

Stripping the Willow
Sculpture by Julian Wild

'An active line on a walk, moving freely,
without a goal.'

Paul Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook* 1925

This much-quoted – and sometimes misquoted – statement by Paul Klee is clearly pertinent to Julian Wild's work. How much he considered Klee's thinking in terms of his own sculpture is debatable, but there is some relevance in that Wild's forms have been, in sculptural terms, characterised through his use of linear motifs since the time he began exhibiting. In his early sculptures the line enclosed space like a net; or in other works the line – maybe metal or plastic tubing – rambled around to catch its tail. In the context of Klee's statement, these early pieces moved freely, but had a goal. In Wild's recent sculpture the line has moved in an angular fashion, sometimes having a beginning and an end, sometimes not. The line may be coloured monochrome or may change hue through its length. However, in the objects made especially for this exhibition,

the line is straight, having a beginning and an end, a top and a base, but more importantly the line has become his subject. It does not describe anything, although allusions are metaphorical.

With reference to the title of the exhibition, *Stripping the Willow*, Wild's subject matter tells of splitting the line. The exhibition has an exploratory nature, as these ideas are still

fresh, but the signs are that he could be finding a new and strong seam of inquiry.

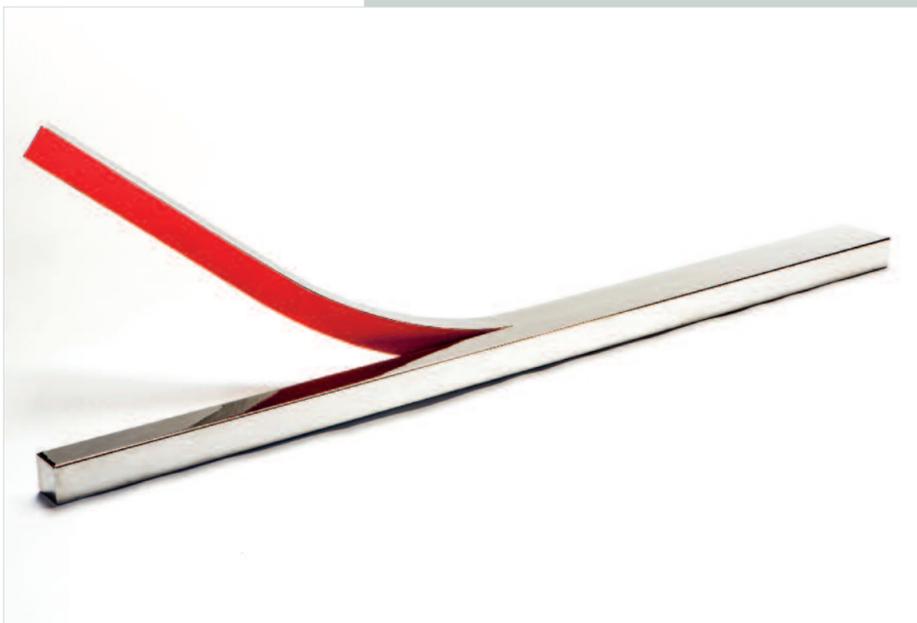
In 2013 Wild was given an exhibition at the Leighton House Museum in Kensington as a result of the work he made as the recipient of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea/Chelsea Arts Club Trust Studio Bursary 2009–12. The title of that exhibition, *Wrestling Pythons*, paid tribute to Lord Leighton's sculpture *Athlete Wrestling with a Python* 1888–91, the marble version of which is in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Wild

reflected the energy of Leighton's masterpiece in his sculpture *Indeterminate System* 2011, although it was made strictly within the parameters that he devised for himself: the changing directional path of a line. *Indeterminate System*, now in the collection of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, is the earliest sculpture in our exhibition. It laid the foundation for this new series of works launched here in the Lobby of One Canada Square. The Japanned hardwood, built up through applying layers of tinted varnish, has given a rich and lustrous finish to the surface of the sculpture. Japanning was a technique chosen especially by Wild in reference to the numbers of Japanned items of furniture displayed in Leighton House. 'This piece' he says, 'references orientalism and the appropriation of the eastern aesthetics found in the lavish interiors of Leighton House.'

In 2012 Wild and his family moved to East Sussex where he and his wife, the painter Mary Grant, have studios near to their country home. While he also works in London, references to the natural world have seeped further and meaningfully into his work. His titles not only speak

of plant species, but also of systems related to woodland management that he has observed and absorbed.

The series of sculptures that constitute the greater part of this exhibition are made in polished metals – bronze and stainless steel – some of which have elements of their structure powder-coated in contrasting red. In *Rubus* 2014 the polished and powder-coated stainless steel tells more about the directions that four lines take as they emerge from the corner of a rectangular frame to take their 'here



Peeled 2015



Stripped the Willow 2015



Slipped Maquette 2015

and there' tangled journey back to another part of the frame. The title *Rubus* comes from the Latin for a large genus of plants in the rose family. Here Wild refers to the *Rubus* fruit or bramble and his metaphor is clear.

Ilex 2014 made in welded and polished bronze, together with its maquette of the same title and date, seem to bring to a close the zigzag course a line takes in the three-dimensional, sharply alternating and criss-crossing course that Wild has invented. When bronze bars or square-sectioned

tubing are welded together and are polished to a high degree of reflectivity, the material takes on a soft, even malleable appearance, a characteristic that is found in all of Wild's recent polished works.

