

# DR MARK WILSHER

Artist Boss

ORCID Reference: 0000-0002-7959-9671

Output Reference: NUA-MW-02

Output Date: 2016-17

**DR MARK WILSHER**  
Artist Boss

## **CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION**

- 1 Supporting Statement 1
- 2 Research Process 2
- 3 Research Insights 3-7
- 4 Dissemination 8

## 1. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

<b>Output title</b>	Artist Boss
<b>Output type</b>	Multi-Component Output: M - Exhibition, B - Edited Book
<b>Output date</b>	2016-17

*Artist Boss* critically interrogates notions of lineage and tradition in British sculpture by focusing on the role and artistic career of the studio assistant, specifically within the studio of Sir Anthony Caro. The project was conceived in 2010 in Caro's studio from discussion amongst Caro and his studio assistants. It was a collaboration between Mark Wilsher and Jenny Dunseath, initiated by Dunseath when she worked at Norwich University of the Arts (NUA) and developed as a partnership between Norwich University of the Arts and Bath Spa University.

Dunseath and Wilsher developed the project themes and research as co-curators of the project. Wilsher's research focused on the relationship between Caro's work and that produced by four of the artists who had worked as his studio assistants, editing and analysing interviews conducted by Dunseath and conducting studio visits. This resulted in the second exhibition of the project at the New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park, Salisbury, co-curated with Dunseath. He also led in researching and planning the publication, and contributed to the planning, layout and content of the website. Two key strands of the research were to consider the role played by the assistant in the production of works by Caro and to examine the kinds of knowledge passed on to the assistant by the 'Artist Boss'.

The research provides new insights into Caro's practice and methods, the professional role of the studio assistant and issues of authorship and fabrication within sculptural practice. It also develops insights into different learning contexts for fine art: assistantships, training, formal education.

Wilsher's research was disseminated in an exhibition, a publication and the project website.

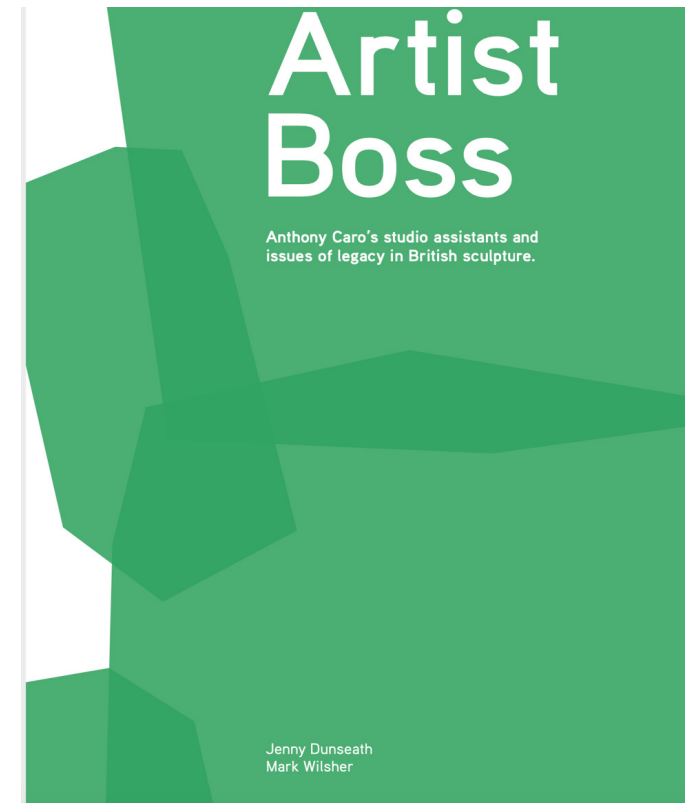


Fig.1 Front cover of Artist Boss publication

## 2. RESEARCH PROCESS

The project was initiated by Dunseath who had worked as one of Caro's studio assistants. She was a lecturer in Fine Art at Norwich University of the Arts from 2009 to 2014 and continued to lead the project when she moved to Bath Spa University. Dunseath undertook the interviews in the first stage of the research. Two group interviews took place in November 2010 and fifteen solo interviews with studio assistants, who worked with Caro over a period from 1966 to his death in 2013, occurred in 2015.

