

***Sculpting Lives* podcast transcript**

Series 1, Episode 1: Barbara Hepworth

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[music]

Sara Matson: She managed her brand, fair play.

Eleanor Clayton: A normal person from Wakefield; A remarkable artist but a remarkable woman.

Stephen Feeke: Hepworth was odd because she didn't see herself as a feminist at all and didn't see herself as "I'm a pioneering woman". She just felt she was a pioneering sculptor.

Barbara Hepworth: I was born with the ideas of certain shapes in my mind. At least I remember as far back as seven. The whole time one's been working at it and working, trying to simplify and make more mature, get the right scale, and develop it according to the development of society.

[music]

Jo Baring: Hello, and welcome to *Sculpting Lives* the podcast by me, Jo Baring.

Sarah Victoria Turner: And me, Sarah Turner. Jo, this is our first podcast and episode. Why are we doing this?

Jo Baring: We met in our professional lives. You are Deputy Director of the Paul Mellon Centre, and I am Director of the Ingram Collection. We have a shared interest in art, but we realised when we met that we are really fascinated by sculpture in particular. Also, during the course of our discussions, we realised that women artists and women sculptors, in general, are less commercially successful than men, less represented in national institutions, museums, possibly have less gallery shows and we really wanted to unpick why that happens.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Absolutely. The situation is changing and we're noticing more exhibitions on women artists generally, but I think being a sculptor is a really difficult profession and professional choice. Then, being a woman sculptor and pursuing a

career is really challenging. In these episodes, we're looking at the lives and careers of different artists from the 20th through to the 21st century to see how those women overcame challenges, faced barriers, and negotiated all these issues. Sculpture is notoriously difficult because it requires often quite a big studio space. It's really expensive.

Jo Baring: Expensive to make. Traditionally male materials. One of the women artists that we talked about that we went to her studio said that when she was at art school, there was even a sign on the door saying no ladies in the welding room. If you're not even allowed to learn how to handle these materials, how do you pursue a career?

Sarah Victoria Turner: That's right. Sculpture was seen very much as a man's world, particularly in the 20th century. I think just seeing how those women really overcame those assumptions about what a woman artist *should* be doing is a really fascinating subject. Who we're going to be looking at in this podcast?

Jo Baring: We've got six women artists. Going from the 20th century to three living artists, we've chosen artists whose work was abstract, whose work was figurative. We've also picked women artists, who'd have very different career arcs or different reputations, different museum success, commercial success. What we really want to do is get behind the story, to really unpick what was actually going on, and to do that, we've been on tour, haven't we, Sarah? We've been around the country.

Sarah Victoria Turner: We've had great fun.

Jo Baring: On the sleeper down to St Ives!. Our first subject, Dame Barbara Hepworth.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes. We're going to start in Wakefield in West Yorkshire, where Hepworth was born in 1903. Really, we're starting at the beginning of the 20th century. Arguably, I think she's probably the best-known woman artist in Britain in the 20th century and had an international career as well.

Jo Baring: You could tell from her voice was just at the end of that sound collage, she sounds like the Queen, doesn't she?

Sarah Victoria Turner: Incredibly posh.

Jo Baring: She belongs to a totally different century, but I would say what was interesting was that in one of the obituaries about her when she died, it said, "the queen of British art is dead". How do you get from being a young girl born in Wakefield at 1903 to being the queen of British art?

Sarah Victoria Turner: Absolutely. I think although there's been quite a lot written about Hepworth, and she's had some major shows in national galleries and museums, there's still a lot to find out about her. I think there's a mystique or some assumptions

as well about her and how she forged her career as a sculptor. In a way, what we want to do in this episode is challenge some of those ideas and go to the places in which she made her work, go to her studios, talk to people who've worked really closely with Hepworth over the years, and see if we can find out more about her.

We began in Wakefield, where she was born at a museum that's actually named after her, The Hepworth, and we talked to curator Eleanor Clayton about how Hepworth negotiated some of the challenges about being a woman sculptor.

One of the key themes of our podcast series is thinking about the relationship between gender and sculpture. It's an interesting question with Hepworth because it seems in some of the written texts that she put out there, she kind of resists being called a 'woman sculptor', and closes down discussions about her gender. Is that something that you come across quite a lot in your research and in your work on Hepworth?

Eleanor Clayton: I think it's such an interesting question and the answer is that she changes her mind over her life, and so have I. I completely understand. Certainly, in the '40s, she absolutely rails against this and she says things like, art is not biological. One can't be considered in that way. It's about form, et cetera, et cetera. Even after, for example, she's made work, like *Mother and Child* when she's been pregnant or just after giving birth, you think that there must be some sensitivity, but she's very much "no, no, no". Then later on in the early '70s, there are interviews where she talks much more explicitly about the experience of being a female sculptor.

