



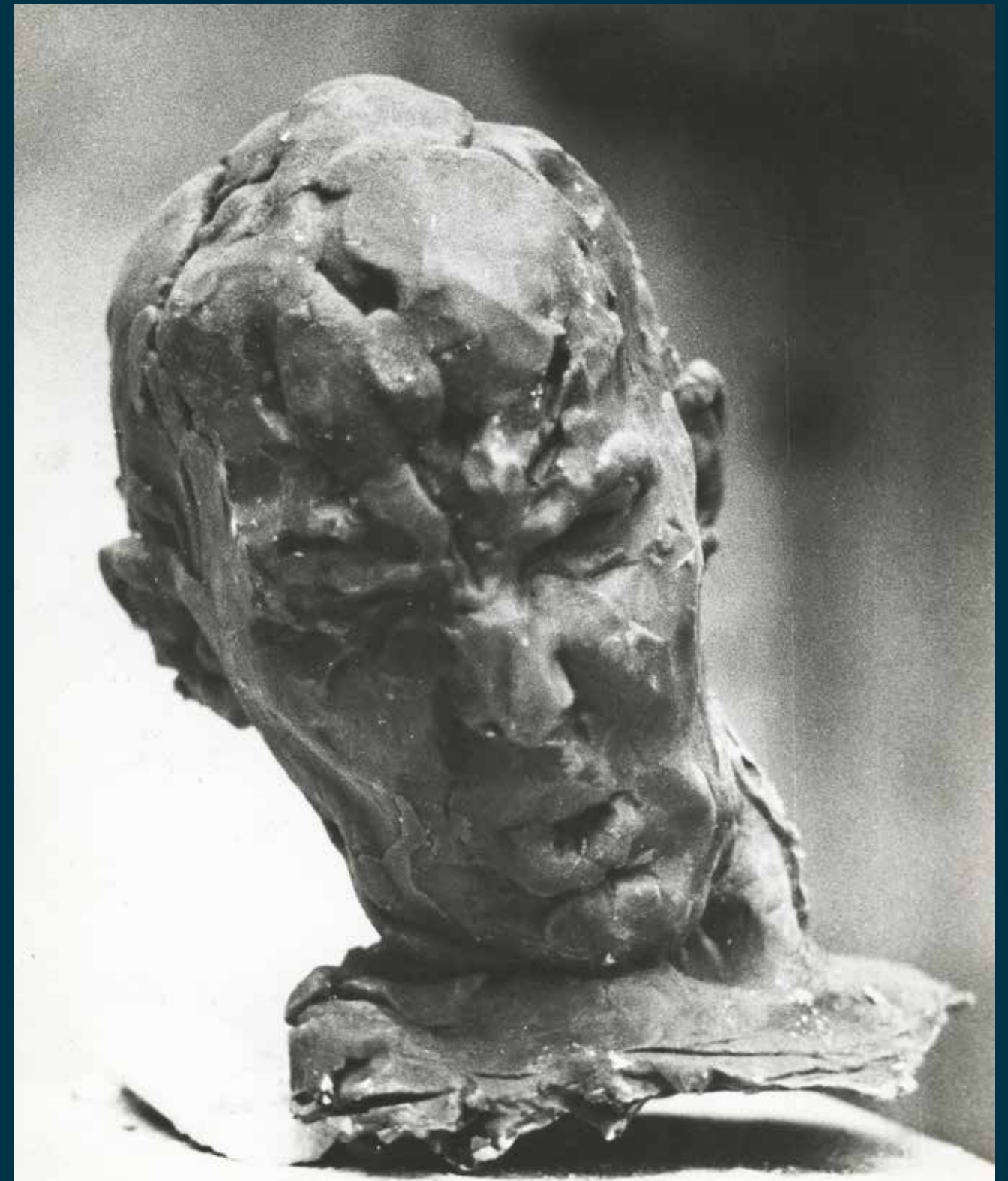
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# BRIAN TAYLOR