In **Split** 2014 Wild reveals yet another way of looking at line, form, coloured and polished surfaces in what was to become a tightly focused series of sculptures. The equally divided end of a stainless steel tube appears to be slit and rolled back. The direct simplicity of this small sculpture reveals the strength of his overall concept.

The sculpture **Stripping the Willow** 2015 provides the title of the exhibition and in the series of works that follow Wild explored the notion of the line splitting away from the parent structure. Stripping of Willow or Withy, originally done by hand, but now often automated, is the process of stripping the bark from a young and pliable stem of the plant, generally for basket making or if thicker, for the construction of woven fences. The large scale of **Stripping the Willow** takes the sculpture far from its notional source to be viewed in abstract terms and with consideration for the materiality of highly polished bronze. The apparently cleaved portions of the structure reflect back and forth, endowing this direct and simple structure with an unexpectedly complex surface.

Unlike **Stripping the Willow**, **Spliced** 2015 is about lines converging or joining, building rather

than separating. However, because of Julian Wild's skill of welding and polishing metal, the sculpture could be interpreted variously. The choice is ours. **Peeled** 2015 has a similar form to that of **Spliced**, although it is positioned horizontally. In both sculptures the application of red tells more of the nature of peeling or revealing an inner layer that becomes a new surface.

A distinct aspect of the exhibition is the series of maquettes that show ways in which Wild has worked through the theme and variations of **Stripping the Willow**. All the maquettes are made in wax and cast in bronze, to which he has given a highly polished surface. The common material used in the maquettes gives harmony to forms that are essentially linked although each is of a different pitch.

Ann Elliott June 2015



Ilex 2014

Julian Wild is a graduate of Kingston University (1995). Working now as a sculptor, he had his first solo exhibition *Bog Standard* in 2003 at the Atrium Gallery, Price Waterhouse Coopers. He has also been in a number of group exhibitions, many of which have shown his sculpture in the open air, most notable, *Sculpture in the City* 2014. He was awarded the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea/Chelsea Arts Club Trust Studio Bursary 2009-12, which provided him with a studio in Chelsea. He has won a number of commissions for organisations including Fidelity Investments; Cass Sculpture Foundation; Crest Nicholson; Wyeth Europa; Schroders Investment Management; Radley College, Oxford; Jerwood Sculpture Park and Sculpture in the Parklands, Ireland.

Wild works in a variety of materials, including polished and painted bronze and stainless steel, glass and ceramics, though which he explores the relationship between colour and sculpture with reference to sculpture of the 1960s. He is currently undertaking a touring project, *Making the Connection*, which enables people to engage in making a collaborative large-scale sculpture using low-tech material; on each occasion the result is different although the material may be constant.

Julian Wild lives and works in London and East Sussex. He is represented by William Benington Gallery, 20 Arlington Way, London EC1R 1UY.

For more information visit
www.julianwild.com
www.williambeningtongallery.co.uk

EVENT

Tuesday 21 July from 6.30 to 7.15 pm
 Curator **Ann Elliott** tours the exhibition with **Julian Wild**. The tour is **free** but please contact Canary Wharf Public Art Office at visualart@canarywharf.com to reserve a place

Photographs courtesy of the artist unless otherwise credited.

Some of the works are for sale

For a price list, please contact Canary Wharf Public Art Office as above, or William Benington Gallery at george@williambenington.co.uk

List of Works

Dimensions in cm h x w x d
 Sculptures are unique if the number of the total edition is not shown

Sculpture	Maquettes
Indeterminate System 2011 Japanned hardwood 120 x 230 x 90 Collection of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Ilex Maquette 2014 Polished bronze 23 x 12 x 12 Private collection
Rubus 2014 Polished and powder-coated stainless steel 80 x 120 x 70	Peeled Maquette 2015 Polished bronze 9 x 35 x 9 edition of 5
Ilex 2014 Polished bronze 45 x 100 x 50 edition of 3	Spliced Maquette No.1 2015 Polished bronze 35 x 14 x 7 edition of 5
Split 2014 Polished and powder-coated stainless steel 8 x 30 x 20	Spliced Maquette No.2 2015 Polished bronze 35 x 12 x 9 edition of 5
Stripping the Willow 2015 Polished bronze 244 x 55 x 55 edition of 3	Slipped Maquette 2015 Polished bronze 35 x 7 x 2 edition of 5
Spliced 2015 Polished and powder-coated stainless steel 370 x 120 x 40	Stripping the Willow Maquette 1 2015 Polished bronze 50 x 13 x 13 edition of 5
Peeled 2015 Polished and powder-coated stainless steel 230 x 120 x 40	Stripping the Willow Maquette 2 2015 Polished bronze 50 x 13 x 13 edition of 5
	Stripping the Willow Maquette 3 2015 Polished bronze 50 x 9 x 9 edition of 5



Rubus 2014

front cover: Stripping the Willow 2015 (detail) Designed by Tim Harvey Printed by Jamm Print & Production

Stripping the Willow
 Sculpture by
Julian Wild

Lobby, One Canada Square
 Canary Wharf, London E14 5AB
29 June - 15 August 2015

Curated by **Ann Elliott**
 for Canary Wharf Group

Monday to Friday 5.30am-midnight
 Saturday & Sunday 7am-11.30pm

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