Ekkehard Altenburger

Ana Genoves was born in 1969 and studied Sculpture at Chelsea College of Art before further postgraduate studies in Sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art. In 1999 she had her first solo exhibition, but has also participated in several group shows including Dumbpop at the Jerwood Gallery and New Contemporaries in 1997. She was also nominated for the Paul Hamlyn Award in 1999.

JERWOOD sculpture prize

Ana Genoves

Wandering one day through the British Museum, Ana Genoves found herself staring at an ancient sculpture of an animal on a plinth. Tucked away near the stairs in a dimly lit corridor, it might easily have gone unnoticed. But the decaying stone carving still managed to keep enough of its original spirit to command her attention. It had no features left, so Genoves could not tell whether it had once represented a lion, a tiger or a more generalised, ambiguous creature. Time had taken away the hand of the artist, and yet she realised that, against all odds, 'the beast in that beast was somehow still there.' Genoves felt that the animal's essence had been retained, even though ' museums are well-known for their ability to crush the life out of things.'

In retrospect, she related the memory of this strange spectacle with another encounter in Spain, where her father is a painter. A real tiger lay in the plaza of a shopping mall, among a display devoted to a circus theme. The animal's 'colours and texture fitted so well with the shiny reds and yellows of the display that together that together they acted together against the immense power, the essence of the beast.' Repressed by the context by which it was displayed, the tiger had effectively been stifled. The loss made Genoves reflect on the paradox involved in making sculpture like the defaced animal mouldering in the British Museum. 'We create artefacts in search of our soul, to understand ourselves, to certify our existence, to celebrate life', she argues. 'We put them in museums with a sticker and a number that classify and limit.' The outcome, she concludes, is 'the death of primal urges.'

That is why Genoves set about making the animal again, taking care to retain in her own sculpture the deadening mood she had experienced in both London and Spain. Her enigmatic version of the recumbent beast has an equally blank face, as if all the features had been eroded by the passage of time. She intends to cover it with glossy enamel paint, thereby giving it a contemporary feeling. But far from liberating the animal, the thickness of the pigment will have a repressive effect. It does not banish the 'old stiff museum feeling,' and Genoves wants to employ white paint because it is for her 'the colour of absence, death.'

All the same, her sculpture will still be enlivened by a palpable tension between outer form and inner essence. This fundamental conflict, pitting stagnation against the urge to escape the status quo, directly reflects Genoves's own feelings about the work of a sculptor. 'Art is always there to subvert in some way,' she claims, before adding that 'you're not always master of the situation.' While denying that her Jerwood proposal has a political dimension, she does concede that 'it is about repression at a personal or social level.'

She warms to the prospect of displaying her animal in the grounds of Witley Court. 'I always have difficulty with sculpture in the street', she says; 'it looks so casual, and I can't concentrate on it in such imposing surroundings.' But a garden context is quite different. It follows certain rules, like the work itself, and Genoves wants her Lying Beast to avoid overbearing monumentality: 'I would like to have a human dimension, and not appear detached from the person looking at it.' Ultimately, though, it will be a disconcerting sight. 'I want the whiteness to be empty and numb. It'll look frozen, like a creature from the Ice Age, with nothing to comfort us.'

Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva

Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva was born in 1971 and achieved first class honours in Sculpture at Glasgow School of Art before undertaking an MA at the Royal College of Art. She is currently a visiting lecturer at several art colleges and has forthcoming solo exhibitions at the Kelvingrove Museum in 2001 and the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Macedonia in 2002.