I also think that when you think about how much she managed to make work, in that period in the '30s, and '40s, it really is astonishing because Henry Moore had children, had a child as well but had a full-time carer for the child. The thought that you would be-- even if you do have help, even if you have childcare-- the thought that you're still the primary carer of your children--

Jo Baring: What it's just having the headspace, isn't it?

Eleanor Clayton: Exactly. The thing is that I think there's a retrospective judgment. I think in the '50s, there was a lot of judgment. The idea of having a nanny for your children in some circles was seen as really awful. This is the time when obviously, there's all this psychoanalytic research being done about attachment and things like this. I do think there was a lot of judgment on Hepworth. I think there was a lot of judgment in Wakefield at the time about her being divorced as well. It's quite controversial. What she does write about, though, is how despite having childcare, like a nanny, she would be working, and the children would interrupt her. She mentions this in various things and she mentions it in a really positive way. She talks about her working day in things like Sunday magazines and things like that. She says she'll work for a certain period, and then she'll be disrupted by one of the children or

to have to do some cooking, and then we'll go back to doing work. She will always have some readings and some music in every day. She said that she doesn't mind the disruptions, as long as she goes back to finish the thought, and that's how she manages to work. I think that that's absolutely incredible.

Sarah Victoria Turner: It's quite inspirational.

Jo Baring: To be able to hold on to that thread of thought--

Eleanor Clayton: To be able to hold on to that, but she talks about it as if actually all of these things that she's doing is part of the work. Even the interruptions is part of the work because her work is expressing her existence, and her connection to everything around her. So much of her work is about, she says, two forms: the relationship of one tender living thing to another. These interactions with her children or doing cooking whatever it's all a part of doing a creative process. I do think it's incredibly inspirational. I think that maybe it's one of the reasons why her work is so rich and relatable and related to life in the way that perhaps an artist who is working in the studio away from that doesn't necessarily have all those connections.

[music]

Jo Baring: Let's catch up on her biography a bit. She went to school in Wakefield. She went to Wakefield Girls' High School. After that, she went to Leeds College of Art where, amazingly, another great title of modern British sculpture was studying there, Henry Moore.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, they were friends throughout their life and career. Although it didn't seem that Henry Moore often got more attention. There's perhaps more literature written about him. He had more exhibitions.

Jo Baring: He seemed to get more official support, like from the Arts Council, more international exhibitions, and that must have irritated her.

Sarah Victoria Turner: I think it did. When she's at the Royal College of Art, she's making friends and connections and has this ambition right from the very start that she's going to be an artist. She also marries a fellow artist, John Skeaping, and together they went to Italy and traveled around there and went to Florence saw the great renaissance works of art.

Jo Baring: It was there that she really formulated her ideas about carvings. At this point in time, she's very much a carver. She calls herself "a carver" and she learned those skills there in Italy and brought them back to London.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Absolutely. Then she's in Hampstead, in North London, living and working amongst really avant-garde artists who are members of groups like Unit

One, the Seven and Five Society, the London Group and we're all really committed to an idea about a new British modern art.

Jo Baring: That's right. Then her personal life, she said she married John Skeaping. They had a son together and then in the 1930s, that relationship starts to fall apart. She meets within her group of avant-garde artists and another artist called Ben Nicholson and they begin a relationship. They have triplets together, which I can't even begin to imagine what that must've been like. Well, they were not yet married.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Quite unconventional for that period. Getting divorced, starting a new relationship and I think that's something again that she had to negotiate.

Jo Baring: That's right. Together with Nicholson, they moved down to St Ives at the outbreak of the second World War alongside other modernists, avant-garde artists like Naum Gabo. St Ives has become mythic in the story of 20th-century British art. Why do you think that is?

Sarah Victoria Turner: Well, it's this place, this town, a fishing village, essentially on the edge of the British Isles right in West Cornwall facing the high seas but it wasn't somewhere that was remote and isolated, to be honest. It had been an artist colony since the late 19th century. It was well-known amongst artists. It has this amazing light because it's surrounded by the sea and it was a safe haven away from the bombings in London but it did have that established cultural community in which Hepworth could work and be amongst other artists.

Jo Baring: She actually lived and worked in St Ives until her death in 1975 and in addition to the museum The Hepworth Wakefield, which is named after her, there's also her studio and gardens which became a museum quite soon after her death and which is run by the Tate. We went down there to talk to the curators there to find out a little bit more about Hepworth.

