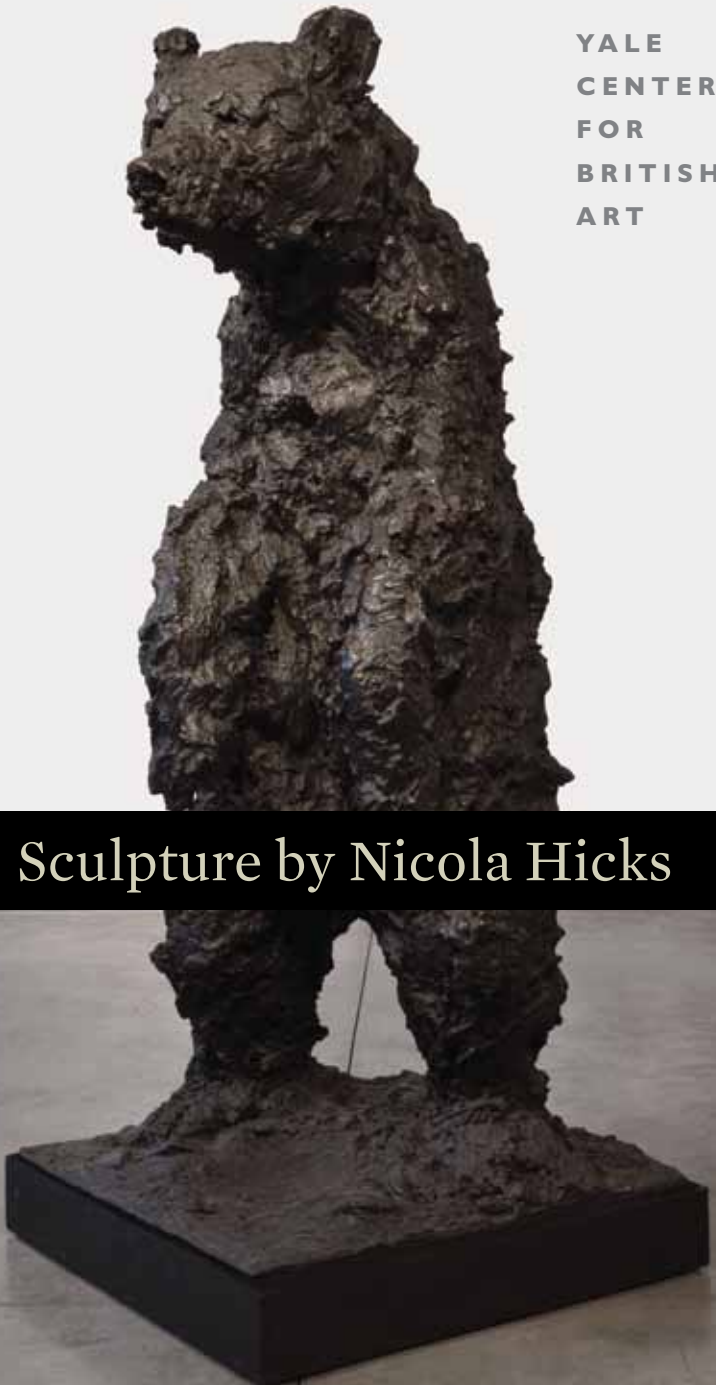


YALE  
CENTER  
FOR  
BRITISH  
ART

Sculpture by Nicola Hicks





*Foal*, 2009/2010, painted bronze, Mr. & Mrs. Leo A. Daly III Collection, © Nicola Hicks, photo by Lee B. Ewing

## Sculpture by Nicola Hicks

The work of the British sculptor Nicola Hicks is realistic and mythical by turn. The striking, often life-sized creatures she creates capture something of the physical and psychological vitality of living beings. This exhibition brings seven of Hicks's sculptures into dialogue with works selected by the artist from the collection of the Yale Center for British Art. Setting the contemporary alongside the historic, each inflecting the other, the exhibition offers an opportunity to approach the British tradition of animal painting through Hicks's unique perspective on the animal world.

Born in 1960, Hicks studied at the Chelsea School of Art before completing her master's degree at the Royal College of Art in 1985. From the outset she worked in a figurative mode, tenaciously building her career as a sculptor of animals at a time when abstract and conceptual trends dominated British art. She has since become celebrated for her compelling creatures, which have been collected widely and exhibited at leading museums and galleries around the world. Usually executed in straw and plaster, her works appear tactile and spontaneous, retaining a sense of the working process in the studio even when painstakingly cast into bronze. Her vividly animated sculptures and her large-scale drawings in charcoal and pastel are rooted in the study of anatomy and observation from life. But she is not concerned with mimetic representation. Instead, her life-like works communicate an organic emotional essence that is animalistic in form, yet uncannily human in character.

Nicola Hicks is represented by Flowers Gallery. A concurrent exhibition of her work is on view at Flowers Gallery, New York, 529 West 20th Street, from November 16, 2013 through January 11, 2014.

