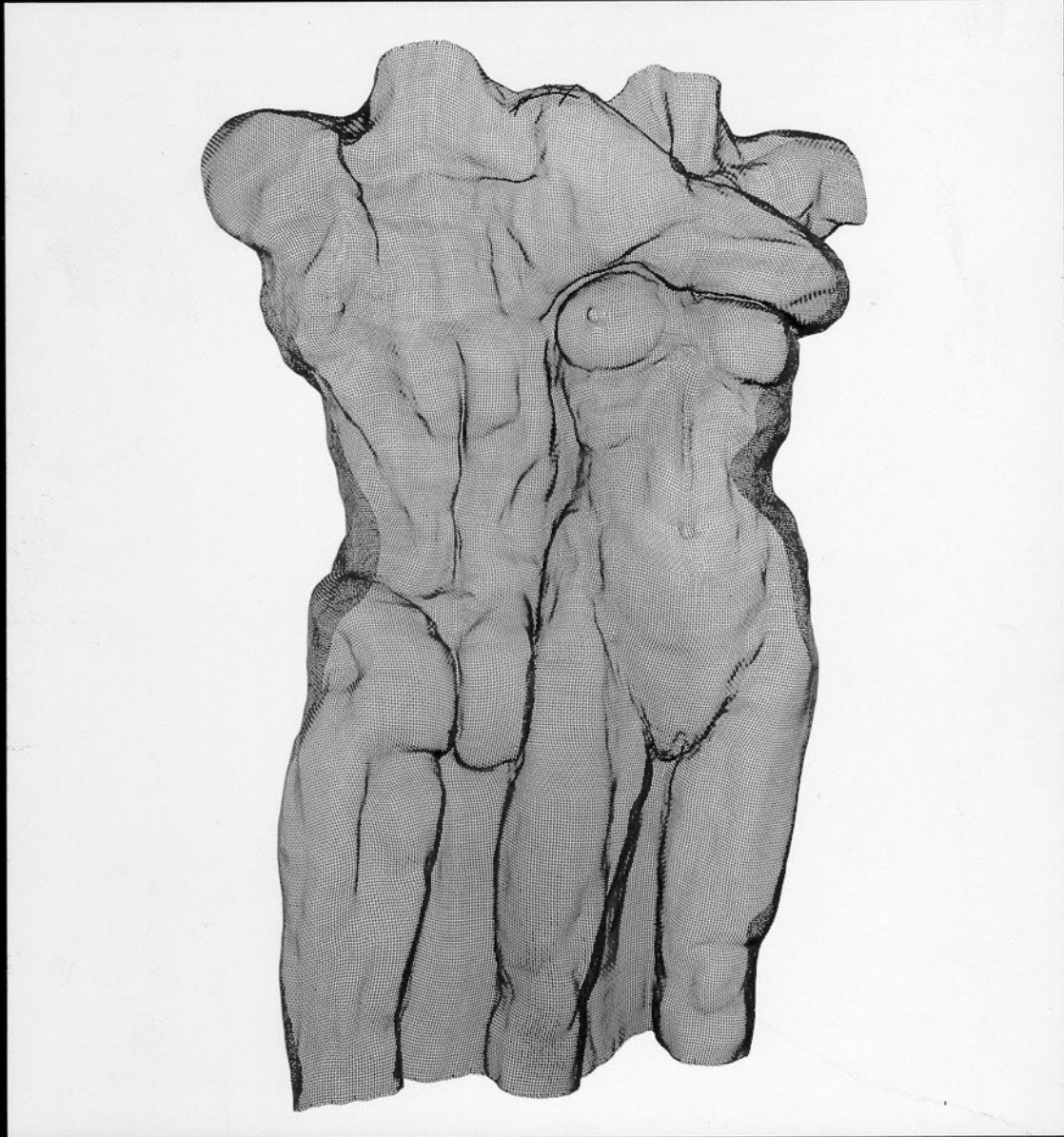


# THE CATTO GALLERY

100 Heath Street, London NW3 1DP 071-435 6660 Fax: 071-431 5620



*David Byrne*

***Sunday 18th April - Sunday 9th May***

## BIOGRAPHY

- 1955 Born Edinburgh
- 1975-76 Winchester School of Art
- 1977-80 Gloucestershire College of Art and Design,  
BA Hons
- 1980-82 Slade School of Sculpture, H.D.F.A.

