ephemeral suggestion of human gesture, which is compounded by the artist's use of stainless steel, a material whose reflective quality mirrors back the visitor and surrounding space to give an impression of fleeting movement, glimpsed out of the corner of one's eye.

The sense of gravity-defying equilibrium of the towering *Incidents* is balanced by the corpulence of Cragg's latest *Integers*. Their soft, organic forms allow each distinctive material to inform the shape the finished sculpture takes. 'Every change in material form has a precise and immediate consequence for our thoughts, feelings and course of action and, with that, the future,' states the artist. From striated wood to strikingly coloured marbles, the surfaces of the works enter into conversation with structures that emulate naturally occurring forms, evoking geological patterns of sedimentation and erosion. The artist has stated, 'although it is

the human figure which interests me most deeply, I have always paid great attention to natural forms.'

Some of the works manifest more markedly the inspiration Cragg draws from the human figure. In one of the *Integers* on view, the fleshy tone of the wood comes together with the sculpture's undulating form to evoke a torso, calling to mind the visual codes of art-historical figurative sculpture. In a 2023 work from the artist's *Masks* series, layered stratum of plywood made from bog oak are pressed into each other through a high-compression process, creating in their collision the subtle suggestion of the titular masks. The outlines of profiles and jawlines emerge and recede, resolving from certain viewpoints, before dissolving back into abstraction.

Highlighting the playful relationship between organic shapes that gesture to the natural world and sturdy, and, in many cases, man-made materials, the nuanced blend of the streamlined and the full-bodied, and of tapered and rounded contours, underline the formal dexterity of the artist. Through meticulous craftsmanship, the works on view highlight the many ways in which Cragg's practice continues to answer anew the question of what is possible in sculpture.



Tony Cragg, *Masks*, 2023  
Bog oak. 140 x 111 x 55 cm (55.12 x 43.7 x 21.65 in)  
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Portrait of Tony Cragg. Photo: Charles Duprat

### **About the artist**

Born in Liverpool, Cragg has lived and worked in Wuppertal, Germany, since 1979 and has lectured at the Berlin Academy of Arts and the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts. Since the 1980s, his work has been shown at important international exhibitions, including documenta in Kassel (1982 and 1987); the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale (1988); and the São Paulo Biennial (1983). He was awarded the Turner Prize in 1988, made a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by France in 1992, and received Japan's prestigious Praemium Imperiale in 2007. Recent solo exhibitions include the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf (2024); Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2023); the Museo Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado, Lisbon (2023); Herning Museum of Contemporary Art (2022); the ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna (2022); Museo del Vetro, Murano (2021); Houghton Hall, Norfolk (2021); Museum Bélvédère, Heerenveen (2021); Schlossmuseum Wolfenbüttel (2020); MON Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba (2020); Museu Brasileiro da Escultura e Ecologia, São Paulo (2019); Boboli Gardens, Uffizi Galleries, Florence (2019); Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See (2019); Istanbul Modern (2018); Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2017); Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana (2017); and The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (2016).

A landmark exhibition of the artist's work is on view at Castle Howard, North Yorkshire, until 22 September 2024.

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