

***This Island Sunrise***  
curated by Simon Andrews

**8 Bury Street SW1Y**  
**31 August - 24 September 2023**  
**Opening: Thursday 31 August, 6-8pm**

*This Island Sunrise* celebrates a selected history of improvised British design, bringing together three remarkable thrones of artisanal construction spanning four centuries. Made respectively by the celebrated designer Tom Dixon (b. 1959), pioneering conceptual artist Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005), and an unknown 17th century woodturner, each unique object speaks to the storied narratives of British national identity woven through design and craft. Presented on the occasion of London Design Festival (16-24 September 2023), the exhibition is curated by Simon Andrews and presented by Sadie Coles HQ at the Bury Street gallery in St James's.



Distinguished by form and concept, each of the works are assembled using humble, rudimentary, or discarded materials and represent creators operating at the very extremities of their capabilities. Separated by centuries, two skeletal thrones delineate a narrative arc. Anchoring the installation, the *Turner's Throne* (c. 1640) signals earnest hand built production; establishing origins in the natural world and symbolic traditions. The throne is a portent of transition, delivered in an era when the regional and vernacular were gradually subsumed by the emergence of industrialised modern society. Revealed through a modern lens, Dixon's *Skeleton Throne* (1985) argues towards the closure of the industrial age, finding likeness in its maker.

Paolozzi's *Sculptor's Chair* (1985-87) offers a paradox to the companion thrones, proposing self-determination and sufficiency through pragmatism and reductive function. Collectively, the assembly of these thrones serves to stimulate an ambiguously interwoven contemplation upon origins, boundaries, authority and identity.

The installation evolves as a metaphysical interpretation of the traditional antiques shop — once a democratic feature of recycled commerce upon every high street, few now remain outside of specialised enclaves, such as St James's. As an unpredictable cabinet of curiosities, these vanishing environments offer valuable potential for improbable and unexpected encounters, forgotten artefacts whose power to communicate remains latent and undiminished, and enhanced by cross-reference to deliver unusual narratives. The three thrones, together with the selection of found objects and artefacts that complete the installation, have all at some point in their existence been released, discarded or even abandoned. Now curated, if only fleetingly for this exhibition, these objects may together conspire to offer collective perspective on our shared cultural history and identity.

On the occasion of London Design Festival, a curator-led tour of the show will take place on Tuesday 19 September, 7pm. To attend please email: [rsvp@sadiecoles.com](mailto:rsvp@sadiecoles.com)

The gallery will also open with special weekend hours:  
Saturday 16 September, 11am-6pm; Sunday 17 September, 11am-5pm  
Saturday 23 September, 11am-6pm; Sunday 24 September, 11am-5pm  
Normal gallery opening hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-6pm

**Simon Andrews** is an internationally respected expert with over 30 years' experience in the global market for Design. Previously Senior International Specialist for Christie's, Andrews has served on the authenticating committees for major international art and design fairs and is the founder of Andrews Art Advisory Ltd.

With special thanks to [Speirs Major](#) for the exhibition lighting design.

[www.sadiecoles.com](http://www.sadiecoles.com)

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## Curators Notes:

**Turner's Throne**  
English or Welsh  
circa 1640

Since the earliest advanced cultures, a throne has been accepted as the defining claim towards authority and the manifestation of hierarchical power. Traditionally a symbol of divine, secular or autocratic supremacy, the form may be distinguished by specific aesthetic and structural criteria that allows for unique and significant differentiation from the holder's entourage. These features may normally include a raised or elevated seating platform, often associated with a high backrest or canopy. As an extension of authority, armrests and pommels may be exaggerated or over-sized. Where decoration is applied, this will serve to communicate the domain over which the holder bears reign. The autocratic resonance of a throne is such that, even when empty, it may symbolise the everlasting presence of dynastic authority.