## EXHIBITIONS

### ONE-MAN SHOWS

- 1979 G.C.A.D. Exhibition Hall, Cheltenham  
The Centre For Visual Arts, Cheltenham
- 1984 Brompton Gallery, London
- 1985 Brompton Gallery, London
- 1986 Forum, Zurich  
Navy Pier, Chicago  
Sacacou Fine Art, Toronto, Canada  
Brompton Gallery, London  
Simpsons of Piccadilly of London –  
Special Collaborative One-Man Exhibition
- 1987 Salama-Caro Gallery, London  
I.C.A.F., Olympia, London (OMS)
- 1988 "Crucifix", Installation at Winchester Cathedral
- 1989 Salama-Caro Gallery, London
- 1990 Salama-Caro Gallery, London  
Wates City Tower, London
- 1991 City Place House, London
- 1992 Sarah Guinan Associates, London
- 1992/3 Tower Bridge Piazza, London
- 1993 Catto Gallery, London

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1980 BA Exhibition, G.C.A.D., Cheltenham

- 1982 Open Studios, Wapping, London  
Metro Show '82, London  
Harrison McCann, London  
M.A. Exhibition, Slade, London  
Christies Inaugural Exhibition, London
- 1983 Metro Show '83, London  
Brompton Gallery, London
- 1984 I.C.A.F., Barbican Centre, London  
A.R.C.O., Madrid  
Ward Jackson Gallery, London  
Guildford Art Gallery, Guildford
- 1985 I.C.A.F., Barbican Centre, London
- 1986 I.C.A.F., Olympia, London  
"Tristan", M.O.M.A. Palma, Mallorca –  
Curated Achille Bonito Oliva  
"Mandelzoom", CANINO, Italy –  
Curated by Antonio d'Avossa
- 1987 Young Variety Club of Great Britain, London  
"The Male Nude Show", Salama-Caro, London
- 1988 Young Variety Club of Great Britain, London  
"Juxtapositions", Salama-Caro Gallery, London  
I.C.A.F., Olympia, London  
Henley '88 Festival
- 1989 "Australian Fashion, The Contemporary Art  
Show"  
20th Century Gallery, V & A, London  
(special commission of mannequins and displays  
for thirty designers)  
Galeria 57, Madrid
- 1990 Galeria 57, Madrid
- 1991 Contemporary Art Fair, Los Angeles  
Salama-Caro Gallery, London
- 1992 Contemporary Art Fair, Los Angeles  
Salama-Caro Gallery, London  
Collet Champion, London  
Variety Club of Great Britain, Christies, London
- 1993 International Art Fair, Miami

## AWARDS

- 1979 Gane Travel Scholarship  
1980 Elizabeth Greenshields Award, Canada

On front cover: **Back to Front**, 165 x 105 x 25 cm, *Steelmesh Sculpture*

On back cover: **Strung Back**, 44 x 10 cm, *Steelmesh Sculpture*



Photo: Bid Jones

## David Begbie at The Catto Gallery

AN INTRODUCTION BY MARINA VAIZEY

David Begbie is a sculptor, draughtsman and printmaker whose materials and media are unusual but whose pre-occupation – the human figure, and indeed by implication, the human condition – is ancient. The first known paintings, the cave paintings of southern France, are of living creatures, animals in the main; even older however, are the first known sculptures: very plump female, in limestone, and a figure of a man, in ivory, both from Central Europe. The survivals – and characteristically, sculpture has, logically, a potential for survival denied to painting – are associated with the art of the hunters, rather with the more settled art of the farmers appearing substantially later in pre-history. The famous dictum of Pope's turns out to have been shared throughout the millennia, even if man – and woman – was dressed up or rather down, in the sense of being naked and observed – as a deity.

In the face of all creeds and isms, the most persistent motif – man is the measure of all things – characterises the formulation of imagery for all of human history. (Abstraction is bold, because it emphasises human absence the more powerfully in some instances to recall the human presence.) Therefore, in one sense, what is there still to say or show?