Wilsher led in editing and analysing the interviews, researching and developing the 'New Art Centre' exhibition and in planning the publication. The exhibition evolved through undertaking studio visits and in dialogue with potential gallery partners over a two-year period. Wilsher visited the studios of Ian Dawson, John Gibbons, and John Wallbank, as well as negotiating loans from Caro's studio Barford Sculptures Ltd. The exhibition showed Anthony Caro's work from each period the four assistants featured worked for him, potentially sculptures they had worked on, alongside contemporary work by the artists who had formerly been Caro assistants.

Wilsher and Dunseath approached and had discussions with a number of galleries (including Tate Britain, Hayward Touring, Raven Row, the Henry Moore Institute) before the New Art Centre agreed to stage the *Artist Boss* exhibition. This consisted of thirteen works: five works by Anthony Caro from the 1960s, '70s, '90s and 2000s, with contemporary work by Ian Dawson, John Gibbons, John Wallbank and Guy Martin.

A video documenting studio visits and the installation of the Pool Exhibition curated by Jenny Dunseath (The Cut, Halesworth) and the *Artist Boss* Exhibition, curated by Jenny Dunseath and Mark Wilsher (New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park) is available at: <https://vimeo.com/527204485/3bf2cd36f5>

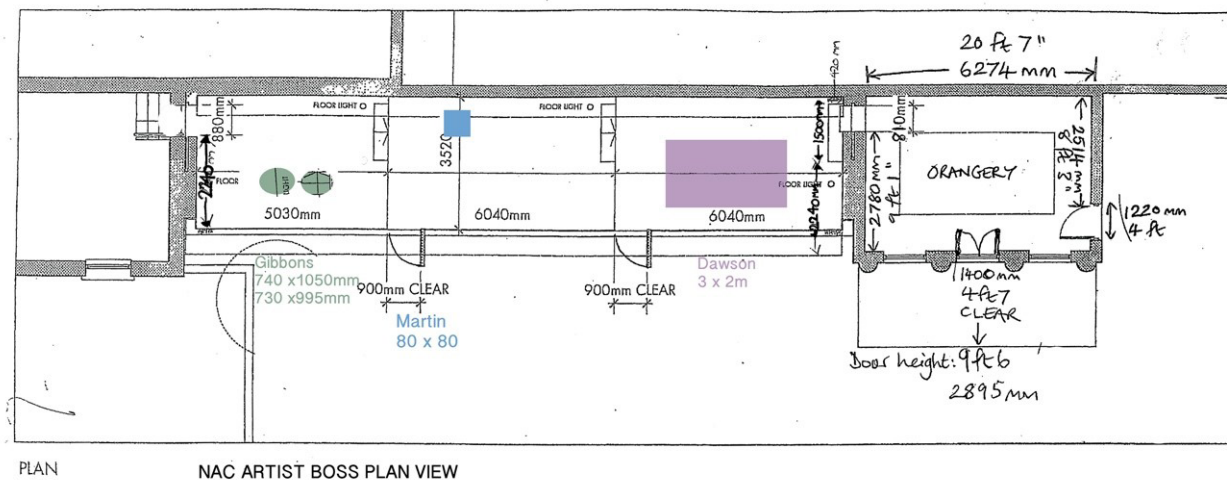


Fig.2 Exhibition plan 1 of 6

### 3. RESEARCH INSIGHTS

The research provides new insights into Caro's practice and methods, as well as the professional role of the studio assistant. There had been very little previous work on the role of the studio assistant, and no one had looked so extensively into Caro's workshop practices. The exhibitions allowed audiences to draw direct comparisons between the work of the studio assistants and their employer, to consider questions of authorship and fabrication. This relates to broader themes of sculptural inheritance, influence and tradition. The exhibition at the New Art Centre reflected the diversity of ways the former assistants responded or reacted to the tradition of improvised welded steel sculpture in their own work. The research also developed insights in relation to fine art teaching and communities of practice.