JERWOOD sculpture prize

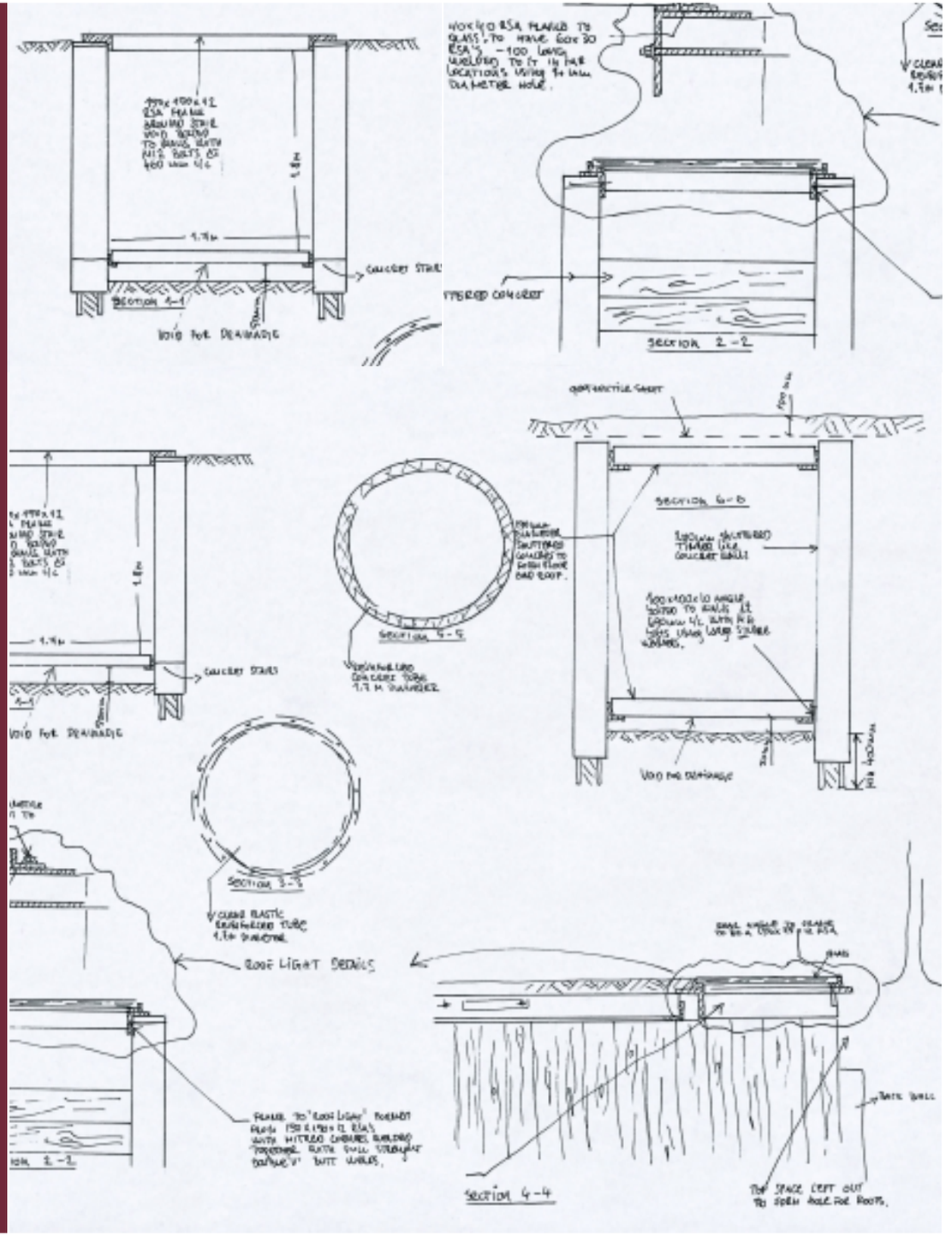
Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva

Growing up in a remote, mountainous area of Macedonia, Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva thought nothing of going underground. Amine had closed near her family house, and she used to delight in playing inside its shadowy tunnels. 'My parents did not allow us to go down there, so naturally I went', she remembers with a defiant laugh. Macedonia is traditionally an agricultural country, and its influence on her work is clear in many disparate ways. But her childhood exploration of the disused mine has a particular bearing on her Jerwood proposal, for Hadzi-Vasileva wants to give us the direct experience of going under the earth, encountering the darkness, moisture and narrowness of tunnels running below two mature trees.

