

BACK TO THE CAVE: THE FULL SPECTRUM
UNDERGROUND SCULPTURE AT CLEARWELL CAVES
In collaboration with Gallery Pangolin

23 May–31 August 2025.

Press opening and tour with Rungwe Kingdon and Claude Koenig:
Wednesday 21 May at 12.30pm



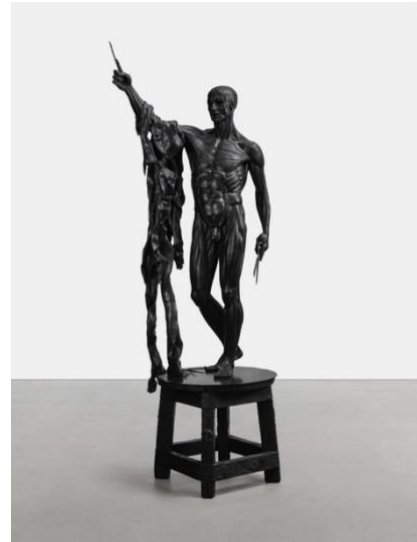
JULIE BROOK: *Strata*, April 2025. Carved drawing, red ochre pigment, L:1050 cm. Photo: Marsha Dunstan.

BACK TO THE CAVE: THE FULL SPECTRUM is an exhibition of modern and contemporary sculpture, curated by Rungwe Kingdon and Claude Koenig, that will take place in the ancient Clearwell Caves from 23 May–31 August 2025. The exhibition, focused on the theme of colour, will involve just under sixty British and international modern and contemporary artists, and include works by Geoffrey Clarke, Lynn Chadwick, Maggi Hambling, Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, Polly Morgan, Conrad Shawcross, Gavin Turk, Monira Al Qadiri, Tavares Strachan, Liz West and Hannah Lim.

Visitors to the exhibition will follow a planned route – 550 metres long and up to 30.5 metres below ground – where they will encounter a combination of known sculptures in a new underground setting, together with new and site-specific works.



Left: ANTONY GORMLEY, *Cotch*, 2015. Photo: Stephen White & Co.



Right: DAMIEN HIRST, *Saint Bartholomew, Exquisite Pain*, 2006. Photo: Prudence Cumming Associates.

Orchestrated by Gallery Pangolin, together with the highly-skilled logistics team from Pangolin Editions, it is the ochre mined at Clearwell Caves, that has prompted the theme of the exhibition: to tell a story of colour. Rungwe Kingdon, the founder of Pangolin Editions and a maker, explains: "This exhibition is an exploration of sculpture in an environment which echoes that of the earliest art we know. Contemporary sculpture comes in a dizzying array of images and media and, so as to make some sense of the diversity and create a contemporary context, Claude [Koenig] and I have chosen colour as a unifying theme. It remains an important reason the caves still function, mining the ochre pigments for artists' paints. We are going to take visitors on a journey through colour, along the passages and through the caverns of Clearwell Caves."

Strata is a carved drawing in which land artist, Julie Brook has followed the vein of iron ore running through the hard crease limestone. Using the red ochre pigment mined from deeper down in the caves she has applied this to the freshly carved line echoing the strata inherently in the rock face. "The ore breaks out more easily and sometimes unpredictably due to its stalactitic structure which gives this uneven quality of line, while the iron strata itself gives the line its rhythm and flow. The vertical axe marks on the rock face originate from the late medieval times, in the 1400s, when people were mining the brush iron ore in this area. It is powerful to be linked across the long breadth of human time in relation to the vast span of geological time," says Brook who spent many days in April working on the piece which will now be a permanent fixture at Clearwell.

She Came in Through the Bathroom Window, 2023, is part of an ongoing series by Sarah Lucas, within which all the works differ quite a lot. Lucas says, "I have selected this figure imagining that its posture will have particular significance in the environment of the cave and specifically underground. Likewise the colour has something internal about it, I'd say."

Cotch, 2015, by Antony Gormley is made from a concentrated earth material: iron. The work is based on a 3D registration of a lived moment in time. The attitude of the body is rendered as a series of interlocking and stacked blocks. Gormley says, "The challenge with these works has always been to find a way to use this architectonic language to treat the body as

a condition: being, not doing. Showing the work in a cave system that was used to mine iron is an exciting prospect. I have always wanted the work to be grounded and become a place for people's thoughts and feelings to dwell. Planting the sculpture inside the body of the earth, I believe, will make this more possible." (Antony Gormley, March 2025)

Maggi Hambling's sculpture of her muse and lover Henrietta Moraes, *Henrietta Eating a Meringue*, 2001, is a voracious exchange between the meringue and the mouth, the mouth devouring the meringue and vice versa. This seminal sculpture, first shown at Hambling's retrospective at the British Museum (Touch), also relates for the artist to the North Sea waves devouring the shingle on the Suffolk coast. A universal response to the timeless movement and challenge of the natural world.