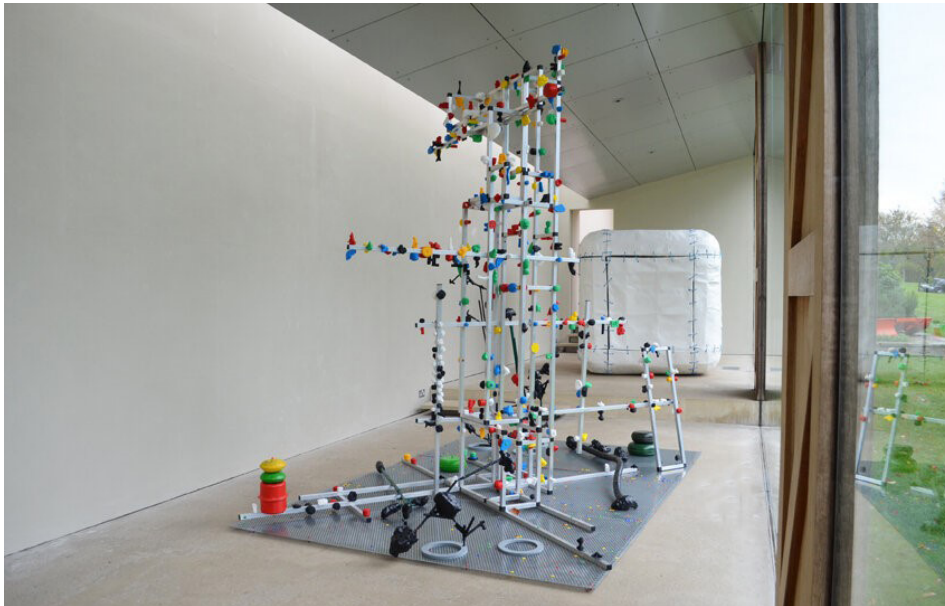


Fig.3 *Artist Boss* Exhibition installation view in the gallery Near: Ian Dawson ID.02.07.1816 Far: John Wallbank *Untitled (sewn cube)*. Image courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park



Fig.4 *Artist Boss* Exhibition installation view in the gallery Near: Ian Dawson ID.02.07.1816 Far: John Gibbons *Binary Binarius*. Image courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park



Fig.5 *Artist Boss* Exhibition installation view in the gallery. Left: Anthony Caro *Table Piece LXXV* (1969) Right: Guy Martin *Cold Climate*. Image courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park



Fig.6 *Artist Boss* Exhibition installation view in the gallery. Guy Martin *Standing in Silence*. Image courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park





Fig.7 *Artist Boss* Exhibition installation view in park. Anthony Caro *Purling* (1969) Image courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park & Barford Sculptures Limited



Fig.8 *Artist Boss* Exhibition installation view in park. Anthony Caro *Thunder* (1976) Image courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park & Barford Sculptures Limited



Fig.9 *Artist Boss* Exhibition installation view in park. Anthony Caro *Equator* (1993/94) Image courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park & Barford Sculptures Limited



Fig.10 *Artist Boss* Exhibition installation view in park. Anthony Caro *Magnolia Passage* (2005/06) Image courtesy New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park & Barford Sculptures Limited



