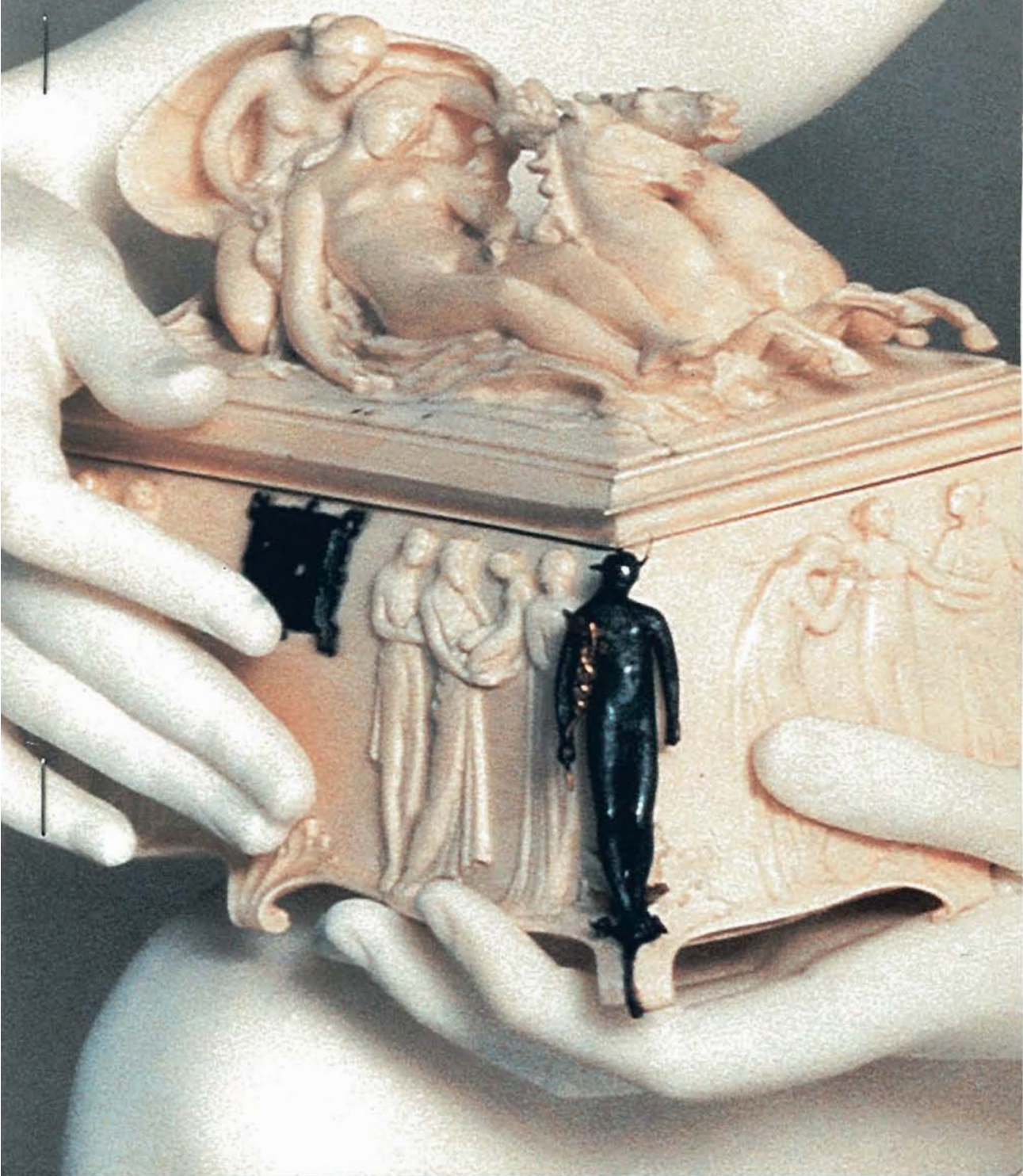


ART HISTORY

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3.1 Hans Haacke, *Taking Stock* (unfinished), 1983–84. Mixed media, oil on canvas, wood and gold-leaf frame, 241.3 × 206 × 17.8 cm. Private collection. Photo: courtesy Hans Haacke and copyright © Artists' Rights Society.