1936 - 2013

SCULPTOR : TEACHER



## MESSUMS WILTSHIRE





# BRIAN TAYLOR

SCULPTOR : TEACHER

SATURDAY 27 OCTOBER - SUNDAY 2 DECEMBER 2018

I'M INTERESTED IN THE STUDY OF PEOPLE;  
THEIR PSYCHOLOGY, CHARACTER AND WAY OF LIFE

BRIAN TAYLOR

PREVIEW : FRIDAY 26 OCTOBER

TALK - THE LIFE OF BRIAN BY RICHARD CORK : SATURDAY 17 NOVEMBER 11AM

MESSUMS WILTSHIRE



## BRIAN TAYLOR: A HEARTFELT VISION

The powerful inspiration provided by Italy played a crucial part in Brian Taylor's life as an artist. After he studied at the Slade School of Art in the mid-1950s, his prowess as a sculptor of the human figure was so impressive that he gained a coveted three-year scholarship to Rome. The artworks Taylor encountered there stimulated him enormously, ranging from classical sculpture right through to early twentieth-century modernism. He became obsessed by the challenge of carving a life-size male figure, concentrating above all on its essential vitality. And the Director of the Courtauld Institute, Anthony Blunt, responded to Taylor's ambition by providing him with a substantial block of travertine marble. So he was able to create a freely handled sculpture of a man pulling his shirt off, and in 1960 Taylor's precocious dexterity earned him a solo exhibition in Rome.

For several years he lingered there, learning even more by working as a studio assistant for the immensely successful Italian sculptor Emilio Greco. But London's rapidly increasing vivacity during the Swinging Sixties persuaded Taylor to return there, and he began his distinguished teaching career at Camberwell School of Art in 1965. Although sculpture was always his primary focus, he emphasised the fundamental role played by drawing as well. Close, first-hand scrutiny of human faces and bodies remained immensely important to him, and yet Taylor was also fascinated by a far more traumatised vision of life. As a teenager he had, tragically, suffered a severe mental breakdown which led him to attempt suicide. Both drawing and painting helped him to recover in hospital, and even during the late 1960s he still found stimulus in scrutinising people as unstable as Lily Pier, a former Camberwell student who gave vent to her anguish by screaming and weeping. *The Dance of Lily Pier*, an arresting bronze which vividly conveys her spiritual torment, shows just how deeply Taylor comprehended mental distress.

Italy, however, called him back in 1971, and he could not resist an impulse to visit the Serra di Burano. This alluring rural area, not far from Umbria, enabled him to study horses - in particular an unusually large



**Gabriel**  
The Artist's Son  
2012  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
41 x 20.5 x 23cm





In 1958, his life-size clay nude Boy from Antigua won Brian Taylor a three-year scholarship to Rome.



**Boy from Antigua, Portrait** 1958

*Winner of Rome  
Scholarship  
Portrait  
Edition of 10  
Ciment fondu*



**The Executioner**  
1980  
Edition of 5  
Bronze  
152 x 86 x 46cm



and well-built animal strong enough to run even when pulling a very hefty cart. Although this pugnacious creature threatened to bite Taylor, he insisted on studying the mighty horse at close quarters. He cunningly distracted the animal by flinging wet clay onto its nose. And while the horse licked off this muddy substance, Taylor took detailed measurements of its head and body without suffering any assault at all.

As a result of these adroit manoeuvres, he was ready in 1972 to create the major bronze sculpture *Burano Horse*. Its title paid tribute to the countryside he relished in the seductive valley of Santa Maria di Burano, as well as the animal he had discovered there. Enchanted by his explorations of this terrain, while staying near the church of San Sepulchro with peasant farmers, Taylor made sure he returned to this compelling district time and again over a twenty-year period. During these visits he worked on a monumental sculpture paying homage, above all, to Piero della Francesca, who in the fifteenth-century painted two interlinked images called *The Triumph of Battista Sforza* and *The Triumph of Federico da Montefeltro*. In both these celebratory works, elaborate chariots are depicted as they proceed along a route high in a panoramic, luminous landscape. Although Taylor never completed the entire sculpture, he intended it to contain life-size images of figures as well as animals. But several of these bronzes were finished, including oxen, cows and even a bull. With characteristic intensity and dedication, he based them on his own careful scrutiny of Italian animals found in a barn.