Executed around 1640, one may reflect that the *Turner's Throne* has borne silent witness to the arching trajectory of modern Britain, four centuries within which political, social, regional and international aspirations have sought to bear fruit. As the freshly-cut wood of the newly-made *Turner's Throne* began to cure and harden, Roundheads and Royalists wreaked internecine rampage through towns and fields of rural England. The monarchy was abolished, and was then re-instated. For London came pestilence then inferno, rebuilt as modern under Wren and Hawksmoor, before embracing an assured sense of destiny as Crown and Empire inaugurated a new Georgian era.

The talent of a turner was a singular one, skilled only in turning wooden rods to be slotted or pegged together for use as spokes in spinning wheels and spindles for furniture, or small domestic objects, bowls and candlesticks included. Theirs was an itinerant and rural craft, to which Britain's great forests of ash, oak and walnut provided ample resource. The turners supplied their community, which by the mid-seventeenth century also comprised the affluent yeomen, merchants and manufacturers of a new middle class, and for whom symbols and assets, thrones also perhaps, became an essential aspiration of new status and authority. Grandly rudimentary yet structurally efficient, the *Turner's Throne* celebrates the intuitive fluency of vernacular architecture, anticipating the minimalism to which the modern era would eventually aspire. A beam-and-post scaffold for status unencumbered by the distraction of decoration, and far from the constructed pretensions of the social elite. And so in substance and resonance the throne belongs to the soil, to the skies and the forests of an ancient Albion that acquiesces to no credo. Instead an indelible pagan reverie, a crafted totem to the Tree of Life.

**Tom Dixon (b. 1959)**  
***Skeleton Throne***  
 1985



With social discord disrupting both city centres and coal-mining shires, by the mid-1980s Britain had de-industrialised to reveal sparse and derelict terrain beneath. The iron that once built an Empire was now scrap sold by the tonne — fertile ammunition for a new generation of partisans who celebrated a noisy collage of *Merz* detritus, post-punk heavy metal romanticised with just a dash of pop Armageddon.

Retrospection may assign Dixon's *Skeleton Throne* as *Memento Mori*, an ergonomically calligraphic Dorian Gray, cheerfully assured of the inevitable impermanence of human endeavours, yet willing to offer us a seat for the ride. Or perhaps his are the skull-and-bones of the pirate's tattered wind-torn Jolly Roger, announcing buccaneering riposte to turbulent seas.

Dixon's is a message of necessary cultural evolution, an informal celebration of discarded fragments of an imperial heritage now scavenged and repurposed for shock and discomfort. A changing-of-the-guard over choppy waters, the memory of a mighty industrial revolution now welded firmly shut.

**Eduardo Paolozzi (1924 - 2005)**  
***Sculptor's Chair***  
 1985-1987



*A room without furniture, an empty house, a desert island — starting from scratch with a few packing cases.*

*In any of these situations the sculptor, after a lifetime of improvising, will reach for his tools. They are contained in a shallow box with a linen hinge and a rope handle. Another box contains the essentials of life — soap & salt, a towel and two mugs. To hang these minimal items on the wall a grill is made with the same dimensions as the boxes.*

*The grill also acts as a backrest for the boxes now transformed into a chair. Being geometric these boxes may evolve into a bed or, with additions stack to become a major storage unit.*

*Like the raw material itself, each part has a strength and individual identity and peculiar honesty, like Shaker furniture. Using basic box wood, an improvised look with the woodwork bearing the stamps of its travels or provenance, one is reminded of the early still life constructions of Picasso or Rodchenko.*

– Eduardo Paolozzi, 1987

Emphasising found objects, detritus, collage and improvisation Paolozzi pioneered the conceptual foundations of British and international Pop Art. Assembled from abandoned packing crates and timber appropriated from the delivery yard behind Zeev Aram's Covent Garden showroom, the *Sculptor's Chair* is a continuum of this narrative. The chair's construction is simple, efficient and effective. Hammer marks, pencil calibrations, knots and nails reveal a process that is assured and certain. Several of the boards conspicuously retain grease-pencil destinations or shipping labels, usurping their discarded aspirational objectives to create a new heraldry — a Utopian throne for the willing castaway.

For further information please contact the gallery at +44 (0)20 7493 8611 or [press@sadiecoles.com](mailto:press@sadiecoles.com).

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