Clearwell Caves is part of a vast natural cave system – one of the most complex in Britain – located on the edge of the Wye Valley in Gloucestershire. The site forms part of a network of more than 1,000 acres of iron-rich caves that have been mined for ochre pigments and iron ore for over 5,000 years. Owned by the Wright family since 1968, whose ancestors have mined in the Forest of Dean for centuries, the caves continue to produce ochre on a small scale*, with natural colours including purple (a dark hue native to the Forest of Dean), golden yellow and English red ochre. Clearwell Caves are believed to be among the earliest – and the last – ochre mines in the British Isles.

Confirmed modern and contemporary artists in *Back To The Cave: The Full Spectrum* will include: Monira Al Qadiri, Olivia Bax, Bruce Beasley, Hamish Black, Julie Brook, Jon Buck, Rachel Carter, Daniel Chadwick, Lynn Chadwick, Alex Chinneck, Ann Christopher, Geoffrey Clarke, Terence Coventry, Rayvenn D'Clark, Ian Dawson, Steve Dilworth, Paul De Monchaux, Abigail Fallis, Sally Fawkes, Sue Freeborough, Antony Gormley, Nigel Hall, Maggi Hambling, Nicola Hicks, Damien Hirst, John Hoskin, Steve Hurst, Richard Jackson, Jonathan Kingdon, Bryan Kneale, Hannah Lim, Jeff Lowe, Sarah Lucas, Susie MacMurray, Anita Mandl, Briony Marshall, Charlotte Mayer, Polly Morgan, Daniel Nadler, Breon O'Casey, Eilis O'Connell, Isaac Okwir, Peter Oloya, Angela Palmer, Merete Rasmussen, Colin Reid, Lorraine Robbins, Conrad Shawcross, STIK, Tavares Strachan, Almuth Tebbenhoff, Lisa Traxler, William Tucker, Gavin Turk, Keith Tyson, Patricia Volk, Moritz Waldemeyer, Jason Wason, and Liz West.

There will be a variety of media in the show ranging from bronze, steel and copper, to plastic, rubber, natural stone, wood, concrete, glass, resin and neon.

For further press information and images, please contact Sophie Money, Money+Art Ltd, smoney@moneyplusart.com or +44 (0)7718 002453

An illustrated catalogue with photography by Steve Russell Studios will accompany the exhibition.

Clearwell Caves, The Rocks, Clearwell, Coleford, Gloucestershire GL168JR.

Open daily, including weekends (closed on Tuesday and Wednesday)

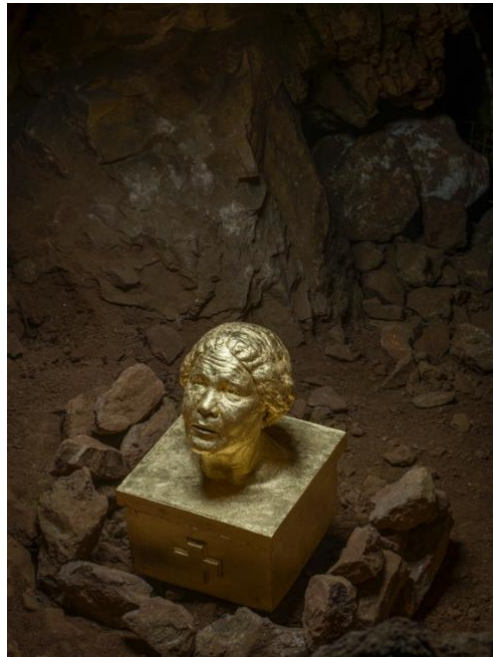
Admission to exhibition and caves: Adults £12.50; Concessions £12; Children (4-16) £10;

Families (2+2) £42; Families (2+3) £50.



Left: LYNN CHADWICK (1914-2003) *Star V (519)*, 1966. Bronze, 63 x 33 x 29 cm. Edition of 8.

Right: HANNAH LIM (b. 1998), *Orchid Table*, 2024. Painted bronze & steel, Edition 1 of 3, 75 x 49 x 47 cm.



Left, Susie MacMurray (b.1959), *Stalactite*, 2025, paper and earth wax. Unique, 160 x 90 x 90 cm.

Right, TAVARES STRACHAN (b.1979) *Mary Seacole*, Ceramic with applied gold leaf, 48cm high x 32cm wide x 32cm. Photos: Steve Russell Studios.



Clearwell Caves entrance, April 2025. Photos Marsha Dunstan.

Footnote:

Ochre is a natural clay earth pigment, a mixture of varying amounts of clay and iron oxides, which are thought to have been mined at Clearwell Caves for more than 7,000 years since the Middle Stone Age. Freemining is an ancient mining custom practised in the Forest of Dean. Local inhabitants have exclusively taken minerals from the ground since prehistoric times and for as long as people have lived in the region. Freeminers are entitled to dig for coal, iron ore and precious ochres in the Forest of Dean in line with their strict birthright. Jonathan Wright is the last Freeminer to mine ochre and iron ore.



Walkway and cavern at Clearwell Caves, April 2025. Photo: Marsha Dunstan



The Ochre Man, 2022, by STIK. Red ochre on limestone, unique, 800 x 800 cm, at Clearwell Caves.
Photo: Marsha Dunstan.