Even so, the disturbed area of his mind never went away. Back in the 1950s, as a teenager struggling to recover from his breakdown, he had become obsessed by Dostoyevsky's alarming fiction as well as the end-of-the-world terror generated by *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. And now, in the latter part of his life, he conceived an uncompromising multi-part sculpture entitled *The Death Cart*. Taylor never lost his profound awareness of mortality, and succeeded here in creating several figures who testify to a heartfelt preoccupation with the fundamental vulnerability of our existence on this mysterious planet.

Richard Cork





**Relief Four Horses  
of the Apocalypse**  
Edition of 10  
Bronze resin  
230 x 145cm





**Death Cart, Figure 2,  
Arms Outstretched**  
1994  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
40 x 30 x 12cm



**Death Cart, Figure with  
Raised Arms (small)**  
1994  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
79 x 48 x 48cm

## PORTRAITS : FAMILY AND FRIENDS



**Michele, artists wife - after Nefertiti** 1979  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
25 x 32.5 x 20cm



**Michele, artists wife  
aged 19**  
1977  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
35 x 28 x 18cm



**Dashiell aged 3**

1995

Edition of 10

Bronze

38 x 25 x 33cm



**Dashiell aged 10**

2002

Edition of 10

Bronze

38 x 18 x 23cm







**Belle**  
**artists daughter**  
**aged 14**  
2004  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
35 x 25 x 20cm



**Belle**  
**artist's daughter**  
**aged 9**  
1998  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
122.5 x 28 x 58cm