PRIVILEGING THE OBJECT OF SCULPTURE: ACTUALITY AND HARRY BATES'S *PANDORA* OF 1890

DAVID J. GETSY

Harry Bates's *Pandora* of 1890 has unfairly come to exemplify the stereotype of vapid Victorian idealism. This twentieth-century attitude is perhaps nowhere as clear as in Hans Haacke's *Taking Stock* (1983–84), in which he attacked Charles Saatchi's manipulation of political and art institutions.¹ In a lavish Victorian frame, the piece depicts a haughty Margaret Thatcher next to whom the life-size *Pandora* has been shrunk down to a decorative object (plate 3.1). Haacke used the statue as a sign of the decadence of Victorian taste, a widespread move in the twentieth century when it became commonplace to dismiss art works such as the *Pandora* on the grounds of style. Nineteenth-century sculpture has often been considered uninteresting because of its commitment to the figure and its seemingly conservative attachment to neoclassical formats. The idealized naturalism of Victorian sculpture, in particular, made it an easy target for the polemical pronouncements of modernist critics. To the contrary, I will demonstrate that the *Pandora* pursued a sophisticated art-theoretical agenda that has been overlooked. Its sugary rendering of the body is not unthinking conventionality but a component of a larger strategy to interrogate the limits of sculptural representation. I argue that, with this statue, Bates offered a polemical opposition between figurative sculpture and the decorative object. This work not only illuminates the complexity of nineteenth-century sculpture but also articulates a fundamental and long-standing issue for sculptural representation more generally. Actuality, the potential for equivalence between sculptural representation and the material constitution of sculpture as an object, formed the basis for Bates's contribution to the debates about the future of modern sculpture at the end of the nineteenth century.

Bates was part of a group of sculptors in London in the 1880s and 1890s who attempted to reconsider and to invigorate three-dimensional art. This movement is often referred to as the 'New Sculpture', and it sought to find a vital, modern

mode of sculptural representation by working within the tradition of naturalistic figuration.² Rather than abandoning verisimilitude, these artists investigated ways to activate the encounter between viewer and sculpture, coordinating the statue's dual existence as both a credible image of a body and a physically present three-dimensional object. Bates was considered one of the central figures of this movement until his premature death in 1899, and the *Pandora* was one of his most ambitious and highly regarded sculptures.³

Born in 1850, Bates began as an architect's clerk and then worked as a mason for the marble merchants and carvers Messrs Farmer & Brindley. From 1869 to 1879 he worked as an architectural and ornamental carver, travelling for the firm to various sites throughout England where work needed to be completed *in situ*. Often, he would be sent to mend existing buildings and their ornaments. In effect, this decade provided Bates with a protracted period of study of historical



3.2 Harry Bates, *The Story of Psyche*, 1887. Silvered bronze reliefs, side panels 33 × 24 cm, central panel 33 × 75 cm. Liverpool: Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool.

architectural sculpture, as he was expected to emulate and replicate the style of those earlier artists. Emulation is, of course, a central aspect of the nineteenth-century artist's education, and it is significant that – unlike many leading members of the New Sculpture – Bates had an extended educational foundation in this aspect of the so-called 'applied arts'.⁴ For this reason, his work would demonstrate a deep engagement with the concept of the decorative, and he readily explored the overlap between sculpture (as traditionally conceived) and objects of design.⁵

In 1879 Bates returned to London where he worked as an ornamental carver during the day and, in the evenings, studied under the then expatriate Aimé-Jules Dalou at the Lambeth School of Art (The South London Technical Art School). When Dalou returned to Paris, Bates left for the Royal Academy Schools, where he won the Gold Medal in 1883. This prize allowed him to move to Paris, where – rather than follow the customary path of joining one of the established academic *ateliers* – he took a studio of his own (on Dalou's advice). He came into contact with Auguste Rodin, whom Bates adopted as his 'mentor' during his year in Paris. Bates's mature style absorbed aspects of Rodin's exuberant handling into formats

indebted to classicism. Rodin is even reported to have refused any remuneration because of the high degree of Bates's skill.⁶

From his early days as a practising sculptor and continuing throughout his career, Bates's work was distinguished by his emphasis on relief sculpture, both architectural and independent. He had won the medal in 1883 for his *Socrates Teaching* and in Paris modelled the *Aeneas* and *Dido* reliefs. These works from 1885 were almost purchased for the British nation through the Chantrey Bequest, but even though the Council had approved it, they were disqualified on a technicality. (They had not been executed in England.) In 1886 Bates created a relief of Homer that expanded upon the linear complexity of these earlier works. The following year, three panels depicting the story of Psyche evidenced a deep engagement with the particular qualities of relief sculpture and its fusion of pictorial imagery and sculptural materiality (plate 3.2). Relief sculpture would become Bates's forte, and he produced some of the most complex examples of the late nineteenth century.

