

In 2002, whilst disillusioned trying to resolve a pre-conceived idea, Edgar adapted Thornhill's method in early carvings, turning the work when things started to emerge and working afresh. Hampered by the reductive way of working, the danger of ending up with nothing positively invigorated the process - carvings *did* somehow resolve and finish themselves and the sculptor was spurred on by the intrigue of just what was emerging. Coincidentally, Thornhill also has West Sussex links, having been brought up in Fittleworth and spending a period in the Seventies at Duncton.



Portrait of Alan Thornhill (2004)

I was influenced by the teachings of Alan Thornhill at the Frink School. His way of working helped me to discover the only approach that I didn't find mundane: abandoning the use of the maquette, trusting in visual response, avoiding notions of normality and celebrating the unforeseen which springs, it seems, from somewhere inside oneself. This results in many of my carvings being turned on their heads as things start to emerge, disregarding the apparent initial images and working on in other directions.

At some point the emergence of more powerful forms demands that the work ceases, hopefully with the ambiguity of several layers of imagery locked into the piece. This process, daring and risky as it is, continues to excite me as the sense of wonder (and puzzlement) continues. My sculpture in wood and stone is non-conceptual, of a human scale and should stand without the need for interpretation. In contrast, work from life in clay (including eminent sitters in several public collections) contributes a memory of forms which emerge, with landscape and other organic references, in these carvings.

With regard to portraiture, approaches are sometimes made to individuals of whose work the artist is appreciative of. Those agreeing to sit might spare a day or even less, resulting in a clay portrait sketch where correctness may play a lesser role than liveliness. Removing the obligation to purchase creates a favourable energy; the sculptor has to please no one and fights rigorously against the idiosyncrasies of his own observation, in pursuit of sensitivity and warmth. Others, with more objectivity than artist or sitter, can decide whether the works will endure.

Locally relevant works include the triptych *Sussex Siblings* - all three sitters in their nineties. Busts of *Wilfred Cass* (Cass Sculpture Foundation at Goodwood) and *Duncan Carse*, Antarctic explorer and voice of 'Dick Barton' are also present; Fittleworth was Carse's home for 40 years.

Two works in Sussex Marble (Winklestone, or Petworth Marble) are from a newly discovered source; quarrying previously ended a hundred years ago. *Rustington Bust* and the little *chalk heads* were carved from materials from that parish; *Ceres* from oak with an agricultural link, originating in Billingshurst. *Sussex Sleepers* seems to have been inspired by the mystic landscape of the Downs. These local links and the names of sculptures offer a helping hand in for the viewer, but the sculptor asks that firstly you spend quiet time with the works rather than reading or talking about them.

People rarely appreciate sculpture with the same sensitivity with which they respond to music and other forms of art. It takes time to reveal itself; you need to expend physical energy - moving - to take it all in. Disregard artist statements and intellectual pomposity in favour of spending time walking slowly around sculpture letting your eyes and fingers decide whether you connect with the work - or not. It really is as simple as that.

Most works are for sale. Plinths are also available. Please enquire in the shop or via email.

Further information:

Responses: Carvings and Claywork - Jon Edgar Sculpture 2003-2008
Hesworth Press (foreword Sir Roy Strong)

Web archive of works: www.jonedgar.co.uk

Biographical information on Jon Edgar, Alan Thornhill and the Frink School can be found on www.wikipedia.org

Spirit in Mass - A Sculptor's Journey: Alan Thornhill; 90 minute documentary (2008) available from www.alanthornhill.co.uk

Sculpture courses by Jon Edgar run at The Edward James Foundation's West Dean College www.westdean.org.uk

Forthcoming exhibitions:

4-12 September 2010 - group show
JOZESHOW, Accolds Farm, W.Sussex www.thejozeshow.com

19 July-31 October 2010 - solo show
The Wilderness, Chawton House Gardens, Hampshire
weekdays 10-4pm; also these Sunday afternoons 25/7, 22/8, 19/9
£3/£1.50 www.chawton.org

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Worthing
Museum and Art Gallery



Sussex Sleepers (2008)

JON EDGAR



Photographer: Anne Purkiss 2009

Jon Edgar was born in Rustington in 1968 and grew up in Billingshurst. After reading Biology at Exeter, and Landscape Ecology and Design at London University's Wye College, he ran a Countryside Management Project and put together bids for public lottery-funded projects.

Living in Northamptonshire, he found that opportunities for personal creativity were decreasing. A conversation with Rosemary Barnett, founder of the Frink School of Figurative Sculpture, led to him spending several years at this small school in the Potteries before moving to premises in Herefordshire where he established himself as a sculptor. After returning to live in West Sussex with his young family in 2007, he was looking for a location for a local show. Worthing's Frink *Desert Quartet*, the Museum's quality public collection and the proximity to his birthplace all strengthened his wish to exhibit here.

Meeting Alan Thornhill in 2001, then a trustee and visiting teacher at The Frink School, was a revelation. He challenged the conventional sculptural path of conceiving small models, or maquettes, which are then enlarged in a chosen material. Thornhill found this approach deadening to creativity, devising his own methods of working with clay so that he could respond to anything that came to him, turning and moving the piece as it developed.