

G E R A L D L A I N G
S C U L P T U R E



Willoughby Gerrish Ltd

Gerald Laing Sculpture

Willoughby Gerrish Ltd

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Willoughby Gerrish is an independent art dealer and consultant, specialising in artworks from the Impressionist, Modern and Post-War periods, with a specific focus on sculpture. He also deals in a select group of established contemporary artists.

With two decades of experience in the London art world, Willoughby Gerrish started his career at The Fine Art Society on Bond Street; rising to the position of Specialist. During this time he also ran The Crate Gallery in Notting Hill, exhibiting a program of emerging contemporary artists. In 2015 he joined Bowman Gallery as Director, where he was Head of Modern and Contemporary Sculpture. Willoughby formed his eponymous company in 2019, with a focus on museum-quality artists - backed up by a discreet, professional and knowledgeable approach.

Over his career, Willoughby has curated multiple important exhibitions, including presentations of Henry Moore and Auguste Rodin, and several other 20th century painters and sculptors. He has sold works to many leading museums including: St Louis Museum of Art, USA; The Walters, Baltimore, USA; Toledo Art Gallery, USA; and The Whitworth, Manchester, UK.

Willoughby Gerrish holds a regular stock of paintings, sculptures, drawings and editioned works available to view by appointment only at our Jermyn Street premises, located in the heart of London's art world. Willoughby Gerrish also has a selection of work available to view online.

In 2020, the company announced its representation for the estates of Gerald Laing (1936–2011), Michael Lyons (1943–2019) and Austin Wright (1911–1997) and will continue to offer a wide ranging program in promotion of each artist's careers. For over fifteen years Willoughby Gerrish has enjoyed a close relationship with the artist Emily Young arranging multiple public exhibitions and museum projects.

In summer of 2021 Willoughby Gerrish will open Thirsk Hall Sculpture Park in North Yorkshire, with an exhibition of monumental steel works by Michael Lyons.



GERALD LAING, 1964



I N T R O D U C T I O N

In the early 1960s Gerald Laing became known as an artist at the forefront of the Pop Art movement, and ever since his work has been included in every major survey of the period. However, in 1965 Laing's focus shifted dramatically towards sculpture, devoting the next forty years to the discipline. Laing's painting evolved into abstract sculptures using the techniques and materials of car customisation - lacquering, spray-painting, and chrome-plating on metal. A pivotal moment for Laing was his inclusion in Kynaston McShine's *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1966, where three of his sculptures were exhibited alongside the minimalist work of Anthony Caro, Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and Dan Flavin. Further success that decade included group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Though lauded as a principal member of the New York avant-garde, in 1969 Laing traded New York's art scene for the remote Scottish Highlands and relocated to Kinkell Castle. This move resulted in an unusual artistic shift from the abstract to the figurative. Leaving behind the sterile white cube spaces of New York's galleries, Laing increased the volume and weight of his sculptures to embrace the vast ruggedness of the local landscape. Inspired by an epiphanic early-morning encounter with Charles Sargeant Jagger's Royal Artillery Memorial during a visit to London in 1973; Laing, who already felt that he had exhausted the possibility of injecting his pre-existing abstract forms with natural and anthropomorphic elements, turned to working from life and recruited his wife as his model. The *Galina series* of figurative bronzes produced during this decade remain some of Laing's most iconic sculptures.

Laing's work has been internationally exhibited and is held in collections worldwide, including at The National Gallery and Tate in London, The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, The Museum of Modern Art and The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and The Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC.

Willoughby Gerrish Ltd represents the estate of Gerald Laing for sculpture.

Willoughby Gerrish, 2021

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All artworks are on display at our Jermyn St premises, unless otherwise stated.

PYRAMID IN FRONT OF KINKELL CASTLE, WHERE GERALD LAING SET UP HIS STUDIO AND HOME IN 1971



A B S T R A C T I O N

In the late 1960's Gerald Laing's work became more abstract and sculptural, reflecting the 'cool' style that was coming to dominate the New York art scene. It was these clean minimalist lines that Laing became so well known for during the period, and ones that directly echo the work of abstract artists Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly. In 1965 the critical success Laing was experiencing and his burgeoning reputation was cemented by the display of three abstract sculptures in the *Primary Structures* exhibition at the Jewish Museum, New York, 1965. Further success that decade included group exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967-8; and Whitney Museum of American Art, 1968-9.