For some visitors, it may well prove a disturbing, claustrophobic experience. But she does not aim merely at testing our ability to cope with confined spaces. 'I hope people will react to nature in a different way down there', she explains. 'From bellow, they'll find a completely different perspective, a different feeling. I see the underworld as another living space that we're normally unaware of.' Hence her decision to choose the title Ambush for the work. She wants it to be a surprise, and nothing will prepare the viewers for the sculpture as they approach it above-ground. 'You won't see much', she says, 'just two glass panels set in the earth and two openings. Then quite suddenly, you'll see something far below you, straight under your feet.'

Walking down the stairs to a depth of around five metres, visitors will find themselves in a shuttered concrete tunnel. Hadzi-Vasileva hopes that people choose to go down one by one, for a solitary experience would enable them, 'to see better and feel the space.' As they walk along, the root systems of the trees above their heads will come into view, hanging dramatically in front of them. A hidden layer of nature is thereby exposed, and Hadzi-Vasileva would prefer to work with evergreen trees: 'their roots are a lot bigger and more complicated.' She is fascinated by the whole idea of 'something inaccessible becoming accessible', and likens the tunnels to a womb. In this mysterious subterranean world, riddled with references to 'myth, birth and growth, underworlds and death', visitors will find themselves challenged to enter into a relationship with 'that which is normally unseen.'

Last year in the New Forrest, Hadzi-Vasileva produced the first version of Ambush. It was only open to the public for one month, but the experience gained from this temporary project proved invaluable. 'I have to be very careful not to kill the roots and damage the trees', she emphasises, describing how specialist advice must be sought before such a risky venture is undertaken. But she thrives on challenges, admitting that, 'without them, I find it very hard work.' In her 1999 solo show at ArtSway, she employed materials as difficult to handle as butter and fir cones, pushing them to their natural limits. Earlier this year, in an exhibition called Epidermis at the Berwick Gymnasium Gallery, she used 2,500 salmon skins and 1'500 bones, all specially cleaned and preserved for the purpose. But Ambush promises to become her most audacious project so far, and Hadzi-Vasileva looks forward to working with trees 'on a long-term basis', finding out how Ambush 'would change and grow, responding to the climate and environment over time.'



Marion Kalmus

Marion Kalmus was born in 1963. She attended Goldsmith's College and graduated in 1994. Her shows have included commissions for Tate Liverpool and the Royal Festival Hall and she was awarded the Kettle's Yard Artist Fellowship in 1997-98. Her permanent outdoor sculpture for the National Botanic Garden of Wales will be opened in 2001.

JERWOOD sculpture prize

Marion Kalmus

Unlike all the other artists shortlisted for the Jerwood Sculpture Prize, Marion Kalmus cannot imagine her proposal divorced from the architectural presence of Witley Court itself. The old, ruined building has become an integral part of the sculpture she wants to produce for the stretch of lawn running down to the Front Pool. From a distance, it will look like a naturally formed rocky outcrop. But as the viewers move in closer, and circumambulate the range of craggy stones, they come to realise that its silhouette and plan echo the proportions of Witley Court beyond.

When Kalmus visited the site, she had no idea what to expect. 'I was astonished to be accepted for the shortlist', she confesses disarmingly, 'because I'm not a sculptor. The judges must have a very expanded idea of what sculpture is.' Walking through Witley Court's ruins, she had a 'really powerful response. It was like walking inside a skeleton, and I found it very poignant. I don't think that I have ever been in a building that's so derelict and still standing.' Kalmus has always reacted strongly to architecture, and her previous career as a fresco restorer enhanced her awareness of the interiors she inhabited. 'Frescoes are a part of the architecture', she points out, 'and my restoration work was very spatial. I went into buildings, and they tended to be vast and awesome.'

