

The chance event is key to Flanagan's generative practice, which he frequently rehearsed on the page. Here we see a grid of experimental collages, comprising gummed paper squares that are cut and torn into colourful compositions. Highly abstract, these improvised works contain a syntax, using different forms of notation, giving a poetic quality. The influence of the lyrical, structural and spatial qualities of music are evidenced through a small set of bronzes, most notably through the collapsed form of the cello, an instrument played by the artist throughout his career.

The larger bronze *Pirate Wheel* (2005) is a humorous appropriation of Marcel Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), comprising an upturned wheel attached to a wooden stool, credited as the first assisted readymade. The spiralling wheel was an essential feature of the original work, which references Duchamp's interest in pataphysics, a term coined by the playwright Alfred Jarry, as "the science of imaginary solutions". In reconstructing the artwork and casting it in bronze, Flanagan creates an objective copy, in which the tyre tracks and manufacturing details are retained. He then transforms the work into a stand for a hare, sculpted in his own hand, evident through the indexical mark of his thumbprint.

As early as *June 8 '69* (1969), Flanagan attempted to reconcile the opposition of painting and sculpture. Three hazel wood poles hold up a canvas, which threatens to collapse under its own weight. The piece draws attention to the architectural space, specifically the relationship between the wall and floor. In contrast, the secure wooden frames in *leaping hare, embellished, 2/3 Jan '80* (1980) and *leaping hare* (1981), contain their own architecture, reminiscent of ancient forms, of pyramids and ziggurats, as well as the modular arrangements found in Minimalism.

There is a literalism to Flanagan's early sculptural practice, which is bodily and ephemeral in nature. It was in 1979 that Flanagan bought a dead hare from a local butcher, which he drew, modelled, moulded and cast in bronze. He then gilded the

sculpture on the first full moon of the year, abiding by a Chinese legend that a full moon and a lake are conducive to the laying of gold. The hare subsequently became the leitmotif of Flanagan's practice, emblematic of his artistic vision.

Published in 1972, George Ewart Evans and David Thomson's book *The Leaping Hare*, which combines an anthropological study of the hare with mythology, folklore and superstition, had a profound impact on Flanagan. According to Melvin, Flanagan was drawn to the hare because of "the mysterious and unpredictable way that the hare moves through the landscape – leaping, darting and boxing. Its wide-ranging symbolic meaning in different cultures and religions added to its allure. However, perhaps the greatest attraction of the hare for Flanagan was its anthropomorphic potential as a vehicle to explore masculinity."

*I did see a hare and was most impressed by its gait. I was travelling from Sussex to Cornwall and this hare was running just beyond the hedge. And there were three figures, one of which was a dog, coming over the brow of the South Downs, but the hare was there and was coursing along, and rather leaping, so that was it, a hare, a leaping hare.*

Barry Flanagan in conversation with Melvin Bragg, *The South Bank Show*, 23 January 1983

Yet the hare within Flanagan's practice takes many forms including; the dancing hare, based on Vaslav Nijinsky's choreography for *The Rite of Spring* (1913), an orchestral work by Igor Stravinsky; the shamanic hare that, decorated with spirals, has a rook on its shoulder and an ink pot and pen balanced on his staff; the pensive hare, responding to Auguste Rodin's *The Thinker*, taken from *The Gates of Hell*, which Flanagan encountered at the *Rodin Rediscovered* retrospective exhibition in Washington DC in 1981. An example of the latter, *Large Troubadour* (2004), can be seen outside the gallery in Oozells Square.

## Second Floor Galleries

The written and spoken word was central to Flanagan's practice. For this second part of the guide, we have selected excerpts of his texts to accompany the works on display.

*There is a nice story of the hare. Among all other animals, given his position in the Japanese moon; a favour from the gods, who demanded some sacrifice: an offering, a gesture. That innocence enraging the sun. The science of imaginary solutions loves mystery.*

*I began with the study of architecture. This was in Birmingham. When I became aware of the work being done in the sculpture department my interest shifted, and it wasn't long before I was doing it myself full time. With architecture, I felt that what I was doing was designing for the plumber. The shapes of architecture are arbitrary to the nth degree, not necessarily integral.*

*My difficulty now with the new interest is to think about and work with light, as a reality and actual phenomenon rather than an 'idea about it' or concept. My most basic assumption has been that light is to be taken for granted.*

*Cloth rope and sand seem unconventional only to those who are bound by the notion of tradition. What I like to do is to make visual and material inventions and propositions. I don't think about making sculpture, I don't think whether or not what I'm making is sculpture.*

*Dry sand freely poured into a stitched shape became an integrated, antonymous material statement: the dialogue between the weight of the sand and the structure of the cloth skin, the modification of the stitched contour making further shape.*

*The convention of painting always bothered me. There always seemed to be a way of painting. With sculpture, you seemed to be working directly, with materials and with the physical world, inventing your own organisations.*

Barry Flanagan in discussion with Gene Baro, 1969

## Mantra of the Awoken Powers

*Mantra of the Awoken Powers* features sound and images from a performance of Sex W Johnston's poem by Barry Flanagan and Hugh Cornwell in Whelan's Bar, Dublin on Saturday 2 May, 1998.

