



"The open world...has no such boundaries, only comings and goings. Such productive movements may generate formations...but not objects."
Tim Ingold: 'Bindings against Boundaries' in 'Environment & Planning' vol. 40, pp. 1796-1810, 2008

"...a convergence of lines of interest rather than a bounded field of study."
Tim Ingold: 'Resisting Culture, Embracing Life', 2010

"Rather than reading creativity 'backwards', from a finished object to an initial intention in the mind of an agent, this entails reading it forwards, in an ongoing generative movement that is at once itinerant, improvisatory and rhythmic."
Tim Ingold: 'The Textility of Making', 2010

Sint Monumento Artes Quas Proutulit: Relocate the 'Imperial Memorial to Queen Victoria' (Buckingham Palace) to Worcester for 2013

Notes & Propositions [DP 04.10.2011]

1. W. H. Kerr & Co

Established from the ashes (literally) of Chamberlain & Co following the 1851 Great Exhibition by W. H. Kerr and Richard Binns, both Dublin born. Dublin born sculptor William Boyton Kirk heads up the modelling department.

2. 1st Earl of Dudley

1850s transformation of Witley Court, architect Samuel Daukes and landscape designer/artist & engineer William Andrews Nesfield ('Perseus & Andromeda' fountain). Thomas Brock's father, William, a 'master painter and decorator' working at Witley Court in 1866 when Thomas Brock completes his 7 year apprenticeship in the modelling department at W. H. Kerr & Co. 1st Earl of Dudley, Chairman of Government School of Design in Worcester, provides Thomas Brock with a letter of introduction to sculptor John Henry Foley.

3. John Henry Foley + 'Foley Sound'

Dublin born but London-based J. H. Foley, 'second generation' of Irish sculptors which included Joseph Kirk, brother of William Boyton Kirk who worked at W. H. Kerr & Co in Worcester from 1852. "Let us do justice to Ireland in acknowledging that this art of sculpture, if not that of painting, has been proved to be one for which Irishmen have a decided native genius" [Illustrated London News]. Thomas Brock completes J. H. Foley's last commissions, including the O'Connell Monument in Dublin (1880), and the statue of the Prince Consort for the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens, London (1874).

'Foley' is the reproduction of everyday sounds for use in filmmaking, named after Jack Foley (Universal Studios, 1927).

4. Sculptor's Ghost

"A person employed by incompetent artists secretly to do their work and make it artistic", Charles Lawes, 1881. 1881 libel suit brought by sculptor Richard Belt against sculptor Charles Lawes following accusations that Belt's sculptures were the work of other artists (including Thomas Brock).

5. Frederic, Lord Leighton's 'An Athlete Wrestling with a Python', 1877 (coll. Tate Gallery)

One of only two life-sized sculptures made by the painter Frederic, Lord Leighton. The modelling of both works was carried out by Thomas Brock. Leighton was careful to later stress that 'the artistic individuality of the work (was) wholly mine'. 'An Athlete Wrestling with a Python' identified by Edmund Gosse (Art Journal 1874) as the start point for 'New Sculpture': "Of all the artistic movements of our time in England, the most sharply defined and the most uniformly satisfactory is that which is identified with the reform of our national sculpture."

6. 'New Sculpture'

"Since the year 1875 or thereabouts a radical change has come over British Sculpture — a change so revolutionary that it has given a new direction to the aims and ambitions of that artist and raised the British school to a height un hoped for, or at least wholly unexpected, thirty years ago." [Marion Spielmann: 'British Sculpture and Sculptors of To-day', 1901]

7. Origins of 'New Sculpture'

- improvements in lost-wax bronze casting processes.
- the impact of Aimé-Jules Dalou, pupil of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, at the National Art Training School (now RCA).

...perhaps Irish figure sculpture following the 1853 Great Industrial Exhibition in Dublin, which showed J. H. Foley's 'Innocence' and W. H. Kerr & Co's Parian porcelain bust of the Exhibition's organiser William Dargan. [Note: the bust of William Dargan was an opportunity to test the performance of Irish ceramic clays, and the success of this sculpture led to Dargan and Kerr (and others) later establishing the Belleek Pottery at County Fermanagh]. W. H. Kerr & Co also showed at Dublin the complete dessert service based on Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, with figures modelled by William Boyton Kirk. Kirk was later to work for the Belleek Pottery, which produced his 'Figure of Erin' initially modelled at W. H. Kerr & Co in Worcester. "Erin unveiling her first Ceramic production. The base of the figure represents the Flagstones of the Falls on which the Pottery is built and from which the town and the products of the Pottery derive their name...representing Ireland... unveiling a vase representing Belleek Pottery. She stands on an island that represents Rose Island where the Pottery was built on. Thus she introduces Belleek Pottery to the World and proclaims its merit and excellence." [BBC: 'A History of the World in 100 Objects']

...perhaps the porcelain modelling skills learned by Thomas Brock during his apprenticeship at W. H. Kerr transferred to 'salon' and monumental sculpture via Brock's involvement in Leighton's 'Athlete' and the later work of J. H. Foley. Certainly, Edmund Gosse's description of 'New Sculpture' as "a wholly different way...a subtler handling of the material, a more variegated treatment of mass in general and in detail, to give a livelier effect of reflected light and texture" links to the same author's assessment of Brock's 'Hercules Strangling Antaeus', "...the vigorous vital qualities of French work...in the fine treatment of surface and detail, it is already masterly, and remarkably free from the fatal Foley smoothness" [E. H. Gosse, 'Living English Sculptors' in Century Magazine, Vol 26, 1883]. This work by Brock (which won the RA Gold Medal in 1869 – two years before Aimé-Jules Dalou came to London) established his working relationship with Leighton, and led to Leighton asking to make 'Athlete wrestling with a Python' in Brock's studio.