Hence her recent willingness to become involved with the gatehouse of the National Botanic Garden of Wales, deigned by Norman Foster and opened earlier this year. She regards her permanent exterior work there as a 'physical part of the building, an architectural intervention.' Made of glass with an aluminium support structure, it 'makes the centre of the gatehouse look as if it is filled with running water and light.' In this respect, it is at the furthest possible remove from her eminently solid proposal for Witley Court. But the two projects are united by Kalmus's love of architecture, and her readiness to take an existing building as the springboard for her own, very different work.

She wants the Jerwood sculpture to look like 'archaeological evidence.' In her view, Witley Court is already reverting to nature, sinking into the land on which it was erected. She sees her monumental stone piece both as 'and emerging descendant and decomposing ancestor of the building it echoes.' Although it will need to be cut and installed with great care, the work should 'produce the illusion of a geological formation which just happens to have worn in this uncanny shape.' Kalmus does not want anyone to be aware, when encountering and examining the sculpture, that it has been man-made. 'It'll look like a rocky object pushed up by geological forces.'

She has been 'really excited by researching quarries and geological museums. I've been advised about how the eight or nine sections of the stone will break in certain ways. There's a high element of risk, and the Jerwood people would have to be very, very committed to go with it.' But she remains convinced that it is possible, and sees the proposal essentially as a 'two-piece sculpture. Witley Court is half of the work. It couldn't possibly be sited anywhere else. If you don't see Witley Court while you're looking at it. You won't get it at all.'

Richard Trupp

Richard Trupp was born in 1973 and studied sculpture at Nottingham Trent University before completing his MA in Site Specific Sculpture at Wimbledon School of Art in 2000. In addition to several outdoor sculpture commissions and a solo show with the Royal Society of British Sculptors, Richard Trupp has also worked as an assistant to Sir Anthony Caro.

JERWOOD sculpture prize

Richard Trupp

Born in Birmingham, Richard Trupp has been strongly influenced by a city that once rejoiced in the sobriquet 'the workshop of the world.' He relishes the monumental ironworks still surviving there, and relates his own attitude as a sculptor to the 'hands-on' attitude still found in this 'city of makers.' When Antony Gormley's defiant yet vulnerable Iron: Man was installed so dramatically in Victoria Square, the vociferous response from the people of Birmingham fuelled the young Trupp's burgeoning sculptural ambitions.

Industrial materials duly became the focus in his 1999 solo show at the Royal Society of British Sculptors in London. He treated the three rooms at his disposal as an arena for his Fixing Blocks, doughty steel structures with large cast-iron nuts and bolts attached. Trupp wanted to play with the space, using the structures as a visible means of binding the rooms together. He also lifted up the floorboards and placed a separate sculpture in the cavity beneath, teasingly hidden from view. 'It's still there now', he explains with amusement, 'gathering dust and imprisoned by cobwebs.'

Trupp always reacts powerfully to the sites at his disposal. At the moment, he is producing 'a wedge' for a space outside a gallery in Norwich, a permanent sculpture in cor ten steel, which 'looks as if it is going into the building and lifting it up at an angle.' This dramatic intervention reflects his interest in Gordon Matta-Clark, who was prepared to use entire buildings as the vehicle for his art. Without seeking to mimic Matta-Clark in any way, Trupp has learned from his pioneering example and believes that 'the site feeds the practice, and I'm very responsive to architectural space in general.'

When visiting Witley Court, however, he became fascinated to his reaction to the landscape as a well. Its changing contours stimulated his imagination, and the large pool in front of the building became the focus of his concerns. The sound of running water from a nearby waterfall is evident to anyone who, approaching the pool, follows the path up the bank. But the pool itself is only visible once the top of the bank has been reached. Realising that the water could easily run down the valley, Trupp decided that he wanted to place an outsized industrial plug in the steep bank. Rearing twenty feet in the air, it plays with our perception of scale and makes the pool seem far smaller. At the same time, though, Trupp wants the viewer to imagine that, if his plug were pulled out, 'the whole place would flood.'