Sarah Victoria Turner: In the spaces of Hepworth studio and gardens. You spoke to Sara Matson, curator at Tate St Ives

Jo Baring: Can you tell us where we're standing?

Sara Matson: We are in Hepworth's, well, living area. She moved into Trewyn Studio, which is what these buildings and this garden is called, and she moved in and this was initially her working space. She moved in in 1949 and it was initially her working space. She had a house with Ben Nicholson, the painter, in Carbis Bay, and in 1949, he got one of the beautiful Porthmeor Studios and she managed to acquire this building and the garden that was being sold off from the big Trewyn estate. It was the summer houses and work sheds, et cetera, and supported with some financial donations from friends and loans and a little bit of her own money she was able to purchase the space.

This room which you actually accessed via a ladder up through the floor there-- she later had the staircase put in-- was initially a carving studio and I think she did woodcarving in here. Gradually as her marriage to Ben Nicholson dissolved and they moved apart, she moved in and it was for a while at hybrid working space and then largely her living space.

A selection of her key works, her key carvings that gives you a sense of her back catalogue from, well, one of the earliest works is *Infant*, which is 1928 carving when she was making figurative forms following her return from Italy and carving in wood-- in African dark wood-- right the way through to this really important work called *Single Form September* which was one of a group of works that relate to the United Nations' *Single Form* that sits in the United Nations Plaza.

Now we're out in the garden and of course, we see this incredible I have to say I'm a little bit smug about the garden because over the last four or five years we've worked really hard with our gardener to curate the plants, bring back the original design and highlight the structure of the garden in relation to the plantings and how it was in the '70s. You get this sense of that opening moment of the museum but still with the sense of how Hepworth had it at that time.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Was she interested in the garden? It wasn't just a workplace, it was important to her?

Sara Matson: It was so important to her because in, she moved in in 1949 and it had some mature plantings from the estate house. She had a very close friend called Prialux Rainier, who was the South African composer, and the pair of them had a conceptual, strong friendship that enabled them to have this dialogue around the garden. Hepworth had become really interested in planting. She loved roses. There's lovely letters in the collection that talk from her father suggesting roses that she might have but the pair of them designed the garden in relation to her sculptural art but which then the plantings very much responds to her the nature of her forms. She was very careful to place her works which were often placed on breeze blocks throughout the garden in particular concept with one another.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Because I guess you'd think they'd move on. She hoped that-- they were commissions or she would sell them, this would be a temporary home for them.

Sara Matson: Absolutely. Well, by 1976, she had various, she was kept in addition to her bronzes. The garden was very full and it had lost its initial design, but of course, she didn't start making or working in bronze until 1956 when she found a way to articulate her conceptual thinking around direct carving into a process that would enable her to work in bronze. She never wanted to model.

Jo Baring: Because she saw herself as a carver?

Sara Matson: She saw herself as a carver. I think, one of the things I'm really interested in, and again, these new perspectives on her work enable us to draw out ideas of the performance of carving and the memory of the body in terms of experience and imposing an image, a conceptual image, onto a work. As you come to looking at the bronzes, there's no material to start with. She articulates the aluminum armatures and literally plasters, the material substance onto those--

Sarah Victoria Turner: She used to build them up and I guess she'd been very used to taking form away as a carver.

Sara Matson: Yes, exactly but that's the start of it and then that went very hard, and then she could carve the hard plaster. She did like a hard challenge. She could carve it back. There was a way that she could bring the process of carving and the mark of the artist back into the bronze and then it would be translated from the plaster prototype into the bronze form and then of course, again, that relationship between surface and patina and the form itself could then be unfolded as the work was made.

Jo Baring: Do you think she's also thinking about other issues when it comes to starting to work in bronze, for example, being able to make large scale public commissions?

Sara Matson: Yes, absolutely.

Jo Baring: Maybe under pressure from dealers to do an addition to works?

Sara Matson: All the above. Yes. I think, oh, I read a quote recently where she talks about the 'art circus' and the fact that she is being pressured into bronze. By comparison, I think Moore found that quite an easy transition where she took a while to think about what it meant to have a practice in bronze which she'd been rejecting early on in her career when she had her formative ideas around carving and made the statement, 'I am a modern artist. I'm a modernist and I'm defined by the fact that I carve'. By the late '50s, having not to revoke that, but find a way of working in bronze that would allow her to take on these big commissions, allow her to tour her works.

Of course, working in stone and in wood, there are inherently fragile--

Sarah Victoria Turner: -- and heavy and all those shipping costs--

Sara Matson: and the British Council were making tours and she needed to be represented in that.

