

John Robinson, sculptor and co-founder of the Bradshaw Foundation, died on April 6, 2007, at his home in Somerset, England, after a short bout with cancer. John was a self taught sculptor, whose work ranged from the figurative to the abstract and demonstrated immense emotional and intellectual depth as well as a remarkable breadth of perspective.

John was born in London on May 5, 1935. His parents were Australian with strong English connections, and he was educated at Rugby School, where he received prizes for geometry and sculpture. He left school at the age of 16 and joined the Merchant Navy, but left the Navy upon arrival in Australia. There he engaged in a wide range of activities that enabled him to explore that continent, from jackerooing and cattle droving to serving on a mounted patrol. He went on to buy a block of virgin scrub land in the 1950's in the Ninety Mile Desert of South Australia where he and his wife, Margie, developed a sheep farm. In the late 1960s, he bought some modelling clay and started modelling friends and children, working in his shearing barn. This was so successful that, in 1969 at the age of 35, John returned to England with his wife and 3 sons to begin a career as a sculptor.

John first made a name with representational pieces. His figurative bronzes ranged in scope and scale from exquisite life-size sculptures of children to monumental athletic sculptures, and included commissioned busts of the Queen and Queen Mother. His representational sports figure 'Acrobats' (1970, 5 metres) still amazes many outside the Sports Academy in Canberra. Another of his athletic sculptures, 'Hammer Thrower,' may be seen outside the Bowring Building in Tower Hill, London, and at the United States Sports Academy, Daphny, Alabama. John was Official Sculptor for the British Olympic Committee in 1988. His 'Gymnast' is at the new Olympic Museum in Lausanne, donated by the Australian Olympic Committee.

In 1975, after listening to a Mozart violin concerto, an abstract form came into his mind, and he rushed to his studio to translate it into sculpture. This 'Adagio' was the first of his non-figurative sculptures. John then embarked on a unique series of abstract sculptures with the aim of symbolizing human values and our concepts of the dynamic processes which shape our lives in the universe. In this 'Universe Series' of symbolic sculptures and tapestries, which comprises over 100 works, John combined a deep intuitive grasp of scientific and mathematical principles with an even deeper and unique artistic aesthetic. The rhythm of line and craftsmanship in John's symbolic sculptures convey their effect with economy and surprise to a very wide audience. An example is 'Joy of Living' (1993), a curving band of stainless steel, which immediately conveys as intended the rhythm of joyous dance. The symbolic 'Elation' (1983) conveys the punching of the fist in triumph, which John felt was more effective than his representational sports figure 'Acrobats'. One of John's best-known symbolic sculptures is 'Bonds of Friendship' (1979), which John dedicated as symbolizing the notion that "trust is the basis of peace". A 1.5mx1m edition of 'Bonds', in polished bronze, was unveiled in 1979 in Sydney Cove by the Governor General of Australia, to commemorate the landing in 1774 of the First Fleet. An analogous sculpture, but patinated to represent the Old Country, was unveiled in Portsmouth by the Queen. John said that 'Bonds' "... symbolises the friendship that exists between my patrons and myself, which has enriched my life beyond measure and made the Symbolic Sculptures possible."

In 1983 John opened the 'Freeland Gallery' in Albemarle St., London, showing both figurative and representative sculptures. In addition to the installations listed above, selections of John's work have been exhibited at Leeds, Bangor, Liverpool, Wadham College Oxford, Churchill College Cambridge, London, Barcelona, Zaragoza, and at several sites in the U.S. Many of his sculptures can be viewed on web sites, including John's estate's website and online catalogue hosted by the Bradshaw Foundation: <http://www.johnrobinson.com/>. A discussion of John's work within the context of mathematical principles can be seen at <http://www.popmath.org.uk>.

In 1992 John was made an Honorary Fellow of the University of Wales, in recognition of the value of his sculpture and his collaboration with the Department of Mathematics.

John's adventures in life were always accompanied by his passion for the knowledge and truth about mankind's artistic development and creativity. After a lifetime of interest in Art, Archaeology and Anthropology, John was a co-founder of the [Bradshaw Foundation](#). This foundation was formed in 1992 following an expedition to the Kimberley region of Northwestern Australia. The sequence of events and the other remarkable individuals involved in the establishment and development of the Bradshaw Foundation is a fascinating story, which can be followed in his published autobiography 'From the Beginning Onwards', accessible online at www.johnrobinson.com. The Bradshaw Foundation's first

publication 'Bradshaws - Rock Paintings of north western Australia' was edited by John in 1993. He foresaw the importance of the emerging World Wide Web, and in 1997 the Bradshaw Foundation website was established to highlight rock art research from around the world. In 2004 the website further expanded as John introduced the genetic research of Professor Stephen Oppenheimer of Oxford University, in order to give rock art an anthropological context. This resulted in the 'Journey of Mankind - Genetic Map'. It was at this point the Bradshaw Foundation received a web award from *Scientific American* for work in the field of Anthropology & Paleontology.

It was in March of 2007 that John was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer. He died in April after a short illness, fully in control, and, as he said, with no regrets. Two of his sculptures illustrate his attitude: 'Mortality' (1982), 'From nothing to nothing, cut from an egg', where the egg is the symbol of the cycle of life; and 'Immortality' (1982), 'Passing on the torch of life'. The latter he surely has done.



Mortality

John Robinson, sculptor, born London, May 6 1935. Married Margie Begg, 3 sons; Official Sculptor for the British Olympic Committee in 1988; University of Wales Honorary Fellow, 1992; died April 6, 2007.

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