An interview with Nicola Hicks may be heard at [britishart.yale.edu/nicolahicks](http://britishart.yale.edu/nicolahicks).

## Nicola Hicks and Aesop's Fables

*A Donkey found a Lion's skin left in the forest by a hunter. He dressed himself in it, and amused himself by hiding in a thicket and rushing out suddenly at the animals who passed that way. All took to their heels the moment they saw him. The Donkey was so pleased to see the animals running away from him, just as if he were King Lion himself, that he could not keep from expressing his delight by a loud, harsh bray. A Fox, who ran with the rest, stopped short as soon as he heard the voice. Approaching the Donkey, he said with a laugh: "If you had kept your mouth shut you might have frightened me, too. But you gave yourself away with that silly bray."*

*A fool may deceive by his dress and appearance, but his words will soon show what he really is.*

—Adapted from *The Aesop for Children* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1919)

Two works in this exhibition are part of a recent group in which the artist explores the timeless relevance of Aesop's fables, a series of simple stories concerning failed ambition, mistaken conviction, and tragic mishap. The sculpture *Who was I Kidding* aims to conjure the shame of public humiliation, real or imagined. The donkey, which has been strutting in the borrowed guise of a lion, finds himself utterly exposed as the pelt slips from his back. The fables' author is depicted in the bust *Aesop*. Also wearing an animal's pelt, Aesop stands as a moral observer. There is a quiet expressivity to Hicks's creatures that resonates beyond their situations, suggesting that the animal acts partly as a proxy for human emotions.



*Who was I Kidding*, 2011, plaster and straw, © Nicola Hicks, photo courtesy Flowers Gallery

## Historic Animal Paintings

The animal paintings from the Center's collection were selected by the artist not for their historical meaning but because Hicks recognizes in them qualities for which she herself "strives daily." Whether laboriously painted or rapidly sketched, they are marked by a deep understanding of individual character. Of George Stubbs's *Water Spaniel*, she says: "I have loved this painting since childhood. It is an absolute lesson in portraiture, the product of untold hours of anatomical study, ending with an obsessive investigation into the depth and texture of fur." In contrast, quickly-made works, such as Sir Edwin Henry Landseer's *Study of a Greyhound* and Jacques-Laurent Agasse's *Study of a Grey Horse*, are "without guile or artifice, not possible without years of experience, yet seem executed in minutes." In making this diverse selection, Hicks hopes that viewers will take a fresh look at paintings that perhaps appear very familiar and see something new in them.



Jacques-Laurent Agasse, *Study of a Grey Horse*, ca. 1800, oil on paper, Paul Mellon Collection, B2001.2.155

## Nicola Hicks and Portraits

All of Hicks's sculptures may be considered portraits or even double-portraits, as they are often inspired by beast and man simultaneously. Individual characters, as well as the dynamics of relationships, are the almost imperceptible starting points for Hicks's conceptions, which may then take the form of an animal or a hybrid body. Her animal heads, like portrait busts, are concentrated studies of character. The bear, *His Price is Everything*, with its haughty turn of the head, appears powerful and knowing, evoking the shamanic being in Ted Hughes's poem "The Bear," which inspired this work. As Hicks explains, the convergence of the physical, social, and emotional worlds of animals and people is "the very essence . . . I am constantly striving for as I push portraits from objective to subjective."



*His Price is Everything*, 2011, bronze, © Nicola Hicks, photo courtesy Flowers Gallery



Tilly Kettle, *Shuja-ud-daula, Nawab of Oudh*, 1772, oil on canvas, Paul Mellon Collection, B1976.748

## Historic Portraits

The portraits selected by the artist include human as well as animal portraits, which reflect her interest in finding the point where “the boundaries between beast and human become blurred.” Indeed, Hicks describes her studies of bears in terms of portraiture, having found the qualities that she herself seeks to capture evoked by the Center’s collection of historic portraits. Responding to Tilly Kettle’s portrait of the Nawab of Oudh, she writes: “It is so exactly what I have been striving for in *Black* and *His Price is Everything*.” Here she sees a man “noble and proud, yet dented by life.” By contrast, in William Barraud’s *A Couple of Foxhounds with a Terrier, the Property of Lord Henry Bentinck*, she recognizes the painter’s profound understanding of the “social structure” uniting the animals. This painting, “despite the human accoutrements, is about the relationships between dogs,” individuals in a pack. Hicks’s eclectic selection offers a prompt to read character and behavior—whether human or animal—in new ways.