David Begbie's human and humane art does demonstrate in contemporary terms that the human figure is inexhaustible as an inspiration in itself, and as a way of saying all kinds of things about art – and life – now. First of all there is the refinement of the material. In the case of the three dimensional figures, Begbie confounds sculptural preconceptions – particularly when related to figurative work. We are accustomed to seeing the figure carved in stone or cast in bronze, however we are also used to an enormous variety of material in the revolutionary formulations for sculpture so characteristic of this century. In a curious way, the figure itself is the last bastion. David Begbie does not, it seems to me, use the novelty of steel mesh and now copper, simply for its own sake. Rather, it is an extension and amplification of an earlier avant-garde – Julio Gonzalez, say, and his drawing in space with his welded metal sculpture. Their technical insights and expansions of possibilities were and are quarried by artists who have tended to abandon overt representation for a more oblique view of the world around us, relying more on an inner vision, a sense of constructing from within.

I do not believe that David Begbie's seemingly accurate (although they are not; artistic license is subtly, imaginatively and interestingly at work) visual mediations on the human figure and face could in fact have been created without the liberty afforded to artists by photography, and its apparent faithfulness to the observed world (although we know that fidelity to be false as well). Nor could the evolution and development of his highly individual idiom have taken place without the freedom afforded figuration by abstraction.

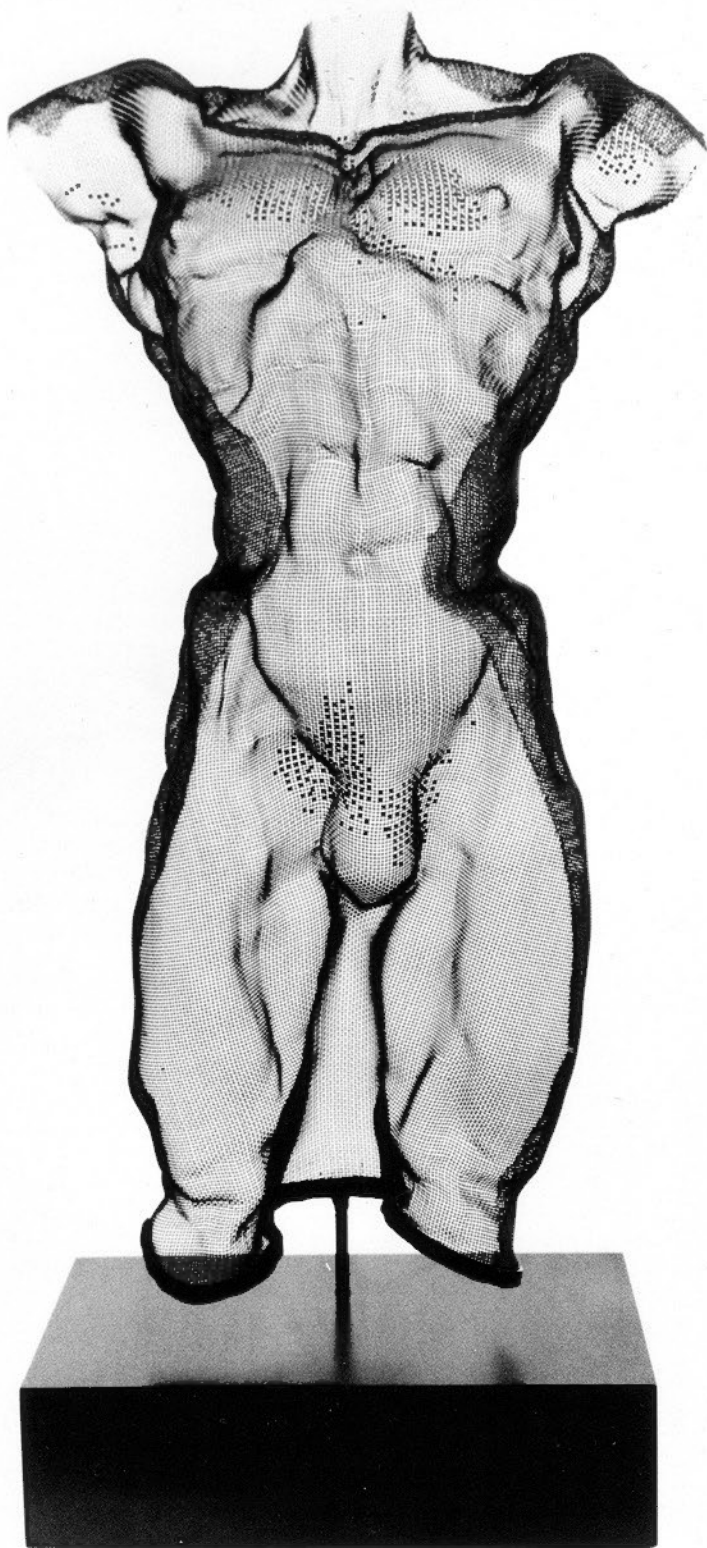
For the figures here – hieratic, startling and monumental on paper, airy, light and even playful in three dimensions – are curiously ambivalent and mysterious, even at times androgynous. There are strongly masculine bodies, and studies which are inescapably feminine, and sometimes tantalisingly close to pin-ups, to the pointed bosoms of the draughtsman of war time girlies, Vargas, and in the current London art spectrum, there is an oblique relationship to the art of Allen Jones. Indeed, Begbie's flirtation with kitsch adds another element of risk-taking to his art.

