



Royal Society of Sculptors celebrates Pioneering Women and the career of Naomi Blake FRBS with free outdoor exhibition

16 March to 6 June

On the sculpture terrace

Royal Society of Sculptors, Dora House, 108 Old Brompton Road, South Kensington, London SW7 3RA

The works on display are:

Memorial to the Holocaust, 1999

Man Against The Odds III, 1986

Sanctuary, 1985

The Royal Society of Sculptors will be showcasing the work of Naomi Blake FRBS with an outdoor exhibition on its sculpture terrace which will be free for all to enjoy. The exhibition will celebrate Blake as part of the Society's 'Pioneering Women' project, which shines a spotlight on the lives, careers and legacies of the talented and extraordinary women at the heart of the organisation.

Caroline Worthington, Director, Royal Society of Sculptors explains, "Naomi Blake was a Fellow of the Society and her story really is one of the most extraordinary. After surviving Auschwitz and escaping a Nazi death march, she started a new life in Palestine and was involved in Israel's war of independence. It was during her recovery from a shot

wound that she started to carve an olive branch and commenced her awe-inspiring journey as a sculptor.

“Blake’s sculptures symbolise hope and optimism in the face of adversity, a message which surely resonates with us all at the moment. We’re showing her work on our open sculpture terrace on South Kensington Road so that everyone has the chance to enjoy viewing them.”

The works are kindly loaned by Blake’s children, Jonathan Blake and Anita Peleg. ‘Our mother’s work is a subconscious expression of her experiences, through abstract and semi figurative forms. Many of her pieces often contain a figure, often protected but later standing free. She said *“there is something positive in the human figure – there’s a lot of good in people”*, quite a remarkable thing to say after what she survived.’

The opening of Blake’s exhibition coincides with Women’s History Month and follows the Society’s ‘Pioneering Women’ Conference. Held online on 10 March, the Conference explored how female sculptors trained, practised and forged careers within the typically male field of sculpture.

The Pioneering Women project has been funded by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.

Notes to editors

Naomi Blake FRBS (1924-2018) became an Associate member of the Society in 1979 and a Fellow in 1993.

Her work focused on expressing her experiences of the Holocaust, yet it came from a place of optimism and positivity. In other words, she sought to commemorate the past whilst promoting understanding between people of different faiths.

Blake’s early sculptures blend the abstract and figurative giving the impression of shelter, or protection, often featuring an enclosed figure. Her later works appear to break free and depict a figure standing tall against the odds in her “Man Against the Odds” series. She was also interested in Jewish life, learning and culture, and some of her works are of Old Testament figures, such as her sculptures *Saul, Joseph* and *Moses*.

Her work is on permanent display in throughout the UK including, Fitzroy Square and St Ethelberga's Church in London; The National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Nottinghamshire; Norwich and Bristol Cathedrals; Norris Lea, Kingsbury, Oxford and Leeds Synagogues; The Hebrew and Tel Aviv Universities.

Blake was concerned that her works 'spoke' and that no further explanation was necessary, saying, "don't talk sculpture, sculpt".

Her daughter, Anita Peleg, often gives talks about Naomi's life and work. She will be delivering a talk about her sculpture on March 18th. For information click [here](#)

-

Discover more about Naomi Blake with this extract from 'My Mothers Friends' by Harrow Film Makers: https://youtu.be/wjqGVAsFe_E