Jo Baring: From the Hepworth museum and garden, Sarah took us across the road to a building which is known as the Palais de Danse and that actually hints that it's past,

it was a dance studio. Hepworth took on because it enabled her to facilitate and to make large scale public monumental sculptures. Sarah in our interview with her talks about these pieces. You can actually see them, see images of them on our Sculpting Lives' Instagram page, [@sculptinglives](#). You may even already know some of them. They're on the side of the John Lewis building in Oxford Street, the United Nations Plaza in New York. What did you find particularly interesting about this, Sarah?

Sarah Victoria Turner: We talked before about the challenges of fabricating sculpture, especially, large-scale bronze sculpture, you can't do this in a small studio with lots of stairs. Hepworth needed semi-industrial spaces to make some of these monumental works, she had to find a place in the small streets of St Ives where she could make big sculptures, and get them out to the rest of the world.

Sara Matson: We're looking at *Single Form*, this is the outline of her plaster prototype for the UN commission that she made largely through the death of Dag Hammarskjöld, she was invited to make a commission in his memory, of course, *Single Form* now stands on the UN Plaza. I think it's something like 6.4 meters.

Jo Baring: We've come across the road, haven't we?

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes.

Jo Baring: From the garden studio to the Palais De Danse.

Sarah Victoria Turner: To the Palais De Danse, yes. This was the studios that she acquired by 1961.

Sara Matson: We're opening up to large gates out, onto another yard.

Sarah Victoria Turner: It's quite the space, isn't?

Jo Baring: Yes.

Sarah Victoria Turner: There's an image of wings figures standing here, looking enormous.

Sara Matson: This really gives you a sense of the scale of her production-

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, absolutely.

Sara Matson: -she needs this quite industrious spaces in many ways to manufacture.

Jo Baring: It's amazing that she constructed this in the tiny streets of St Ives. Even now, when we were walking around this morning, we've commented on people's big four by fours [crosstalk].

Sara Matson: A major event of the summer is somebody getting their Audi Quattro stuck in the Digey [a very narrow street in St Ives]. That's a fact. The streets again had all sorts of mechanisms, a huge number of people involved in getting her work out.

Jo Baring: That's because there's a lot of local goodwill.

Sara Matson: Yes. Even today, of course, if we move or shift any of the sculptures we work with a local mover who knows, exactly, the adverse camber of every cobbled street, the ability to get the flatbeds, the air-ride trucks, or whatever we use around certain corners. You have to be really careful, particularly, with air ride because they're so wobbly. You can find people crushed against the wall. It's all of this logistics.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, sculpture's dangerous.

Sara Matson: As her work got bigger it became more of an issue to move it. She created a viewing area, the height of four square walkthroughs directly correspondent with the height of this room. She used the spaces she had to the max, the height of *Meridian* was, completely, the same height as the space that she had in the rooms that she could find on Fore Street. She will use the expansion of space that she could to its fullest extent.

Jo Baring: Yes. That speaks to how important studios are, and if you don't have one, it limits the work that you can actually produce.

Sara Matson: Yes, absolutely. It's difficult for sculptures, isn't? Particularly, if they're working directly with the materials, about finding space these days to work.

Jo Baring: In that large studio, the Palais De Danse, Hepworth was really making bronze sculptures. Let's go back to that transition, to bronze in the '50s because that's, obviously, of huge significance to her career, her reputation, how visible she was internationally, but that move to bronze happened quite late in her career, didn't? In the mid-50s.

Sarah Victoria Turner: I think the context is important, working after the Second World War, when there's a lot more commissions from the government, from local councils, from schools.

Jo Baring: Yes, it's unprecedented public commissioner.

Sarah Victoria Turner: People want sculpture that can be outside, in the public realm. Hepworth was very conscious of this. I think bronze allows her to experiment with her sculptural language, but also respond to the physical and logistical challenges of making sculpture for outdoor spaces.

Jo Baring: In order to be visible, in order for her reputation to increase and take advantage of those public commissions, she had to work in bronze, didn't she? She was aware of that.

Sarah Victoria Turner: It's more commercial, of course, because you can make many additions.

Jo Baring: You can make an addition of four or five, and those can be sold as well. Not only is she thinking artistically, she is thinking commercially, she's thinking about her reputation. That is something we picked up on with Stephen Feeke, who is a former curator at the Henry Moore Institute, and curator at the New Art Center.