On one hand we have the monumental, the dignified, the awesome. We also see in his work the intimate, the affectionate. The use of shadowplay, the shadows cast by his figures, is an element that helps to convey liveliness, a sense of movement. There is also the nearly abstract, the refinement, especially in the works on paper, whether monoprints, monoprint collages or drawings – into a paradigm of the figure, a pattern of outline shaded in with varying textures, and a rich sense of colour although all is black and white and the greys inbetween. And there is that exhilarating touch of kitsch from time to time: a sense of going beyond the acceptable, out of the rarified gallery into some other world.

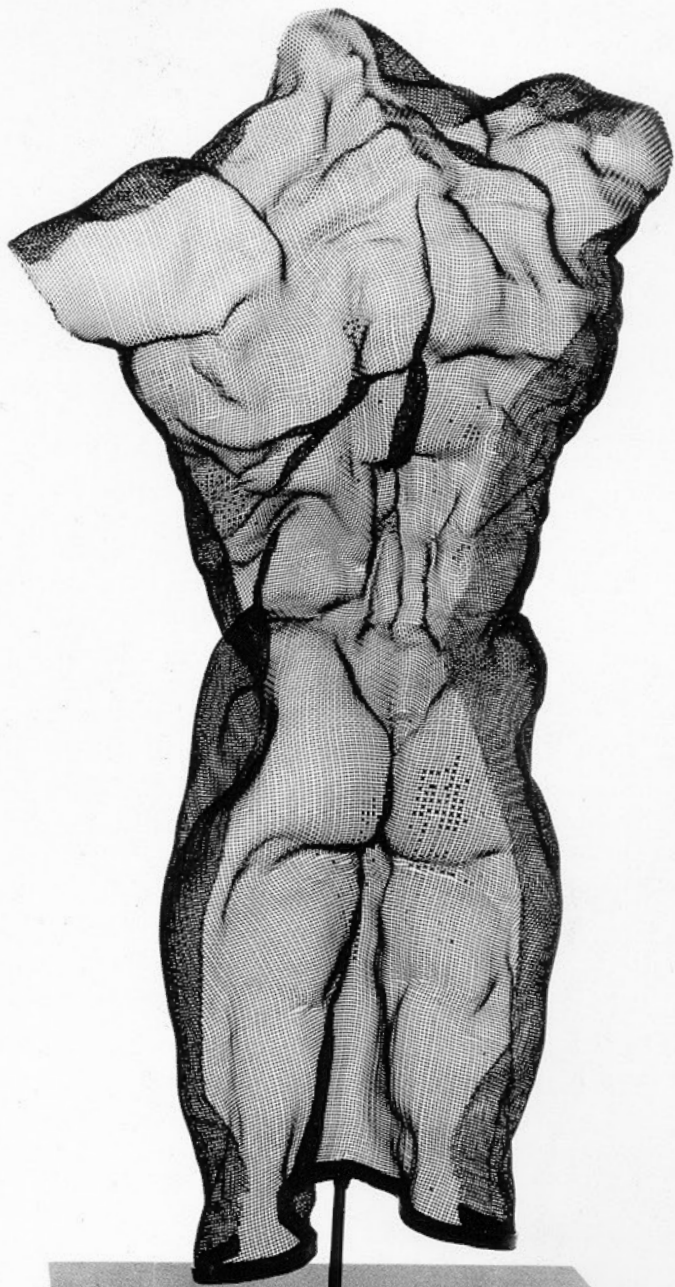
The artist captures too that sense of interest in the body that is characteristic of western culture now. There is the awareness of health, of 'good' bodies; a feeling that we must rescue our bodies from the ill usage caused by the activities of the modern consumer world. People pay attention to their bodies, some even spend time and effort in building their bodies, a sport some claim as art.