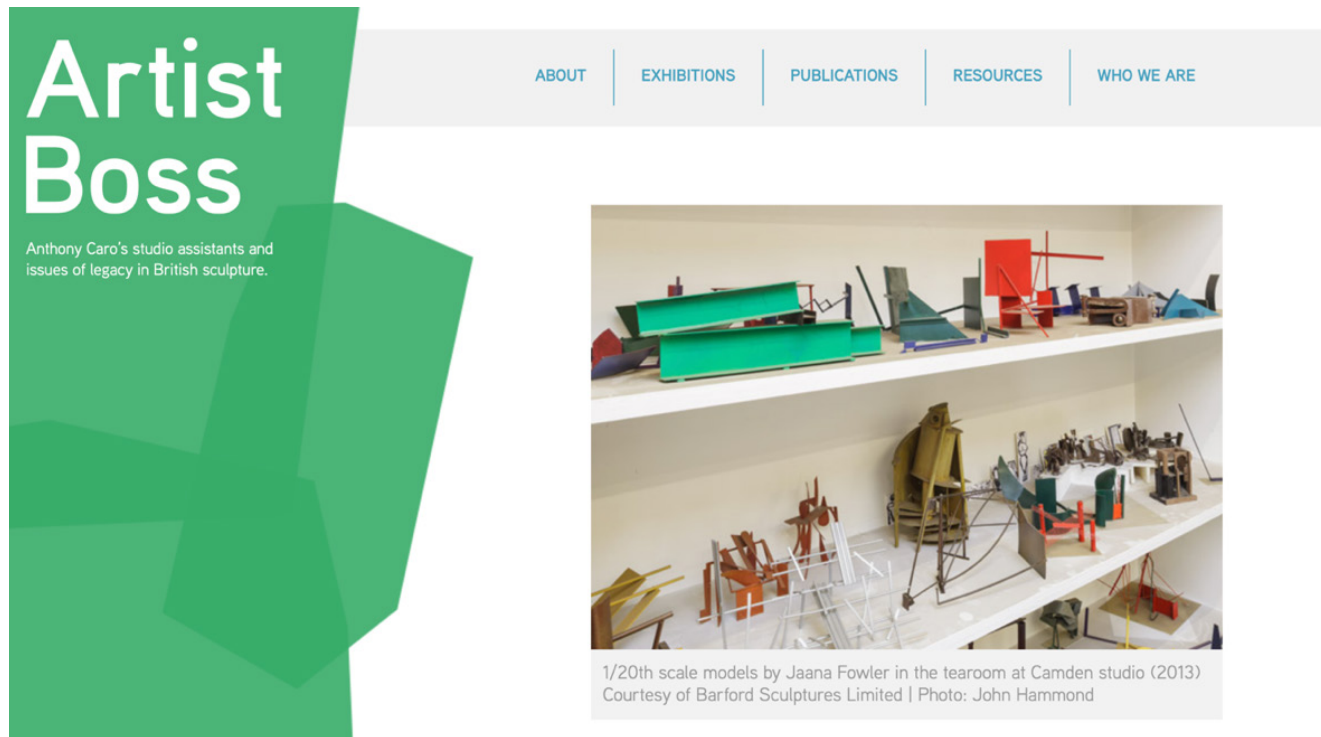


Fig.11 Screenshot of *Artist Boss* website

## 4. DISSEMINATION

Wilsher's research for the project was disseminated in a publication, an exhibition, and a website.

1. Book *Artist Boss: Anthony Caro's Studio assistants and issues of legacy in British sculpture*, Jenny Dunseath & Mark Wilsher (eds), 191 pages, Wunderkammer Press, Bath 2016 ISBN: 978-0-9935511-0-9 Essay: *Artist Boss: Anthony Caro's Studio assistants and issues of legacy in British sculpture*, Jenny Dunseath & Mark Wilsher, pp. 20-27
2. Exhibition co-curated by Jenny Dunseath and Mark Wilsher: *Artist Boss*, New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park, Salisbury, 19 November 2016 – 29 January 2017. Work by Anthony Caro, and former studio assistants: Ian Dawson, John Gibbons, Guy Martin and John Wallbank <http://www.artistboss.org.uk/artist-boss-roche-court> (accessed 22 March 2021)
3. Website: *Artist Boss* <http://www.artistboss.org.uk> (accessed 22 March 2021)

*A digital version of the Artist Boss book follows.*



NORWICH  
UNIVERSITY  
OF THE ARTS