Stephen Feeke: She's very conscious of her role, making sure that she was part of something. I think the moving to bronze is very key for that because that does open up a whole different way of working, but it also opens up the big public commissions, there had been a few, but it always been carving.

The idea of moving into bronze, in a way, the climax of that is things like the UN, does take her to a different level, she did push herself and was a very good salesperson of her own work. I think did, also, quite amazingly have a contract with-- when she moved to the Marlborough Gallery, she managed to have a contract with them where they paid her production costs, which was unheard of, which I think to lessened the burden of that outlay. Carving was expensive enough, but casting was another level. I think, in the back of her mind, was this-- not poverty as such-- but financial concerns that she had because you've still got a career that you're trying to build up, still got to live, you've got to find a space, and then, when you start having assistants you are employing people.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, you're paying their wages.

Stephen Feeke: You're paying their wages, and you're trying to support your family.

Jo Baring: How important do you think that commercial acumen is? In terms of an artist reputation and career.

Stephen Feeke: I think is the sort of weirdness of the art world, in fact, that it's all very nice, but actually, underneath it all is this sort of beating heart of commercial pressure.

Sarah Victoria Turner: What we can hear there from Stephen is that Hepworth was very active in, what you call, 'the hustle', Jo, of the art world.

Jo Baring: That's right. I had to come from a commercial background, rather than, your more lofty academic background, in terms of the art world. I think we're all aware of the current international art market, Damien Hirst's diamond-encrusted skull all

that thing. We think that is quite a recent thing, but actually, when we spoke to Eleanor Clayton at the Hepworth Wakefield, she's saying back in the 1940s, Hepworth is hustling, she's writing to dealers, she's writing to buyers, potential buyers. What I also find fascinating is that Hepworth was aware of the importance of having her work in institutions, and what she did herself to make that happen.

Eleanor Clayton: She's so active in her promotion.

Jo Baring: Is she?

Eleanor Clayton: Yes. She's very active in writing to her dealers, her various dealers. She is very active in writing to people that she thinks, she would like to be her dealers. Absolutely to people who she wants to buy works.

Sarah Victoria Turner: The British Council?

Eleanor Clayton: The British Council. With Wakefield Art Gallery directors; she wrote to them all the time, she was constantly hustling on their behalf. One of the works that we acquired- the first work that we acquired in 1941. 'We', I'm just taking credit.

Jo Baring: Do.

Eleanor Clayton: Was *Pierced Hemisphere*, that was a work that she initially wrote to the director of the art gallery saying it was acquired by an early collector, he's willing to sell it to you at a discounted rate of what he paid for it because she had, basically, said how important it was. She'd spoken to the collectors about how important it would be for her to have a significant work in the gallery of her hometown, he had agreed to sell it for this price, the director couldn't afford it, said, "We can't afford it." So she arranged for her father to buy it, and give it to the museum. She was really involved.

Jo Baring: She realised the importance of placing her work in institutions.

Eleanor Clayton: Absolutely, yes. She kept in touch with people like this really, really well. This is why it's so frustrating to then see her being talked about as being a difficult person or whatever because actually, she did her business really well. She just didn't, necessarily, have the personal soft skills.

Jo Baring: She was successful. She was successful in assuring that her work made into institutions.

Sarah Victoria Turner: She's, probably, the best known woman artist of the 20th century in Britain.

Jo Baring: Yes, without a doubt.

Eleanor Clayton: Absolutely. I guess, the thing to say is that she worked hard at it, not just in making the work, but in making that career.

Sarah Victoria Turner: What is interesting with her is this tireless dedication to being an artist. You get the sense she never gives up on that idea that she is going to be an artist. That is what she is going to be, and only will be. I think that tenacity that she shows throughout her life is quite phenomenal.

Jo Baring: Its testament to the success. I'm interested in what you said about the dealers. She's got a dealer, but she's always looking to the next dealer who might be able to present her on a different stage.

Eleanor Clayton: She was, actually, very dedicated to Gimpel Fils, but they looked after her in the UK, so she was courting deals in America. She was trying to get dealers who were representing Nicholson and Moore to represent her. When they didn't, trying to then look to other dealers who might. When she did have a dealer, she was writing to them a lot saying, "When's my next show going to be? I'm making this stuff." Constantly, keeping up to date. Pushing them to promote her.

Jo Baring: Yes, the world doesn't come to you, does it? You have to get out there.

Eleanor Clayton: I think that's good advice for everyone.

Jo Baring: Yes.

[background noise]

Sarah Victoria Turner: Interestingly, Hepworth was already thinking during her lifetime about turning her studio and garden into a museum.