A move from New York to the Highlands of Scotland in 1970 saw Laing's sculpture respond to the beauty, roughness and power of the surrounding landscape. These new surroundings led to a series of monumental sculptures including Laing's first major public commission, *Callanish (Steel Henge)*, for the University of Strathclyde in 1971.

THREE OF LAING'S ABSTRACT SCULPTURES FEATURED IN THE PRIMARY STRUCTURES EXHIBITION AT THE JEWISH MUSEUM, NEW YORK, 1965



Grenadier

1968

Lacquered aluminium and chrome on brass

61 ¼ x 24 x 25 ½" (156 x 61 x 62 cm)

Unique

Provenance: Richard Feigen Gallery, NYC; Sothebys, London, 1973

On exhibition at Thirsk Hall Sculpture Park



Gold Standard

1968

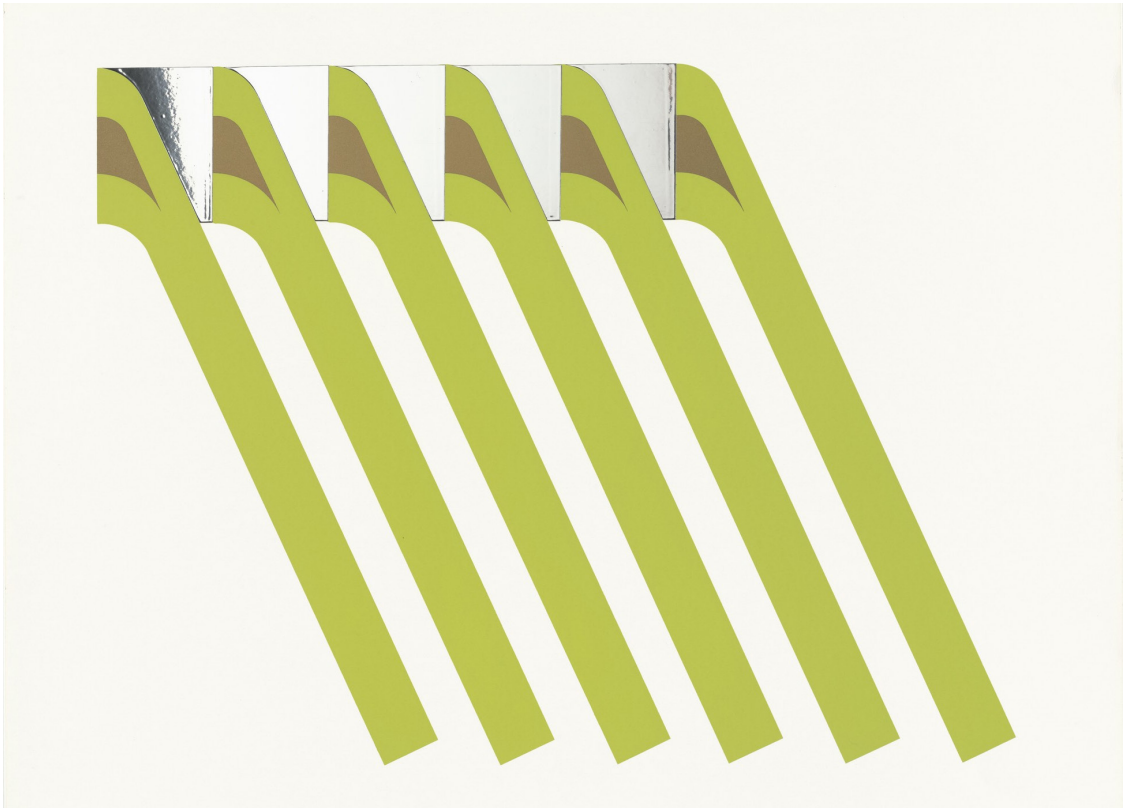
Screenprint with diecut Mylar

Signed in pencil '*Gerald Laing*' with the artist's blindstamp

Titled and dated in pencil '*Gold Standard, 1968*' and 'A/P'