At tough and playful, this steel colossus would undoubtedly act as a sculptural exclamation mark in the landscape, disrupting its placidity and introducing an awareness of latent menace. Trupp is working on the project with a structural engineer. He pays tribute to the way his understanding of heavy steel has been nourished by the year he spent working as Anthony Caro's assistant. 'His attitude is pure enthusiasm', Trupp explains, describing the atmosphere in Caro's studio as 'a fantastic experience. I was really sweating, but I learned a lot of skills there because of the high quality of workmanship.' The knowledge Trupp gained there should prove invaluable if he is able to fulfil his dream, plugging the front pool of Witley Court with his provocative intervention.

Tom Woolford

Tom Woolford was born in 1973 and studied fine art at the University of East London before completing his MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in 1998. In the same year he was represented in the New Contemporaries exhibition, and has since exhibited in group shows, as well as completing site specific work. He is currently working as a studio assistant for Anthony Gormley.

JERWOOD sculpture prize

Tom Woolford

If he wins the Jerwood Sculpture Prize, Tom Woolford wants to ensure that the grounds of Witley Court are interrupted, at some point, by a mysterious tower. Stretching up to fifteen metres in the Worcestershire air, it will confront the viewer with an enigma. Although Woolford wants his structure to be open at the base, encouraging people to wander in, its interior offers no means of ascent. Unlike another, related structure he made in Ipswich, enabling visitors to climb up inside the timber frame and survey their surroundings at the apex, this one will defeat any attempt to scale it. ' There'll be an opening in the roof,' he says, 'but you can't get up there and look out.'

The frustrating element in this sculpture is linked, in Woolford's mind, with Kafka: 'he's someone who has influenced me – the sense of the unattainable in The Castle makes it one of my favourite books. The traveller can never reach the castle, and it's connected with feelings about his father. But the towers in Kafka's novel are quite solid and four-square.' Woolford's Jerwood structure would have a similar sense of substance. He plans to build it from concrete, and in one preliminary drawing the exterior is painted grey with supporting columns in red and white ('the shiny colours of a lighthouse'). He admits that 'there's something perverse about applying paint to such a brutal object'. And explains that the two tone colour scheme comes from institutional interiors.'

Woolford is also fascinated by industrial architecture, its anonymity and functionality. He is making a grey-green structure for a site in the Chilterns, likening it to 'an ear-trumpet catching the noises of the forest.' And its large façade reminds him of the eerie, ominous building in Tacita Dean's haunting film about Sound Mirrors at Denge, near Dungeness. He also remembers being impressed by a colliery tower in the mid-west, photographed by Bernd and Hilla Becher. 'It was ramshackle and organic-looking', he recalls, describing how 'bits of wood were nailed together in a higgledy-piggledy way.'

His own use of concrete is quite different from the colliery tower, where 'each individual nail has been fixed there by someone.' But its reliance on wood does have a kinship with the cabin structures Woolford built a few years ago. They were among his first pieces, and suggested the idea of frontier habitation. 'There was a Scott of the Antarctic feeling about them,' he says, 'and the viewer was asked to ponder the fate of the occupant.' Like Antony Gormley, for whom he has worked as a studio assistant since 1999, Woolford is interested in people. He may not make figure, but his structures – with their air of observation towers silently watching and waiting – are 'all about an absent protagonist. Absence means a lot to me, whereas in Antony's sculpture, the figure is ever-present.'

Woolford is interested in creating mood, comparing his proposed structure to ' a buoy bobbing around in a void waiting for a ship to arrive.' He would like his brooding sculpture to contain 'the suggestion of narrative.' But he also wants to tantalize viewers in the end, and 'leave them hungry.'