Effective art must be of its time, as well as containing within it some understanding of tradition and the past. David Begbie's art is exhilarating and fascinating precisely because he deals directly with a subject that could not be more ancient and traditional, but does so in ways that are only possible now. He uses traditional techniques, and techniques that he has invented. He uses the human form, but his art mediates it into a series of works, highly individual, that communicate a recognisable, emotionally authentic and affecting interpretation that is his own.

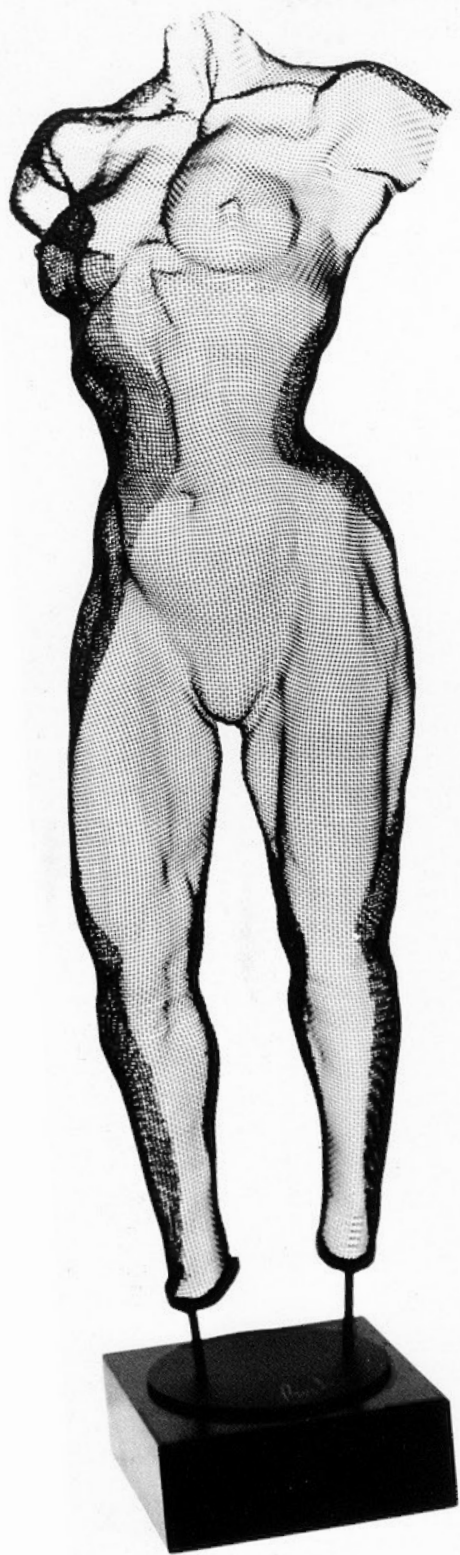
*Marina Vaizey, March 1993*



**Truncus, 1993**  
50 x 16 x 10.5 cm  
*Steelmesh Sculpture*



**Strong Man, 1993**  
50 x 16 x 10.5 cm  
*Steelmesh Sculpture*



**Raised Figure, 1992**  
75 x 15 x 15 cm  
*Steelmesh Sculpture*



**Stripper, 1992**  
54 x 12.5 cm  
*Steelmesh Sculpture*