**Belle, artist's daughter aged 21**  
2010  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
122.5 x 28 x 58cm

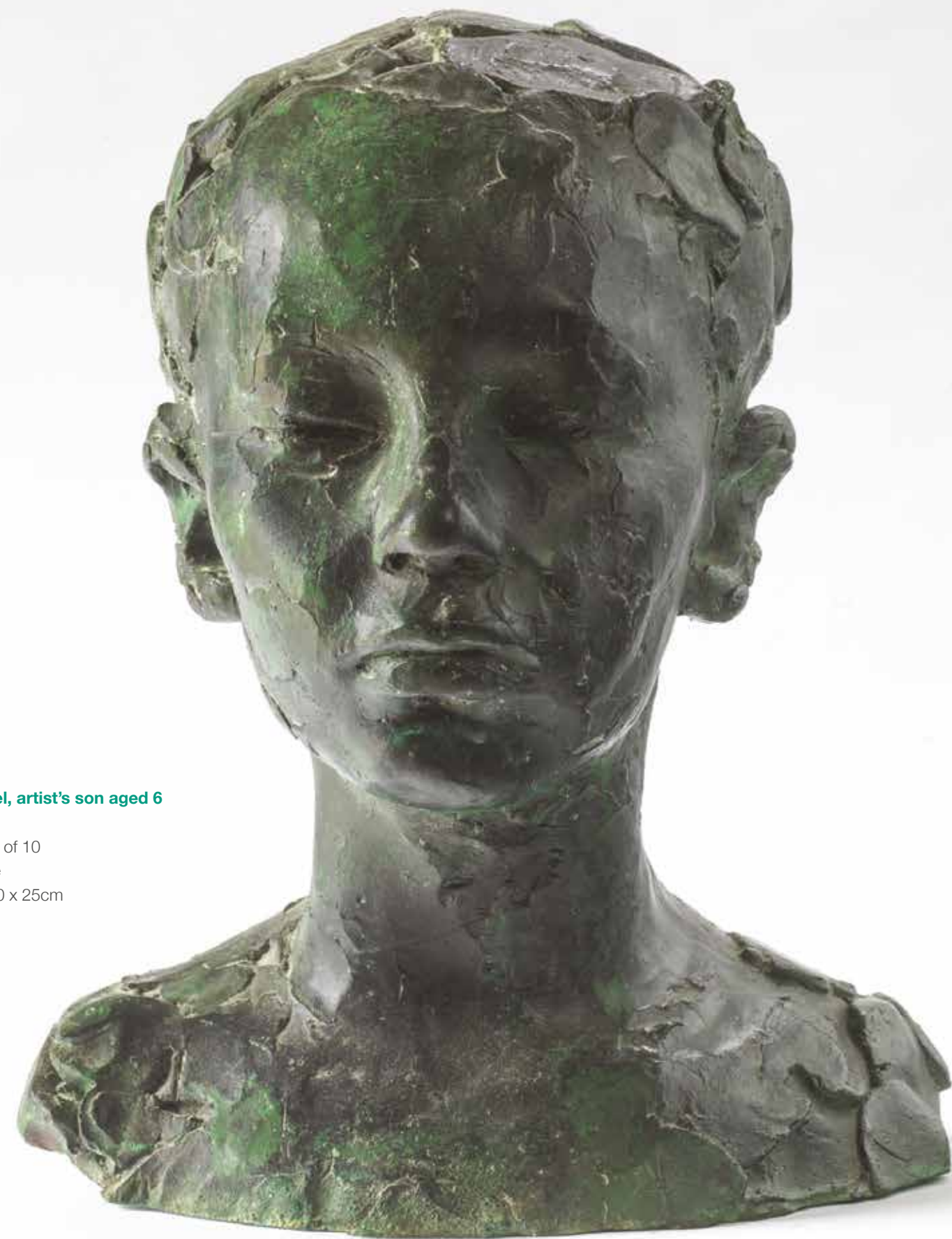


**Torso of Belle with Skull**  
2013  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
81 x 71 x 38cm









**Gabriel, artist's son aged 6**

c.2001

Edition of 10

Bronze

33 x 20 x 25cm



**Lolly Batty 1979**

Edition of 10

Bronze

46 x 31 x 31cm



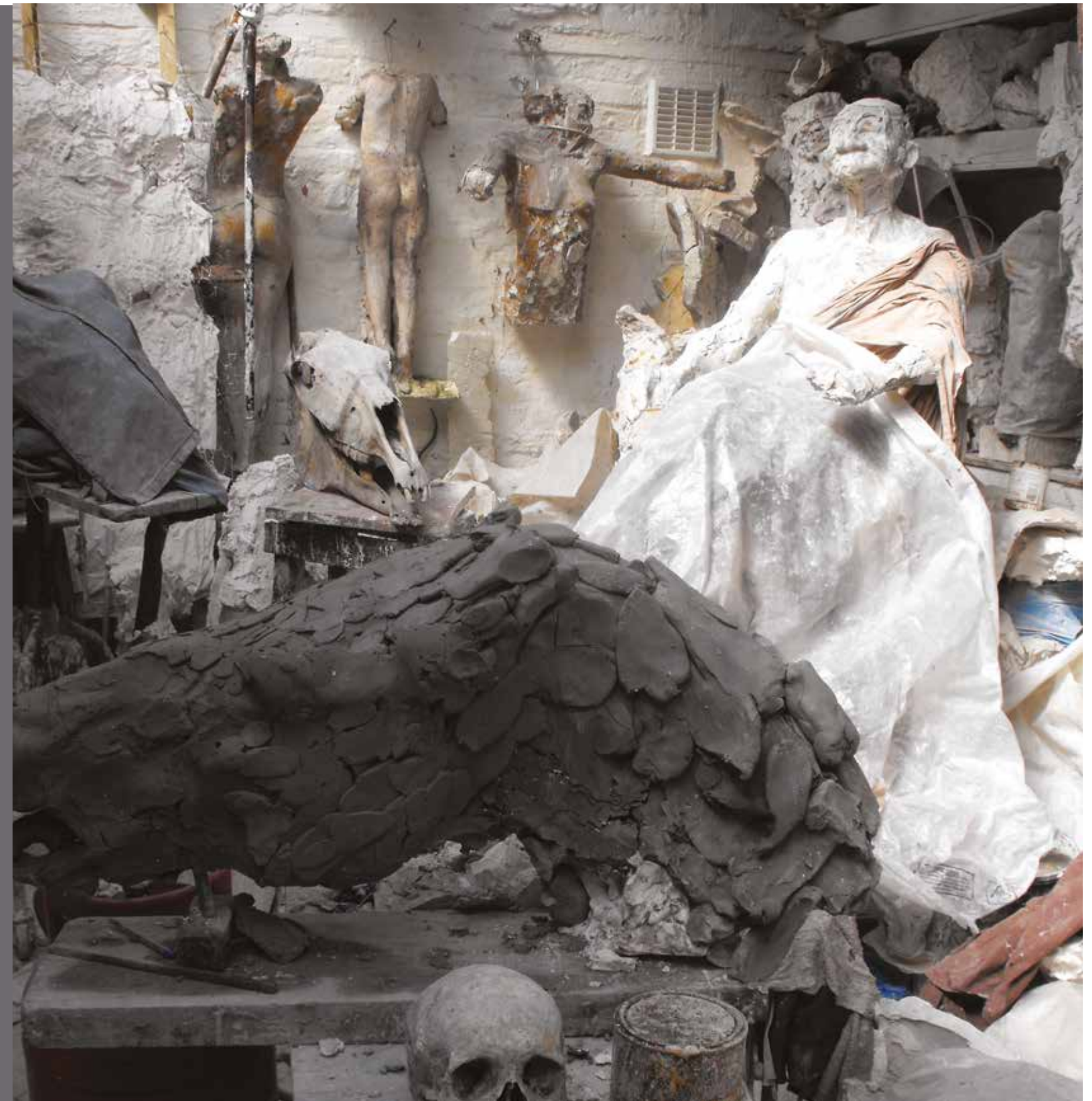






## ANGUISHED HEADS

For a while, his own work explored themes of mental instability, based either on characters from Alice in Wonderland or his first-hand study of distressed homeless people. Taylor's bronze *The Dance of Lily Pier* – a former student at Camberwell who would be 'crying and screaming most of the time' – is among his most powerful and disturbing works.







**Anguished Heads 3**  
1968-71  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
25 x 17.5 x 17.5cm



**Anguished Heads 5**  
1968-71  
Edition 2/10  
Bronze  
25 x 17.5 x 17.5cm



**Anguished Heads 6**  
1968-71  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
25 x 17.5 x 17.5cm



**Anguished Heads 7**  
1968-71  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
25 x 17.5 x 17.5cm





**Lily Piper Dancing**  
c.1968/71  
Bronze  
Edition 1 of 10  
127 x 122 x 41cm



**Debbie, Standing Figure**  
c.1980  
Bronze  
Edition 1 of 10  
171 x 153 x 81cm





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**Figure Falling Backwards,**  
1979  
Bronze,  
Edition 1 of 10  
92 x 117 x 140cm



# ANIMALS



**Siamese Cat**  
c. 1970  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
26 x 15 x 13cm







**Calf Head II**

c.1973  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
26 x 37 x 28cm



**Burano Bull, Turning (small)**

1998  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
41 x 31 x 17cm



**Burano Bull, Head Up (small)**

1998  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
26 x 36 x 18cm





**Cow's Head**

c.1972

Edition of 10

Bronze