22 3/4 x 29" (58 cm x 74 cm)

Edition of 75



Bronze Pyramid

1971

Bronze (in two sections)

Marked '*BRONZE PYRAMID, 1971, CR281B, GERALD LAING, 2/10*'

43 x 42 x 21" (109 x 107 x 53 cm)

Edition of 10

On exhibition at Thirsk Hall Sculpture Park



Pyramid Folly in Garden

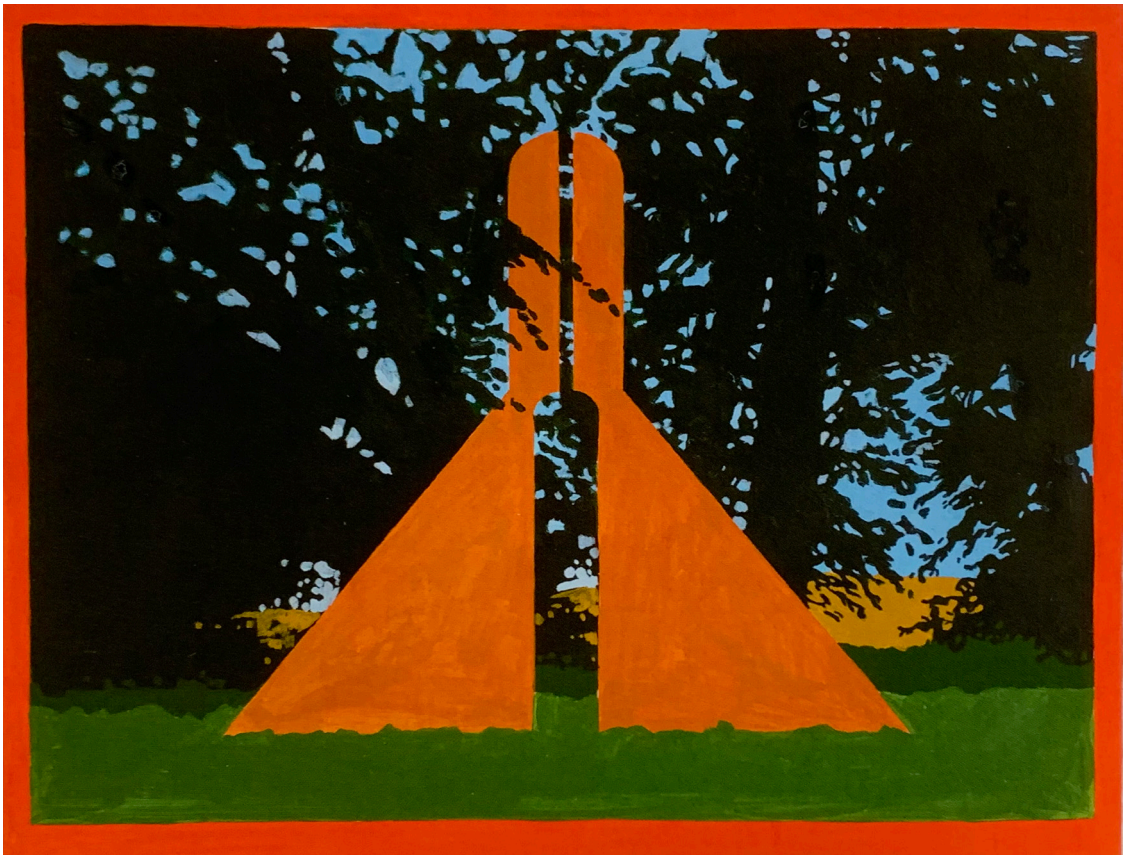
1973

Acrylic on Paper

Signed '*Gerald Laing 1973*'

16 ½ x 20 ½" (41.9 x 52.1 cm)

Unique



T H E G A L I N A S E R I E S

In 1973, Laing abandoned pure abstraction and using his wife as a model began working in clay and casting in bronze, fast becoming one of the country's leading figurative sculptors. The *Galina* series, named after his wife Galina Golikova, were his first works from this period and remain some of his most enduring icons. The series shows the route by which Laing returned to the figure – though the geometry of his abstract sculpture is still present – and can be seen as the zenith of Laing's sculptural career.