Jo Baring: That's right, so not only in the light of her just thinking about her reputation and her position in the art world as it stands, she's also thinking about what it's going to be like when she dies, which I find fascinating. She enlists the help of a family, doesn't she? There's a particularly crucial family member that's involved.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, and that's her son-in-law, isn't it?

Jo Baring: Yes, Alan Bowness, who is also the director of the Tate.

Sara Matson: She died in this room, in 1975, and as the year after, very quickly, the estate, who responded to a request in her will to, perhaps turn this studio into a museum-- if the public would like-- that was acted upon, and the museum was opened in April '76, very quickly. Obviously they, with the help of Norman Reid, Alan Bowness, Hepworth's son-in-law, and also soon to be director of the Tate for a period of time, worked with Sarah, his wife and Hepworth's daughter to represent both a

selection of works that would give a sense of the array of different forms that Hepworth and materials that Hepworth used across her career, so some key works. She was very aware of that, she was buying back works towards the end of her life, in the '60s and '70s because she felt that she needed to create an archive. I'm sure that this was very much at the forefront of her mind.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Not many artists have galleries and museums named after them, so I think it's significant that Hepworth has two, in fact. We talked to Eleanor Clayton about how the Hepworth Wakefield came about.

Eleanor Clayton: Well, Wakefield Art Gallery has been going since 1934, and Wakefield have this incredibly progressive collecting policy, where it was established with this idea that they would collect modern art, for what they said was that they wanted to keep in touch with modern life and its relation to modern art. This idea that art reflects our contemporary experience so that we can learn something from our contemporary experience through the art that's being made.

They started building this collection at this time when obviously, local artists, Hepworth and Moore were gaining prominence on the international and national field of sculptures, so they collected their work early. We have great works by Hepworth in the collection. The first work was acquired in 1941, and she had some of her earliest public shows here. Then, over time, the old Wakefield Art Gallery was felt that they needed a new space because it was in an old townhouse. It was in great need of repair, but also all the necessary accouterments of a modern museum like a cafe, and learning studios, a new space for engagement. So the idea of a new museum was mooted, but this was really pushed along by the offer of the Hepworth family gift.

The Hepworth family offered a significant number of Hepworth's plaster prototypes and other material to do with her working processes, but particularly these 44 plaster sculptures that she worked on and that we used as a basis of her bronze casts from the late '50s onwards. This opportunity Wakefield Council seized upon, and the idea was that it would be called the Hepworth Wakefield partly to celebrate this gift which is on permanent display, so you can always get a sense of Hepworth's practice here.

Also to really connect Wakefield to Hepworth because she's known, or at that time certainly was known or associated more with St Ives, where she lived for the second half of her life. Actually, she always talked about the prominence of Yorkshire, Wakefield and the surrounding landscape in her early artistic inspiration. Famously, and much quoted, said something like, "What one wants to say is formed in childhood and one spends the rest of one's life trying to say it."

Sarah Victoria Turner: Can we talk about the gallery itself, because we're walking through these incredible, interconnected rooms, and as you mentioned earlier, this was purpose-built by the architect, David Chipperfield. It feels quite sculptural, and

there's something about these block rooms with really interesting angles. Is there a relationship to Hepworth's work in the form itself?

Eleanor Clayton: 100%. David Chipperfield was really inspired by Hepworth's sculpture, and he designed the rooms with their geometries, to say, exactly based on this idea. Then the other thing that he was inspired by Hepworth was this idea of connecting to the landscape into our environments, so almost all of the gallery spaces have windows that look out on significant landmarks around us. One window looks out on Wakefield Cathedral, another window looks out on Henry Moore, another one looks out on the Chantry Chapel. He orientated these series of interconnecting abstract cubes essentially so that they have particular connections out to the landscape.

[music]

Jo Baring: We left the Hepworth Wakefield and went down the road to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, where Hepworth is one of the most important artists that's on display there. There is a piece called *Family of Man*, which Sarah and I spent quite a lot of time walking around, didn't we?

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, Yorkshire Sculpture Park is one of my favorite places in the whole wide world. On the recording, you can hear other visitors chatting away, and also the background hum of a sit-on mower. The perils of recording outside.

Jo Baring: Outside, exactly. We also spoke to Clare Lilley, who's the director of programming at the park to really find out why Hepworth's work has such a precedence to have visitors and why it's so important. We're standing in front of one of Hepworth's most famous late sculptural pieces, aren't we? Which is *Family of Man*.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, made in 1970. A bronze sculpture of many parts, these totemic standing figures which are sited here at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Jo Baring: Going down the hillside, aren't they?

