



Anthony Caro & James Capper
Heavy Metal
Press Release

22 April – 23 May 2026

Heavy Metal brings together the seminal works by **Anthony Caro** (1924–2013) with the pioneering practice of **James Capper** (b. 1987). The exhibition explores a cross-generational dialogue, tracing the evolution of British sculpture from the abstract revolution of the 1960s, to Capper's mechanical age.

Caro's return to the UK in 1959 marked a fundamental shift in the landscape of modern art. After encountering the work of David Smith in the United States, he began constructing large abstract sculptures that disregarded existing artistic conventions. Caro's North American travels enabled him to transcend the rule-breaking dynamism of his transatlantic contemporaries. *Heavy Metal* features four of Caro's iconic tabletop works, demonstrating his mastery of an industrial vocabulary that rejected traditional bronze in favour of raw, welded steel and block colour. By painting these sculptural works in gloss paint, Caro unified varied elements into a singular cohesive unit. These sculptures, works of pure abstraction, reclaim the shape of the table as a participant in the artistic process, cascading over the edge of the tabletop like fluid elements.

Not only did he meet Caro, but Capper was able to exhibit the movement of one of his early hydraulic sculptures before him. This critical moment serves as a benchmark from which the development of his practice can be explored. Since then, Capper has worked with industrial materials on a small and large scale. Capper's *Rotary* series—painted by hydraulic-powered rotary machines that were constructed by the artist—indexes his various areas of artistic inquiry. This includes his interest in the use of colour, the potential for hydraulic engineering to mimic innate biological movement, and the appropriation of industrial materials in the artistic process. Exhibiting two *Rotary* paintings grounds the sculpture presented in *Heavy Metal* by offering a visual depiction of the fundamental interests continually explored throughout Capper's diverse output.

Heavy Metal further presents four *Nipper* sculptures alongside Caro's tabletop works. This family of sculpture epitomises Capper's creative inquiry, being designed with a mechanical intent emerging from Capper's fascination with biomimicry while simultaneously adopting a visual and material language established by Caro. This can be seen through the use of orange industrial paint and powder coated steel. When powered, these objects transition from a static state to a living extension of the artist's practice, connecting the divide between fine art and heavy industry. The *Nipper* works present four different designs for teeth that can be used, given the hydraulic element of each sculpture, to cut through materials.

Trained as a welder, Capper's work exists at the intersection of engineering and biology. Emulating teeth and talons, *RIPPER* and *ATLAS TINES* explore how sculptural engineering might draw from nature to achieve practical results through a detailed design process. Capper stands at the forefront of sculptural practice today, bringing a visual language that was developed by Caro towards a new mechanical age, one hydraulic step at a time.

The presentation at Albion Jeune will be followed by a large-scale presentation of indoor and outdoor sculpture, opening at Albion Barn in Oxfordshire, in June 2026. The Albion Barn opening will be accompanied by a publication exploring Anthony Caro's enduring legacy and his continued influence on James Capper's own artistic practice. The publication will also include an academic essay written by Deyan Sudjic, writer and former director of the Design Museum, which further draws out the significance of this dual presentation.

**Excerpt from Deyan Sudjic's Forthcoming Essay
Published in *Heavy Metal***

Capper has based himself in what was Wroughton airfield's fire station. Set beside the former aircraft hangers his studio is a relatively modest size, but its up-and-over doors make manoeuvring a forklift truck in and out much more straightforward than they were in his previous studio. There is room for an assortment of Capper's work, his machines and a stock of steel. But the move marked more than a change of address and a more affordable and comfortable location for Capper to work in. It can be seen as a point of transition from his early career when he formed part of the community of young artists in South East London. They showed their work at Bold Tendencies, exhibiting on the upper floors of Peckham's redundant multistorey car park that has become famous as an independent centre for creativity.

Leaving London behind in his thirties invited a certain amount of introspection about the next stage of his career. Taking part in *Heavy Metal*, the Albion exhibition that pairs his work with that of Antony Caro, is a chance for reflecting on Capper's work at a significant moment, and also to look again at that of Caro, one of Britain's most influential sculptors of the 20th century. It is also a reminder of the significance of Caro's own interest in the work of other artists. In the course of his lifetime, he would exchange works with those artists that he was close to, including Kenneth Noland and Helen Frankenthaler. He first met Frankenthaler who was primarily a painter in 1959. At one particularly significant period in their careers, she spent three weeks in Caro's London studio, working with his assistants to make sculptural work.