51 x 64 x 69cm



**Calf Head**

1975

Edition of 10

Bronze

25 x 34 x 27cm





**Belle's Horse (small)**  
2001  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
58 x 155 x 18cm



**Donkey c.1985**  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
63.6 x 23 x 35.5cm

**Horse Head c.1970**  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
30 x 56 x 23cm



**Burano Horse (small)**  
1972  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
56 x 58 x 18cm





**Lilie Curl (small)**  
2009  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
20.5 x 35.5 x 28cm

**Lilie, Legs Open, Head Down (small)**  
2009  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
20 x 81 x 40.5cm



**Lilie Lurcher, Open Legs, Head Up (small)**  
2008  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
20 x 81 x 40.5cm





**Lilie Lurcher Rolling**  
2012  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
64 x 100 x 26cm



**Lilie Lurcher Resting (small)**  
2008  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
119 x 15 x 63cm



**Reg Bull Terrier**  
2003  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
69 x 118 x 41cm



**Greyhound Billie**  
1960  
Edition of 10  
Ciment fondue with alabaster eyes  
20 x 30 x 15cm



**Lilie Lurcher Portrait**  
2003  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
25.5 x 24 x 32cm





**Procession of Oxen with  
Curly Tails**

1995  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
30 x 70 x 12cm





**Tree of Life**  
c.2004  
Edition of 10  
Bronze  
28 x 18 x 8cm

**Burano Bull (life size)**  
1978  
Edition of 5  
Bronze resin  
180 x 135 x 225cm  
Signed on testicles









ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DUMMY COPY. The concept for this exhibition started before the barn opened and has been in lengthy gestation until this point, not least of which owing to the breath of art that was required to fulfil the concept

We are therefore very grateful to the following galleries who have been kind enough to loan works to this show.