Bates also created a smaller number of figures in the round, such as *Hounds in Leash* (1889, plate 3.3), an ideal bust *Rhodope* (1887, untraced), an ambitious Lord Frederick Roberts monument for Calcutta (1894–8, replica in Glasgow: Kelvingrove Park), and the intricate *Mors Janua Vitae* (1899, Liverpool: Walker Art Gallery). The mode of working in relief sculpture, however, dominated his earliest efforts. *Hounds in Leash*, Bates's first significant entry into statuary, is a depiction of a hunting dogs leaping forward to their prey only to be controlled by the muscular exertions of their master. It was criticized for being 'the composition of one who has habitually devoted himself to working in relief.'⁷ While replete with the depiction of energetic tension, Bates's sculpture nevertheless does, as the



3.3 Harry Bates, *Hounds in Leash*, 1889. Plaster, 116 × 220 × 108 cm. London: Tate.

critic noted, work primarily in a somewhat shallow plane rather than the full three-dimensional complexity that is sculpture's potential. Departing from the planar frontality of his earlier statues and reliefs, the *Pandora* of 1890 marked a profound shift in Bates's handling of the freestanding figure. In it he made the transition from the shallow space of relief into a fuller three-dimensionality (plates 3.4, 3.8 and 3.9). In this work, Bates experimented for the first time with multiple materials, further indicating that this statue was to mark a new phase of his career. His earlier work in relief sculpture grew out of his engagement with the decorative arts and architectural sculpture, but it was in *Pandora* that he made his first, bold statement of how decorative art (normally marginalized in relation to painting and sculpture) could be integrated with the format that dominated the hierarchy of sculptural genres – the freestanding nude.

In creating a life-size statue like *Pandora* as a statement of his commitments and beliefs, Bates was in step with his contemporaries, most of whom used the Royal Academy summer exhibitions as the arena in which to make art-theoretical statements through ambitious and polemical statues. The summer exhibitions were the major annual event for sculpture. While there were many venues for painting, sculptors had far fewer options for large works. For this reason, the Academy's annual exhibitions continued into the twentieth century as the central and often singular venue for statues. Sculptors created high-profile works for these exhibitions in order to make their name and vie for commissions. When Bates exhibited *Pandora* at the exhibition of 1890, it received high praise. One critic noted, 'If there were awarded by the Academy a Medal of Honour similar to that conferred by the Salon, it would with great propriety fall on this occasion to Mr. Harry Bates for his beautiful "Pandora," the most important work which he has yet executed in the round.'⁸ The following year it was purchased for the nation through the Chantrey Bequest.⁹

Pandora was the major work that Bates needed to secure his prominence in relation to his better known contemporaries, such as Hamo Thornycroft, Alfred Gilbert and Edward Onslow Ford. Despite this important aim, the sculpture was remarkably unlike any of his other major works. In comparison to the rest of his oeuvre, the statue's even and unvaried handling stands out immediately. The *Pandora* has little of the activation of material and represented surface that characterized his extraordinary relief sculptures, nor did it repeat the muscular dynamism of *Hounds in Leash*. In fact, Bates first exhibited that earlier statue in wax in order to call attention to the intricacies of its surface.¹⁰ The customary practice was to exhibit a plaster cast of a sculpture that had been first modelled in clay. Sculptors did sometimes use wax instead of clay to achieve a higher degree of surface particularity and detail, but its fragility often deterred them from relying on it for time-consuming life-size sculptures and exhibition pieces. Bates, however, went to the trouble of exhibiting the wax original of the life-size *Hounds in Leash* in 1889 as a means of foregrounding both his skill and the statue's detailed surface. (It was soon thereafter cast in plaster and in bronze.) In contrast, the