Artists don't necessarily need to share objectives and experiences for it to make sense to show their work side by side, and to see a fruitful outcome. Caro and Capper were born generations apart, and began their careers in very different circumstances. Caro studied engineering at Cambridge, deciding to become an artist only after completing his compulsory military service. He was at the Royal Academy schools at a time when higher education was still free, but when Britain had not yet emerged fully from post war austerity. There was still no commercial market for contemporary art to speak of in London. Discussion and debate in the art world took place almost exclusively in the art schools, and young artists depended on what they earned from teaching in them to support themselves. Famously, Caro worked as an assistant to Henry Moore before going through the liberating experience of spending time in America.

Sudjic's full essay will be published in *Heavy Metal*, available from the opening of the presentation at Albion Barn.

Anthony Caro (b. New Malden, 1924, d. London, 2013) played a pivotal role in the development of twentieth-century sculpture. In the early 1960s, he began making brightly painted, abstract steel structures that he positioned directly on the floor, the omission of a pedestal marking a radical shift in the dynamic between work and viewer. Using prefabricated steel elements salvaged from scrap yards alongside found objects from his material surrounds, Caro developed new ways of making sculpture that would be more immediately expressive. Throughout his career Caro worked extensively in steel but also in a diverse range of other materials including bronze, silver, lead, clay, stoneware, wood, paper and perspex.

Caro's constant reinvention of the language of sculpture, as well as his influential teaching at St. Martin's School of Art in London, distinguished him as the successor to artists such as Henry Moore and David Smith. This also led to major collaborations with architects Frank Gehry, Tadeo Ando, and Norman Foster, the latter of whom he worked with on the *Millenium Bridge* (1997-2000) alongside engineers Arup. At the turn of the millennium Caro engaged in multiple large-scale series of narrative works including *The Last Judgement* (1995-99) and *The Chapel of Light* (2008) in Beaubourg, France.

Mid-career retrospectives of Caro's work were held at the Hayward Gallery, London (1969), and Museum of Modern Art, New York (1975). In 1992, the British Council organized an exhibition of his sculpture in the ancient setting of Trajan's Market in Rome, followed by a major exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, in 1995. In celebration of Caro's eightieth birthday, Tate Britain, London, staged a retrospective in 2005. In 2011, a selection of works dating from 1960 through 2010 were exhibited in the Roof Garden of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Caro's 2013 retrospective at Museo Correr, Venice, coincided with the 55th Biennale di Venezia and was on view at the time of the artist's death. In 2015 The Hepworth Wakefield and Yorkshire Sculpture Park held a joint retrospective to celebrate and commemorate Caro's life and work. Knighted in 1987, he was awarded the Praemium Imperiale Prize for Sculpture by the Japan Art Association in 1992, and was inducted into the Order of Merit in 2000—the first sculptor to be so since Henry Moore in 1963.

James Capper (b. 1987, London) uses his background in agricultural mechanics to fabricate large-scale mobile sculptures. Trained as a welder and a graduate of the Royal College of Art, Capper's work combines drawing with speculative engineering and biology, producing mobile sculpture. These operate within 'divisions' of engagement with the world in Earth Marking, Aviation, Materials Handling, and Offshore environments. Each 'division' develops from a prototype, both technically and aesthetically, as Capper constantly experiments with new engineering solutions.

Solo exhibitions of the artist's work have taken place at the Royal Academy of Arts, London (2024); Albion Jeune, London (2024); Albion Barn, Oxford (2022); Alex Eagle Studio, London (2022); MONA, Barriedale (2021); Forth Arts Residency, Sydney (2019) Hannah Barry Gallery, London (2018); and Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst (2017), among others. In 2020, the artist was commissioned by the Battersea Power Station to create MUDSKIPPER WALKING WORKBOAT, and in 2023 he was commissioned by Gallery Town to create Camellia, presented by Nicholas Serota. The artist participated in group exhibitions held at Hannah Barry Gallery, London (2022); Safehouse 1, London (2022); Alma Zevi, Venice (2021); Albion Barn, Oxford (2021); Serpentine Galleries, London (2018); and the Science Museum, London (2018), among others. In 2011, James Capper received the Royal Society of British Sculptors Bursary Award. In 2009 he was the youngest artist ever awarded The Jack Goldhill Prize for Sculpture from the Royal Academy of Arts and was nominated for the Jerwood Sculpture Prize. In 2023, Capper was the only artist presented at the Science Museum in an exhibition on leading engineers, globally. His work is held in the Science Museum's permanent collection.

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