As ever, it is also with due recognition to our team here who do a wonderful job in collating, researching and installing the works: Catherine Milner, Laura Grace Simpkins, Stephanie Rennie, Hannah Davies, Molly Grant, Cigdem Baker and Melissa Stourton. Thank you.

PARTICIPATING GALLERIES

- DUMMY COPY
- Bowman Sculpture
- Ben Brown Fine Arts
- Daniel Katz Gallery
- Marlborough Fine Art
- Pace Gallery
- Pangolin London
- Tomasso Brothers Fine Art
- Rupert Wace Ancient Art

We are grateful to the following for their recollections of Brian

Richard Rogers - Peer at the Slade

‘Brian was, by far, the most talented man at the Slade’.

Michele Franklin - Brian’s Wife

‘Brian sculpted everyone he knew’.

‘He didn’t talk much, he made things and drew instead’.

‘In the 80s when Thatcher started cutting funding, Brian took an early retirement so he had more time to work. The establishment had become more about politics than learning’.

Emily Hoffnung - Student

‘Brian was a giant of that time’.

‘He was a very good tutor. In the life room he would set up armatures so big the students had to step around them. He was stubborn, though it was a brilliant way of working and learning’.

‘Brian was an incredible draughtsman; his drawing and sculpture were intrinsically connected’.

Ellen Christensen - Student

‘In 1986 I was one of the students invited to his house in Italy. I began to draw the surrounding landscape but found myself overwhelmed. Brian’s drawings were amazing – especially impressive when one knows how difficult it is. The mountain range was huge, and the light was beautiful’.

‘The best advice I had from Brian was ‘there is always more you can see’.

Laurence Edwards - Student

It wasn’t Brian’s incredible technical ability or natural talent that got me in the end. He was ‘nature’, I’d never met someone so in tune with work, it was his only form of expression, everything boiled down to the making not the showing the casting or the talking, that and empathy are what he leaves me striving for.

Chris Stannard - Student

‘Brian was a generous teacher, and his teaching at Camberwell was perhaps the last bastion of making sculpture from life in the mainstream London art schools’.

‘Brain was a master draughtsman, a very rare thing in these days. His sculpture remained unapologetically figurative, sculpted from life and hence unfashionable’.

Gabriel Franklin-Taylor - Brian’s Son

‘My father was a rather strange person, often preoccupied and very much in a world of his own’.

‘Modelling was fun, we used to watch films on an ancient TV set whilst he poked us in the face with a stick, and took measurements using a medieval selection of instruments’.

‘Most people wouldn’t have modelled for their parents and it might seem like quite an unusual or boring task for a child to undertake, but it was all quite normal to us and almost expected, considering the art we grew up around, and the art that grew up around us’.

‘As a child, I was quite frightened by some of his figures and even had nightmares about hem; the contorted bodies and anguished faces all looked so real, they were quite uncanny’.

Jerry Nelson - Student

‘There were several words of advice as you can imagine, spending time with someone whose passions and obsession ranged from the fishing trips, to cycling miles across London to find a particular pond in Epsom where we would catch a very special beetle for his collection, or again cycling to Epping forest to gather fungi in the autumn (Brian was a brilliant cook), but the one thing that I think has proved a constant is that whatever you attempt you should give it your total concentration’.

Maxine Relton - Student

‘Brian gave me a deep and lasting understanding of classical sculpture’.

‘My first impression of him as a gruff, unapproachable man who didn’t suffer fools gladly slowly changed as I began to perceive behind this intimidating front a remarkable patience, compassion and above all, a passion for sculpture that mirrored my own obsession at that time’.

‘On one occasion, Lily abruptly abandoned her pose, ran out and threw herself at the glass door of the main entrance, cutting herself on the smashed glass and having to be rushed to hospital. Such scenes – shocking to us students – were powerful subjects for Brian who captured the intensity of the moment in a number of arresting sculptures’.

‘Drawing was the basis of all we did and remains at the heart of my work to the present day’.