William Barraud, *A Couple of Foxhounds with a Terrier, the Property of Lord Henry Bentinck* ca. 1845, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

## Works in the Exhibition by Nicola Hicks

Nicola Hicks, born 1960

### *Limbic Champion*

2003, bronze  
27¾ x 22¼ x 21¼ in.  
(70.5 x 56.5 x 54 cm)

Louis-Dreyfus Family  
Collection

### *Black*

2008, bronze  
75 x 29¾ x 39½ in.  
(190 x 75 x 100 cm)

Louis-Dreyfus Family  
Collection

### *Foal*

2009/2010, painted bronze  
41 x 22¼ x 16¾ in.  
(104.1 x 56.5 x 42.5 cm)

Mr. & Mrs. Leo A. Daly III  
Collection

(**note:** this sculpture is located  
in the Center’s Entrance Court)

### *Who was I Kidding*

2011, plaster and straw  
47 x 59¼ x 26 in.  
(119.4 x 149.9 x 66 cm)

Flowers Gallery

### *Aesop*

2011, plaster  
23½ x 19½ x 15 in.  
(60 x 50 x 38 cm)  
Flowers Gallery

### *His Price is Everything*

2011, bronze  
31 x 22 x 19½ in.  
(79 x 56 x 50 cm)  
Flowers Gallery

### *Brave*

2012, bronze  
26¼ x 19½ x 23½ in.  
(67 x 50 x 60 cm)  
Flowers Gallery

front cover:  
Nicola Hicks, *Black*, 2008, bronze, Louis-Dreyfus  
Family Collection, © Nicola Hicks, photo courtesy  
Flowers Gallery

back cover:  
Nicola Hicks, *Aesop*, 2011, plaster, © Nicola Hicks,  
photo courtesy Flowers Gallery

## Selected works from the Center's collection

Jacques-Laurent Agasse,  
1767–1849  
*Study of a Grey Horse*  
ca. 1800, oil on paper  
8½ x 12 in. (21.6 x 30.8 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B2001.2.155

Jacques-Laurent Agasse,  
1767–1849  
*Study of a Fox*  
Between 1810 and 1830,  
oil on paper laid to board  
6¼ x 8½ in. (15.9 x 21.6 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B2001.2.49

Richard Ansdell, 1815–1885  
*Studies for the Portraits of  
Lord Eglinton, Lord Douglas  
and Lord Stradbroke in “The  
Waterloo Cup Coursing  
Meeting” (in the Walker  
Art Gallery), 1840*  
Before 1841, oil on millboard  
Each oval: 5 x 4 in. (13 x 10.5 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B2001.2.133

William Barraud, 1810–1850  
*A Couple of Foxhounds with  
a Terrier, the Property of Lord  
Henry Bentinck*  
ca. 1845, oil on canvas  
44 x 56 in. (111.8 x 142.2 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B2001.2.177

Henry Calvert, active 1826–1854  
*Portrait of Thomas Cholmondeley,  
1st Lord Delamere, on His Hunter*  
(study for *The Cheshire Hunt  
at Tatton Park*)  
ca. 1839, oil on panel  
16 x 12 in. (40.6 x 30.5 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B2001.2.259

Henry Bernard Chalon,  
1771–1849  
*The Duchess of York's Spaniel*  
1804, oil on millboard  
7 x 8½ in. (17.8 x 21.9 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B2001.2.185

George Jones, 1786–1869  
*A Highlander, Black Watch  
attending a General of Hussars,  
possibly Lord Uxbridge: a study  
for “The Battle of Waterloo”*  
1815, oil on board  
8¾ x 14¾ in. (22.2 x 37.5 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B2001.2.180

Tilly Kettle, 1735–1786  
*Shuja-ud-daula,  
Nawab of Oudh*  
1772, oil on canvas  
50 x 40 in. (127.3 x 101.9 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B1976.7.48

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer,  
1802–1873  
*Portrait of Mr. Van Amburgh,  
As He Appeared with His  
Animals at the London Theatres*  
1846–47, oil on canvas  
69¼ x 94 in. (175.9 x 238.8 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B1977.14.61

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer,  
1802–1873  
*Study of a Greyhound*  
ca. 1860, oil on card  
5 x 3¾ in. (12.7 x 9.5 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B2006.14.10

George Stubbs, 1724–1806  
*Self-Portrait*  
ca. 1759, oil on copper  
5½ x 4¼ in. (14 x 10.8 cm)  
Paul Mellon Fund, B2006.16

George Stubbs, 1724–1806  
*Brown and White Norfolk or  
Water Spaniel*  
1778, oil on panel  
31¾ x 38¼ in. (80.6 x 97.2 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
2001.2.10

Sir David Wilkie, 1785–1841  
*Sketch for “The Reading  
of a Will”*  
1820, oil on board  
7½ x 10 in. (19.1 x 25.4 cm)  
Paul Mellon Collection,  
B1981.25.679



*Sculpture by Nicola Hicks*

November 14, 2013–March 9, 2014

This exhibition has been organized by the Yale Center for British Art and selected by Nicola Hicks in conjunction with Martina Droth, Associate Director of Research and Education, and Curator of Sculpture, with the assistance of Lars Kokkonen, Postdoctoral Research Associate.

Yale Center for British Art  
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[britishart.yale.edu](http://britishart.yale.edu)

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