

RECLINING BODYSCAPE, 1994,
46 x 232cm, edition of 9.



RECLINING BODYSCAPE, front.

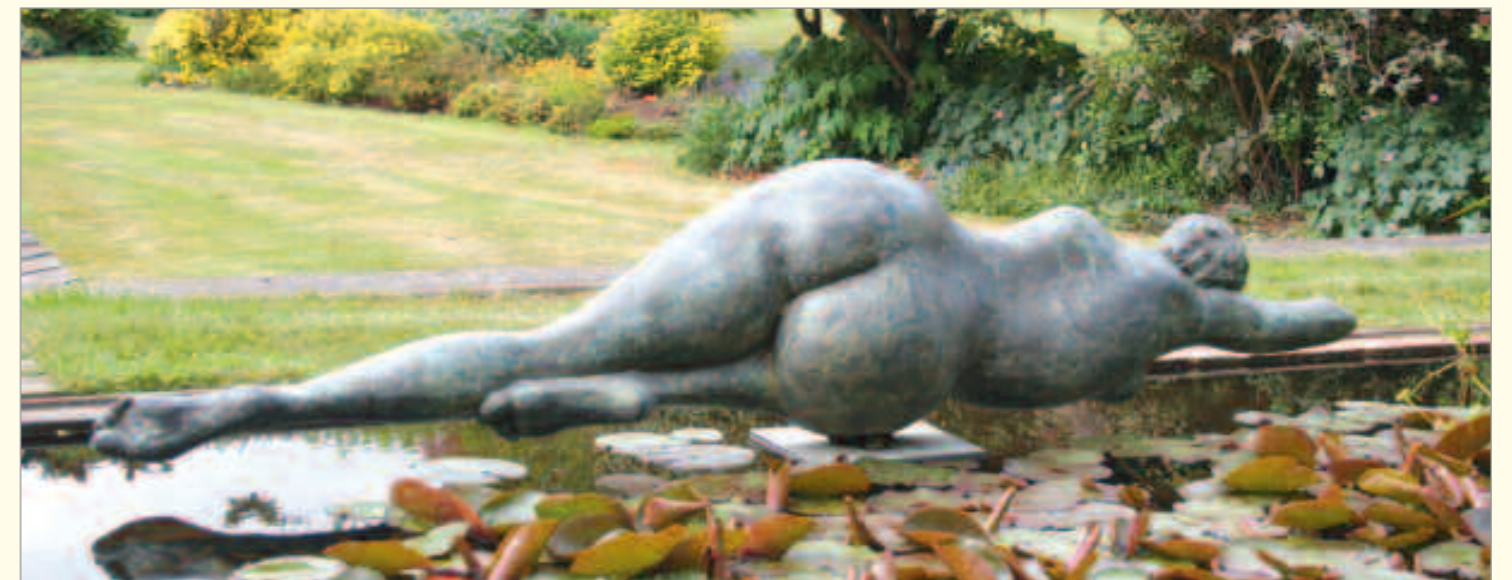


This was not Rowan's first experience of sensory deprivation. While at York School of Art, we were subjected to benevolent forms of such deprivation for the sake of our respective disciplines on a regular basis. Equipped with a sheet of carbon paper sandwiched between two sheets of cartridge paper, we were sent to draw York's Roman ruins with a knitting needle. The point of the exercise was to use our eyes to observe what we could actually see rather than drawing on our preconceptions of what we thought we could see. We drew blind. Surprisingly, the results were very good.

Just as we had been forced to heighten our visual sense at York, Rowan, with one eye temporarily disabled, concentrated on his sense of touch. The results are striking. His male and female torsos are modelled on pure instinct. The skills had to be mastered without sight, in much the same way as one imagines the masked Luke Skywalker acquired 'the force' with his light sabre in 'Star Wars'. Blindfolded and working only in clay, Rowan strives to express what it feels like to be inside a male torso and conversely to play the creator by kneading, moulding and groping his ideal, sensual woman. Clay, as famously shown in the potting wheel sequence from the film 'Ghost', is a most sensual substance. The temporarily blinded Rowan, like the blind Orion before him, achieves an altogether different sense; the visceral sensuality of these pieces being a marked departure from the usual stripped and raw figures we associate him with.

As his eyes were corrected one at a time, he lost binocular vision until both eyes had fully healed. He modelled either blindfold and by instinct, or in relief, recalling Picasso's free, linear, rapidly executed figure drawings. The exhibition planned for the Solomon Gallery in 1985 was therefore a combination of both styles. The RECLINING BODYSCAPE combines both approaches: the front is two dimensional polished bronze with linear, engraved detailing while the rear is a richly patinated, shapely, three dimensional form.

RECLINING BODYSCAPE, rear.



RUTH'S BUM,
2004, 12cm,
edition of 9.