8. The end of 'New Sculpture'

Benedict Read ['Victorian Sculpture', 1982] describes Brock's 'Imperial Memorial to Queen Victoria' (1901 - 1924) as, "...one of the supreme achievements of the New Sculpture, redolent throughout with features and reminiscences essential to its whole nature..." The Imperial Memorial remains the largest commemorative monument in the British Isles, and is an "unabashed celebration of imperial magnificence" [English Heritage]. Over the course of the Memorial's construction, 'New Sculpture' was overtaken by the Modernism of Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska.

9. Sint Monumento Artes Quas Proutulit

Thomas Brock's tomb (Mayfield churchyard, Sussex) bears the Latin inscription 'Sint Monumento Artes Quas Proutulit', meaning 'Let the works of art he produced be his memorial'.

10. Propositions under the general title 'Let the works of art he produced be his memorial'

[...for discussion and expansion!]

- There are at least three works by Thomas Brock in Worcester: porcelain work in The Worcester Porcelain Museum; 'Monument to Henry Philpott Bishop of Worcester', 1892, at Worcester Cathedral; and the Grade II listed 'Statue of Queen Victoria' outside Worcester Crown Court on Foregate Street. Do these three works form a straight line?
- The 'Statue of Queen Victoria' at Worcester was recently cleaned. Is there an opportunity to use Percent for Art monies to fund a cleaning/restoration/documentation programme for all Worcester's sculptural monuments via a partnership between the City Council, the University (training course), and the City Art Gallery & Museum.
- Brock made 14 statues of Queen Victoria. Is it possible to bring the other 13 sculptures (as full-sized reproductions) into the same space as the Worcester statue? A gathering of queens?
- Brock designed the 'veiled' Queen Victoria head for use on all British and Empire coins from 1893. Is it possible to film one of these coins spinning, and project at large scale on a block of white Carrara marble or a slab of Parian 'statuary porcelain'?
- Just how much of Worcester city centre would be taken up by the 'Imperial Memorial to Queen Victoria' that currently sits in front of Buckingham Palace? How can we 'return' "one of the supreme achievements of the New Sculpture" to the birthplace of its maker?
- Can we project the Pathe silent movie of the 1911 unveiling of the 'Imperial Memorial' at full scale, and add a 'Foley' soundtrack of our devising?
- How can we express the importance of Irish nationalism to the success of Royal Worcester? Can we show William Boyton Kirk's 'Figure of Erin' in Worcester?
- Can we commission a street theatre performance of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' to recall the importance of William Boyton Kirk's dessert service?
- How can we link the 1st Earl of Dudley's 'Perseus & Andromeda' fountain to all of this? Should we parade it full-sized from the train station (which one?) to the City Museum & Art Gallery?
- In 2013, how can we celebrate the centenary of Thomas Brock becoming an Honorary Freeman of the City of Worcester? Can we find the exact location of Brock's birthplace in Blockhouse, and do something to raise the profile of that part of Worcester?
- How could we suggest that the Parian modelling work undertaken at W. H. Kerr & Co in Worcester between 1852 and 1860 (when William Boyton Kirk left) are the equivalent of 'public monuments', albeit on a small scale! See the work of Isaac Cordal at <http://www.isaac.alg-a.org/Cement-eclipses,116#IMG/jpg/casa1-2.jpg>
- How can we use the Worcester Royal Porcelain Company's new system of numbering their products introduced in 1862 following William Kerr's return to Ireland? The ornamental ware was split into ten different classes and the first two of these were for Statuary Parian. Class one being for busts and small figures and class two for larger figures. This typology reflects exactly the range of studio sculptures undertaken by Brock and other sculptors during the 19th century.
- How can we signify the importance of the Government School of Design (in Worcester by 1851) to all of the above, and in so doing indicate the importance of artist training to the future development of public art in the city-shaping programme outlined in the DLA master plan?
- Why does Worcester ignore the importance of W. H. Kerr & Co? Is it because Richard Binns was an unashamed self-publicist and, as such, all history starts with his taking the company forward as Royal Worcester post-1862.
- And then there are all the other great artists working at W. H. Kerr & Co between 1852 to 1862, what can we do with them? How can we suggest that Brock (and the other artists associated with W. H. Kerr & Co) are the "sculptor's ghosts" behind Worcester's international reputation?
- There's something about 'Sint Monumento Artes Quas Proutulit' that reminds me of the XIV International Sculpture Biennale of Carrara, 2010: "What happened to the monument? The theme of this year's international sculpture biennale of cararra is the 'monument', or rather the radical process of de-monumentalization which has freed sculpture from any celebratory, encomiastic function. The monument is an emblem of power, a tool for controlling the masses and making them conform, but it is also a catalyst of national values and an irreplaceable piece in the jigsaw of collective memory. It has become one of the main targets in revolts and revolutions, wholly swept away when the ideas of democracy and freedom of our time took hold. However, in today's changing scenario, in this atmosphere of fin-de-siècle and of the rewriting of history, alongside the predominant contemporary iconoclasm we can sense a gradual re-emergence of the codes and values of the past. will we again identify ourselves in new monuments?"
- If Carrara can run biennales to do with sculpture/marble, could Worcester run biennales to do with sculpture/Parian 'statuary porcelain'?
- ...and more.