*in a copse of blackthorn he cut a stave  
then went beside my heart where I never went  
then saw the place I was in that I never saw  
then heard the songs I sang that I never heard  
then said the words I spoke that I never said  
and by a rocky shore he trapped a fish  
then came to the mind where I never came*

*then thought the thoughts I thought that I never thought  
then made the promises I made that I never made  
then broke the hearts I broke that I never broke  
then kissed the lips I kissed that I never kissed  
and in a bush of furze he caught a bird*

*then fell into the soul where I never fell  
then killed the hope I killed that I never killed  
then breathed the breath I breathed that I never breathed  
then weaned the child I weaned that I never weaned*

*then lost the self I lost that I never lost  
and in my hand I held a stave  
and in my mouth I held a fish  
and with my foot I held a bird  
and I was alive thought he was dead  
and I moved though he was still*

*and I remain though he remaineth not*

From *we love you*, sound works compiled by Martin Sexton and Paul Hitchman (@mbassadors, 1998).

**Claudia Losi**  
*Being There*  
18 September — 24 November 2019

### Tower Room, Second Floor

*Being There* is a project conceived and realised by Italian artist Claudia Losi in collaboration with Collettivo Amigdala. It comprises two parts, an exhibition and a performance, which are inextricably linked.

Exhibited for the first time in Ikon's Tower Room, *Poli Antarctici Constitutio* (2019) is an intricate silk embroidery featuring a depiction of the Antarctic as illustrated by Athanasius Kircher in his visionary writings *Mundus Subterraneus* (1664). The piece was fabricated over a period of two years by a group of twelve women, none of whom are professional embroiderers; mostly friends and acquaintances of Claudia Losi who attended her studio to dedicate a few hours of work as a break from their daily routine. This collective work carries the stories, conversation, secrets and laughter of the women in every stitch.

Thanks to Giuliana Znamerovska, Oxana Grinchuk, Inesa Martsinkevich, Sanja Temelkova, Camilla Riscassi and many other hands.

**Between Poetry and Sculpture**  
Tuesday 29 October, 6-7pm - £3  
Booking essential

Jo Melvin, Director of the Estate of Barry Flanagan, discusses the poetics of Flanagan's practice. She is joined by the artist Roger Moss who worked with Flanagan on sculptural processes, including dying rope and hardening canvas.

Please book online or call Ikon Shop on 0121 248 0711. Online booking closes at 4pm on Tuesday 29 October 2019

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Open Tuesday – Sunday  
and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am–5pm  
Free entry, donations welcome

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This exhibition guide was written in conjunction with curator Jo Melvin.

# IKON

## Exhibition Guide

**Barry Flanagan**  
18 September — 24 November 2019

*My work isn't centred in experience. The making of it is itself the experience.*

Barry Flanagan in discussion with Gene Baro, 1969

This is a major survey of work by Barry Flanagan (1941–2009), one of Britain's most inventive sculptors. It includes key pieces drawn from the Flanagan Estate, Tate, Arts Council Collection and Southampton City Gallery. Curated by Jo Melvin, it brings together a selection of Flanagan's iconic bronze sculptures alongside earlier works, offering new insights into the interconnectedness of seemingly distinct aspects of his practice.

### First Floor Galleries

For Flanagan, sculpture was as much performance, sound, light as it was metal, stone and wood. The exposure of process and method is something he consistently presented throughout his career. In the 1960s, he started pouring dry sand directly onto the gallery floor. This action is documented in *Sand Girl* (1970), but with sand falling onto a naked body. When the woman rises, the camera tracks the resulting imprint, suggesting the moment of removal of a cast object from its mould. We can see how this process translates into the bronze figure of the hare in the 1980s, which stands as a monument to time and duration. An unpredictable and playful protagonist, *Juggler* (1994) conjures concepts of art history, poetry, mythology and spirituality, recurring throughout this exhibition.

Repetition, serialism and colour were preoccupations of Flanagan's early sculptural practice that, associated with Minimalism, often used soft materials. For *heap '67* (1967), he used a sewing machine to create hessian bags, filling them with sand, tying the ends and creating a pile on the floor. There is something bodily about the forms that, like limbs, have their own character. This anthropomorphism extends to *Baby Elephant* (1984), which performs a balancing act with a balletic hare on a circus drum. Together these works reveal Flanagan's ironic sense of humour, whereby light materials (of cloth and sand) fall heavily, whilst weightier subjects (cast in bronze) appear to defy gravity.

In *A Hole in the Sea* (1969) Flanagan attempts to conduct the forces of nature. Shot from an aerial view, the waves wash around a circular hole, with the artist entering the frame and revealing the visual trickery, of a plexiglass cylinder, at the end. Flanagan subsequently photographed the video during its broadcast, on a black and white TV, producing a series of prints that stress the sculptural potential of water. In *Grass 1 – 3* (1967), Flanagan captures impressions on the ground, incidentally flattened by picnickers on Hampstead Heath, underscoring the relationship between landscape and art.



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