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, on the sloping hillside. It's wonderful how the trees that are also here seem to become part of this sculptural installation.

Jo Baring: Yes, exactly. What's really interesting is that, we're just looking here, and it says that Hepworth was so keen for the work to be experienced outside, and then when she's thinking about the work, she's actually thinking about them in a landscape. I can't help but think when looking at them now, this is exactly how they're supposed to be sited. This is a loan from the estate, isn't it? This has been a long-term loan?

Sarah Victoria Turner: It's been here as long as I can remember, and I've been visiting with my family for a long time. It's interesting, Hepworth saying that she wanted her sculptures to breathe by being outside. It's almost like the space in between the parts

of this sculpture are just as important as the objects themselves. There's this strange forcefield in between the sculptures. It feels to me like they're talking to one another, and there's a resonance between each object.

Clare Lilley: I think that piece in particular, for a number of reasons, it's complete. It's the complete body and it's the only place in the world now that you can see it. I think for us, it's really important that people do feel an emotional connection to this place. The idea of the *Family of Man* in its literal sense and metaphoric sense is really important that people feel that they're connected to this place, that they feel welcome, but there is a tolerance, and an understanding, and an exchange, a communion, really that goes on here. It does go on here. It's really difficult to articulate, but-

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yes, it's very personal.

Clare Lilley: It's really personal, but we've all seen it. We've seen people in tears and we've seen people elated. It's a very particular experience here.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Clare Lilley spoke there about the emotional response that people continue to have with Hepworth's work, and especially when it's cited in the landscape. There's something very particular about sculpture where you are made very aware about your own body in relationship to the form of the sculptural work.

Jo Baring: That's right. Also, something particular about Hepworth's work is her own relationship to landscape and how the natural forms in landscape were extremely inspiring to her. That's something that Sara Matson at Tate St Ives also picked up on.

Sara Matson: People will always relate to sculpture in a way that's very meaningful because you're operating in the same space as it, and there's a dialogue on even terms with it that allows us to commune if you like, in a way that perhaps other media-- maybe I'm biased? I don't know-- but other media don't allow you to do.

Jo Baring: We're both nodding.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Yeah, we agree. We're signed up.

Jo Baring: Interestingly we're at the top of the garden looking around but there's still so many more people coming in and also when we arrived, there were children jumping in and out of the sculpture sitting on it.

Sara Matson: Her late work *Conversation with Magic Stones*, this works extraordinary because it brings together so many of those aspects of her work. It's like a compendium of her work because it brings together ideas around abstraction, the pagan landscape because they like standing stones, the relationship to this landscape

but also the sense of being able to actually stand within it and it, again, allows you to be on equal terms with it.

What Hepworth understood, all through her career she understood and wanted to convey the positive relationship with power of human relationships. The positivity of human relationships. She was very aware that menhirs, quoits and places like Stonehenge had a very significant ritual purpose that brought people together. This social purpose of the single form or the multiple form together was really significant to her work.

Sarah Victoria Turner: The name's really interesting: 'Conversation', one thing that there's a dialogue, but also this idea of magic, and she does seem to be, especially I think after her move to Cornwall, increasingly interested in ideas about magic and mysticism. She talks a lot about the spirituality of art as well. That seems to be something that grows throughout her-- particularly her later-- life.

Sara Matson: Certainly she talks about a moment of praise. I can't recall the quote particularly, but making sculpture is like a moment of praise, but her spirituality and her interest in mysticism, she never pins her flag to any particular mast.

[music]

Jo Baring: One of the things we're trying to do in this podcast is to really get behind the accepted story of an artist, especially the story of Barbara Hepworth. She's a Dame, she's almost like a national treasure, isn't she?

Sarah Victoria Turner Do you think her work is seen as quite safe now?

Jo Baring: I think so. I think people are so used to it and it's so easy to deradicalize her, to forget that she was this very important radical avant-garde artist.

Sarah Victoria Turner: What's really struck me as we've been traveling around and talking to these curators and people who work with Hepworth's artworks is why she's still relevant now and they've all spoken about that? The way that visitors to their galleries are still really powerfully moved by her work and there's a sense that there's still research and new things to say about her career and why she made such an impact not only on British art, but internationally as well.

Jo Baring: That's something that Eleanor Clayton at Wakefield spoke quite clearly about. In terms of her politics. I think that's interesting to think about her as a political sculptor as well and again, that might have been suppressed in the histories of her work, but her active involvement with antinuclear protests, going on marches. I think again that thinking about her role that she was very conscious of her role as a sculptor for the state as well in that, especially in the post-war period that she believed that sculptors should be active, I think.