Describing *Galina I*, Laing said the following:

...the breast is a perfect demi-pyramid; one shoulder is organic and tender; one is geometric. The true vertical line up the centre of the work which ends in a depressed oval which refers to the soft indentation of the temple, is at the same time a conscious homage to Picasso's 'Femme-Fleur'... The heads, however, beginning with Galina I, are derived from comic heroes such as the Silver Surfer (who rode the stratosphere looking down and murmuring to himself, 'Alas what fools these mortals be'). And these comic images have, of course, roots in Japanese art and applied art, and probably run much deeper than that into the elemental human psyche.

Ultimately, however, the series can be seen in terms of its most fundamental purpose: as a dedicated celebration of the artist's wife. Laing married Galina Vassilovna Golikova in 1969; the couple lived at Kinkell Castle in the highlands of Scotland and had two sons together. The sense of female empowerment embodied in the *Galina* sculptures situates them in their time; one of greater liberation for women.



Galina I

1973

Bronze with a brown patina

Marked '*GALINA I, CR290, 1973, GERALD LAING, AP1*'

18 ³/₄ x 14 x 10 ¹/₂" (48 x 36 x 27 cm)

Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proofs



Galina II

1973

Bronze with a brown patina

Marked '*GALINA II, CR291, 9/10, 1973, GERALD LAING*'

11 ³/₄ x 8 x 9" (29.8 x 20.3 x 22.8 cm)

Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proofs



Galina V

1976

Bronze with a green patina

Marked '*GALINA V, CR349, 6/10, GERALD LAING*'

22 x 16 x 9" (56 x 40.5 x 23 cm)

Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proofs



T H E L E G A C Y O F G A L I N A

Between 1973 and 1978 Laing worked steadily towards figurative sculpture which both fulfilled his own aesthetic ideas and had some symbolic connotations. *An American Girl* and the accompanying bust *Dreaming* can be seen as the culmination of the *Galina* series, showing how Laing had approached the figure with both abstraction and naturalism, absorbing a variety of influences in order to find a figurative language for the human form.

Laing also created a series of reclining figures carved in wood and cast in bronze. This step saw the artist both challenging and learning from the past, and doing so Laing depicted the female form in increasing stages of abstraction. This series was to be his last before returning to a far more naturalistic style of sculpting.



An American Girl

1977

Bronze with a brown and gold patina

Marked '*AN AMERICAN GIRL, CR 375, AP1, GERALD LAING*'

25 ½ x 26 x 31" (64.7 x 66 x 74.7 cm)

Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proofs



Dreaming

1978

Bronze with a green patina

Marked '*DREAMING 1978 A/PB CR379 GL*'

12 x 8 x 12" (30 x 20 x 30 cm)

Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proofs



Reclining Figure II

1975

Bronze with a dark brown patina

Marked '*RECLINING FIGURE II, 1973, 3/10, GERALD LAING*'

7 ½ x 21 x 5" (19 x 53.3 x 12.7 cm)

Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proofs



MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield
Denver Art Museum, Denver
Glasgow Art Gallery, Glasgow
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis
Minneapolis Museum of Art, Minnesota
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Nagaoka Museum of Art, Nagaoka
National Gallery, London
National Portrait Gallery, London
Scottish Arts Council, Edinburgh
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh
Tate, London
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC
Städtische Museum Gelsenkirchen, Gelsenkirchen
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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C R E D I T S

CATALOGUE DESIGN GILLY THORNE

CATALOGUE RESEARCH OLIVIA CATCHPOLE

CATALOGUE EDITING ZILLAH BELL

P H O T O C R E D I T S

p 7 BELLA HOWARD

pp 1, 8, 10, 13, 23, 31 GERALD LAING ESTATE

pp 25, 27, 29, 33, 35, 37, 38 ANGELO PLATAMURA

pp 15, 17, 19, 21 STELLA BELL

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