

Objects in Focus

20th century art

Barbara Hepworth

Inspiration

Yorkshire landscape ~ shapes

Born in Wakefield, Yorkshire, in 1903 Barbara Hepworth would sometimes accompany her father, a County Surveyor on his inspections around the county. Barbara recalled '*it was an early and very high car enabling us to see over the hedges. Moving through and over the landscape with my father in his car, the hills were sculpture's and the roads defined the forms*'.



Yorkshire dales

Egypt and Greece ~ carving

An inspiring teacher opened-up the world of ancient Egyptian and Greek stone-work, later, after securing a place a finalist in the prestigious, Prix de Rome scholarship, she was able to travel to Italy and see these works in the flesh – thus began her lifelong love of stone carving and marble began.



Egyptian Limestone statue of a man with bowl, Fitzwilliam Museum

Ben Nicholson ~ pebbles

Barbara met her second husband Ben Nicholson whilst staying on the Norfolk coast at Happisburgh. They spent their time on the beach collecting large pebbles which they carved, exchanging ideas. In a letter to Ben, she wrote '*your dear head is like the most-lovely pebble ever seen and your thoughts clear as the pebbles just left by the sea*'. They had triplets together and moved to St. Ives in Cornwall at the outbreak of war in 1939.



Barbara Hepworth, St Ives

Artworks at the Fitzwilliam

Drawings

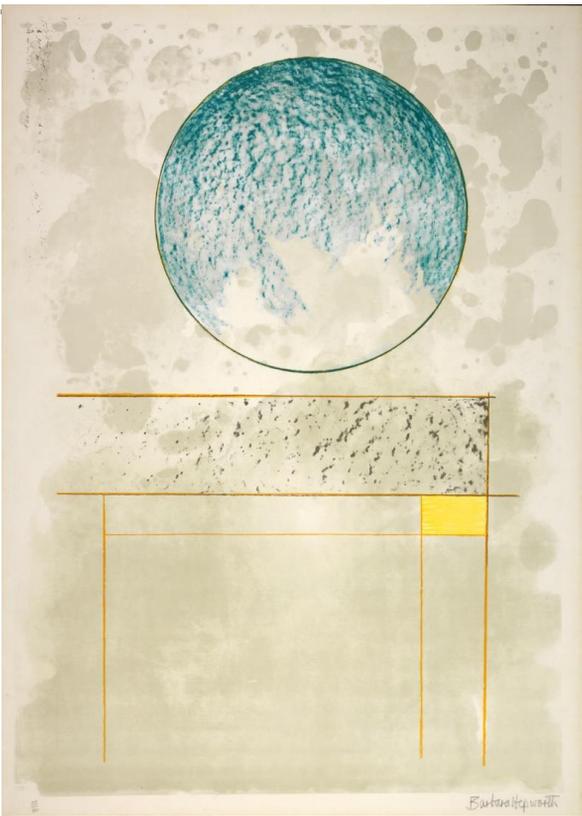
Hepworth became close friends with the surgeon Norman Capener during her daughters stay in hospital. He invited her to view surgical procedures; **she produced nearly 80 drawings of operating rooms in gesso, chalk, ink, and pencil.**



Hepworth was struck '*by the beauty of purpose and coordination between the people in the operating theatre all dedicated to the saving of life*'.

Prints ~ The Aegean Suit

Two examples from the set of nine lithographs that reflect and capture ideas, experiences and sensations Hepworth had during a trip to Greece in 1954.



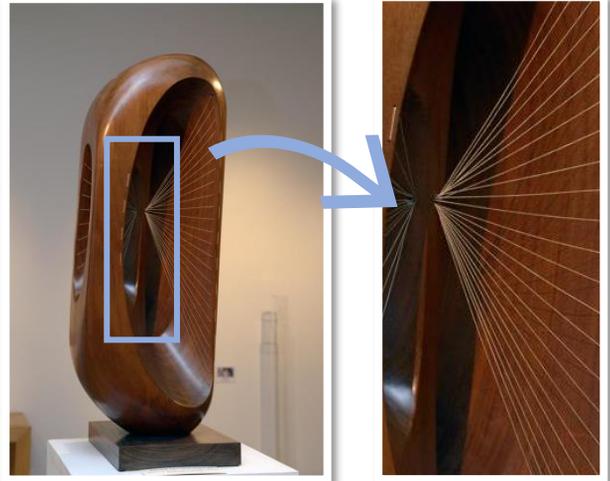
Sculpture

Hepworth's sculptures were created in a range of different materials reflecting her passion to explore and express key themes that resonate throughout her career.

Fugue, 1956, height 78cm carved from Mahogany, highly polished, Fitzwilliam Museum.

A pierced oval form with strings.

'the closed form, oval, spherical or pierced which translates the embrace of living things either in nature or the human spirit'



The Family of Man, 1970, height 276cm x width 109cm, made with bronze. These large pieces stand majestically on the edge of a vast reed bed by the river Alde at Snape in Suffolk.

'the standing form is the translation of my feelings towards the human in a landscape'



Minoan Head, 1972, height 71cm Fitzwilliam Museum. Carved from a single block of white marble. Barbara would have had to release this form from a rough block of marble, with hammer and chisels, piercing through the stone to create an aperture, it has been carefully polished to create a very smooth surface which invites us to touch it.



St Ives, Cornwall

Hepworth lived in St. Ives, from 1939 until her death in 1975 and like her childhood county of Yorkshire, the rugged rocky landscape of Cornwall, shaped by the ever-changing sea would inspire her sculpture, as would the ancient standing stones found in the landscape.

She said of her St Ives home

'Finding Trewyn Studio was sort of magic. Here was a studio, a yard, and garden where I could work in open air and space'

Her studio is now a part of the Tate Gallery, St Ives.



Behind the scenes at The Museum

Meet Alison Ayres, Learning Assistant

Barbara Hepworth is one of my favourite artists, I discovered her in my art classes at school and having done stone carving and been a building conservator, I really appreciate the physical effort and incredible skill she brings to each piece.



Hepworth has left a great legacy of art; along with the other members of the Learning team at the Fitz, this is something I never cease to enjoy sharing and indeed celebrating with groups across all of our programmes.