Jo Baring: She had a moral responsibility would you say, she felt an obligation to make work that engaged with those political issues. She had a platform.

Eleanor Clayton: Absolutely but this goes all the way back to the '30s as well. There are amazing letters between Hepworth and Mondrian on the cusp of the Second World War talking about how as artists they have this responsibility to fight the Nazis but through ideas through, through their art. I feel like she's such a relevant artist still because of these really wide-ranging ideas, because of her interest in new technology, because of her involvement in politics and because we are also in a time now where these ideas are really inspirational, when we can think about art connecting people across nationalities, cross-boundaries. It's really important.

Jo Baring: Obviously the key theme of this podcast is gender, about being a woman and a woman's sculptor. It's something that we quote Stephen Feeke about. He was very interesting in his response.

Stephen Feeke: Hepworth was odd because she didn't see herself as a feminist at all and didn't see herself as "I'm a pioneering woman". She just felt she was a pioneering sculptor. There's a lot of work to be done on that. How you can, on the one hand, be a pioneer but not consider yourself feminist.

Sarah Victoria Turner: I think that does have a lot to do with the wider context of art history and art criticism that feminist scholarship hadn't taken hold in Britain and I wouldn't do so until the '70s and '80s and so, again, she is working ahead of that curve as well. The people who are writing about her and her allies within the wider critical field aren't using a language of feminism and feminist scholarship. It's quite interesting to see the work that researchers are doing now who have imbibed all that work. We've got a new way of thinking about women artists in social and political context of why careers come to market and how people have written about. I think that's quite interesting when that critical language is not there either to see those things in tandem.

Stephen Feeke: Sometimes it does come down to the individual's personality as well because, by her own admission, she wasn't particularly easy. She was shy and quite reserved and really just wanted to make work. I think she was probably happier writing about her work than having this conversation about it.

Sarah Victoria Turner: She did write a lot, didn't she?

Stephen Feeke: A lot. I think it's an interesting stage really because I think she was very good at self-mythologising and I think on the one hand that's great, because you have something to refer back to but it's funny how much that has colored people's reactions especially now. Most texts on Hepworth start with quotes from Hepworth and she created the mold in a way. I think it's very difficult to break out from that but

I think for her reputation to continue to grow, you need to start distancing ourselves slightly from what she said. It's still obviously very important. It's very important that an artist's reputation isn't just kept in aspic. I think it's extraordinary that until the Tate show a couple of years ago that there hadn't been a big museum show in London since 1968 and yet she is the best-known woman British sculptor--

Sarah Victoria Turner: There's a museum named after her!

Stephen Feeke: Yes, exactly. It just seemed extraordinary. I think there has to be a lot of done to keep a reputation alive. That's both commercially but also intellectually. I think you can, in a way, be too controlling. You can try and protect a reputation too much that doesn't allow re-interpretation and reappraisal because I think it's very important that they're not just stuck in a certain rut; that you do allow interesting aspects to come to the fore. I think that's one of the reasons why Hepworth seems so exciting now because there's a lot been done, but it's amazing how much hasn't been done yet.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Hepworth left behind an incredible body of work, an incredible body of writings too, and there are two museums dedicated to her work. It's just been amazing actually to travel around with you, Jo.

Jo Baring: I know. Also, what we found in our subsequent conversations with living artists, with women's sculptors, is what an inspiration Hepworth continues to be for them. In terms of her reputation and what she achieved in the 20th century, she continues to be a lodestar, really, doesn't she? For contemporary women's sculptors today.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Absolutely. In the subsequent interviews that we've recorded, a lot of these women talk about the legacy and inspiration of Hepworth. Join us for future episodes of *Sculpting Lives*.

Jo Baring: That's right. Next time, we'll be delving into the career of Dame Elisabeth Frink, a figurative sculptor who achieved great success in her lifetime, but perhaps her reputation suffered quite academically.

Sarah Victoria Turner: It's definitely less well-known than Hepworth.

Jo Baring: Yes, exactly.

Sarah Victoria Turner: We just want to end by saying thank you to our sponsors and thank you to the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British art for making this podcast happen, and thank you to all the contributors who shared their ideas and their time so generously with us.

Jo Baring: Took us behind the scenes! As we said earlier in the podcast, if you want to see any of the images and sculptures that we refer to, go to our Instagram page, which is [@sculptinglives](#). Thank you and goodbye.

Sarah Victoria Turner: Bye!

This podcast was written and presented by Sarah Victoria Turner and Jo Baring, produced by Claire Lynch, with research assistance from Isabel Mooney.

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