



Alex J Wood

Explorer



MOCA London

27 November - 17 December 2022

## Explorer

MOCA London is pleased to present new bronze sculptures by Alex J Wood that were inspired by his residency at Sala I in Rome. Wood was presented the residency as a prize for his bronze sculptures presented to the Royal Society of British Artists in 2021.

Wood is that particular sort of Englishman, with that very British sort of sly humour. His bronzes are not only quirky but they are often actually very funny. It is hard to make a work of sculpture intelligent and funny, for it to tell a visual joke that is not a pratfall. When viewers see his Palm Trees (*Pina Colada Palm*, 2020, *The Palm After the Storm*, 2020 - recently exhibited at Paul Smith's Bond Street store) swaying, or a juicy bronze burger (*Whopper*, 2022), they are reminded of a sort of Britishness that comes from having grown up in Kent. The sculptures recall holidays in Mallorca, Tenerife, LA, or nights in Ibiza yet they are extremely well made bronzes that have been wonderfully patinated or cold painted in bright colours. They take a lot of work to make them look so calmly timeless.

Like a good joke, they have to be honed and the end results are from a lot of hard work that the viewer never sees and if they do, the joke is bust. It has to appear effortless, seamless and as if it rolled off the tongue or out of his fingers. Even his works that allude to mythical creatures (*Scylla and Charybdis*, 2020, *Hydra*, 2022) or spaceships and airplanes leave the viewer bemused. They certainly do not look like your child could make them, but neither are they hyper realistic, if I say they are Wooden, it is a poor joke on his name, but what I mean is that they all look like only Alex Wood could have made them.

**Dr. Michael Petry**







## Sala I

Alex J Wood intersected with Rome and Sala I in April, 2022. His visit to the city but also the whole of Italy was unprecedented in its total dynamism. Alex has a potential for energy that translates into a constant explosion of input, travel, conversations, friendships, contacts, visits to see the entire span of Western art, and most of all producing his art at the same time.

He was able to achieve all this in Italy thanks to the Royal Society of British Artists who supports an annual residency at Sala I. We are non-profit center for contemporary art located behind the Pontifical Sanctuary of the Holy Steps complex in Rome, one of the world's most important religious shrines. An abandoned ex-basilica restored as an art center in 1970 by priest-sculptor Tito Amodei, Sala I's specific goal is to show aspects of contemporary art, especially sculpture, not easily programmed for commercial galleries and museums. Sala I has been in the vanguard for bringing international exhibitions, performances, architecture, contemporary dance and music to Rome, often for the first time. Alex is just one of many artists who have added to our story, including William Kentridge, El Anatsui, Rodney Graham, Daphne Wright, Richard Wentworth, Ange Leccia, Guillaume Bijl, Steve McQueen, Tadashi Kawamata and countless others.

A word about Alex's work: he produced drawings in Italy, dozens of them. Funny, insightful, full of colour, but his bronzes are of particular importance. They are complex, also full of chromatic markings and bursting with energy. Almost as if they are an extension of some baroque context designing their energy and movement. Alex doesn't copy, he is careful to produce a unique way of handling the material and the content. No small feat in a world of memes and replicas.

**Mary Angela Schroth**  
Director Sala I  
October 2022















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Alex would like to thank Michael Petry and Roberto Ekholm for their kind invitation to exhibit at MOCA London. Mary Angela Schroth for her essay and support at Sala I in Rome. Arts Council England for their support of my practice. The Royal Society of British Artists for the opportunity to explore Rome whilst on my scholarship, and finally a huge thank you to my family and friends for their ongoing help and encouragement.

Image list:

Outside cover: *Whopper*, Humbrol enamels on patinated bronze, 2022, 5 x 11 x 10 cm.

Inside front cover: *Thing*, patinated bronze with verdigris, 2022, 19 x 20 x 19 cm.

Inside back cover: *Space Pod*, patinated bronze, 2022, 13 x 9 x 9 cm.

Page 3: *Echostar (Saturn V)*, 2017, patinated prussian blue bronze, 39 x 32 x 25 cm.

Page 4: *Titan*, 2021, resin and card with enamel, 40 x 20 x 17 cm.

Page 5: *Scylla and Charybdis*, 2020, patinated bronze, 36 x 37 x 27 cm.

Page 7: *Adrift*, 2022, patinated bronze, 29 x 15 x 23 cm.

Pages 8-9: *Out of the Blue*, 2017, patinated blue bronze, 50 x 30 x 24 cm.

Page 10: *A Sprinkle of Star Dust (Randy's Donuts)*, 2022, glazed earthenware ceramic, 22 x 13 x 14 cm.

Page 11: *ACE*, 2021, glazed earthenware ceramic, 19 x 24 x 18 cm.

Pages 12-13: *Rockets*, 2021, various rockets, glazed earthenware ceramic, dimension variable.

Page 14: *The Wind Swept Palm*, 2020, patinated bronze, 25 x 15 x 13 cm.

Page 15: *Ojai Palm*, 2022, watercolour and ink on Saunders Waterford paper, 28 x 38 cm. Private collection.

[www.alexjwood.co.uk](http://www.alexjwood.co.uk)

Instagram: @AL3XJW

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**MOCA London**

113 Bellenden Road

SE15 4QY

[www.moca.london](http://www.moca.london)

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