3.4 Harry Bates, *Pandora*, 1890. Marble, ivory, bronze and gilt, 94 × 50.8 × 73.7 cm. London: Tate.



3.5 John Gibson, *Pandora*, c. 1860. Marble, height 173 cm. London: Victoria & Albert Museum.

surface of the *Pandora* lacks the animation and formal energy of *Hounds in Leash* or, indeed, of much of his earlier works. When Bates exhibited a bronze cast of *Hounds in Leash* a year later in 1891, one critic immediately noted this difference between his two most well-known works: ‘The vigour and incisiveness of the execution [of *Hounds in Leash*] form an interesting contrast to the delicately caressed modelling of the “*Pandora*,” which was one of last year’s most signal successes.’¹¹ A later assessment of Bates’s work also concluded, ‘*Pandora*, by Bates, is a prettily-conceived figure, and the attitude graceful, but too smooth in workmanship, and the simplicity of the modelling verges on emptiness. His *Hounds in Leash* is a far more virile work.’¹² While the conventions for rendering the male and female nude contributed to the difference between the two figures, there is nevertheless a noticeable departure in the *Pandora* on this stylistic level. Consequently, one should be cautious about disregarding its smoothness as a reflex or mere conventionality. It was, more correctly, a strategic shift for Bates.

The singularity of *Pandora* is further apparent when it is compared to the works of his peers, next to which Bates’s statue looks equally anomalous. Its relatively undifferentiated treatment of bodily surfaces seems to hark back to earlier neoclassical norms in which idealization rather than variation or detail determined the handling of the figure. One of the central features of the innovations in sculptural practice of the 1880s was a

cultivation of surface particularity and a greater attention to verisimilitude. Naturalism and realism became the prevalent stylistic choices of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By contrast, the handling of *Pandora* at first glance seems to have more in common with earlier neoclassical sculptors, such as John Gibson, than with the innovations of the 1880s (plate 3.5). Neoclassicism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had retained a strong hold on sculpture through the mid-century, and Gibson was exemplary of the retention of the neoclassical legacy's generalized handling of the figure. Many of the 'New Sculptors' based their own priorities on the repudiation of such formulaicism, so it is striking to see Bates here seeming to allude to the rejected style of the previous generation.¹³ That is, his rendering of the body seems wilfully retrospective, yet this anomaly of style has often been regarded as grounds for dismissal from the standard accounts of British art rather than as a clue that there may be other concerns at work. Whereas the dominant naturalistic trends of the 1880s and 1890s sought to make the figure appear vital and lifelike, Bates treated *Pandora* in this way, I will argue, in order to emphasize its artificiality.

This even and consistent tone of *Pandora*'s body was heightened by Bates's decision to depict the figure as an ideal nude. Other than her headwear, no clothing or jewellery interrupt the smooth rendering of the flesh. The amplified monochromy of the sculptural body was set against *Pandora*'s sole attribute – the elaborate ivory and gilt bronze box at which she gazes. The ivory of the box seems almost warm next to the stark whiteness of the statue. In contrast to the smooth surface of *Pandora*'s body, this chryselephantine object is packed with detail and is immediately recognizable as being made of different materials than Bates's use of conventional white marble for the figure.¹⁴

Pandora crouches down on one knee in a somewhat unconventional pose. While most likely not a source for Bates, a comparison can be made to Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *Pêcheur napolitain à la coquille* from the late 1850s (plate 3.6). As in Carpeaux's admittedly more exaggerated twisting boy, Bates deployed this pose in order to amplify the compositional dynamics of the crouching figure. Without sacrificing the compactness of a pyramidal composition, the different positions of the bent legs serve, in both sculptures, to break up the solidity implied by the base of that pyramid. This pose could be called a 'crouching contrapposto' because of its effect, in which both a sense of transitory movement and formal stability are conveyed. Unlike Carpeaux's work, in Bates's *Pandora* the raised right leg, the curved back and neck, and the enveloping arms focus the composition inward. The terminus of this spiral organization is the decorative object that holds *Pandora* in 'awe-struck contemplation', as one commentator put it.¹⁵ The central focus of the statue and of the *Pandora* legend as a whole is the box (plate 3.7). In Greek mythology, *Pandora* was the first woman, created by order of Zeus as a means of enacting revenge on mankind and on the Titans Prometheus and Epimetheus. *Pandora* unwittingly unleashed the pains and evils of life onto mankind by opening the box in which they had been locked.¹⁶ Analogous in position to Eve



3.6 Jean Baptiste-Carpeaux,
Pêcheur napolitain à la coquille,
c. 1858–63. Plaster, height 36 cm.
Dijon: Musée des beaux-arts de
Dijon. Photo: copyright © Jeffrey
Howe, Boston College.

in Christian theology, the figure of Pandora has served to consolidate a host of stereotypically sexist dichotomies in which woman becomes an object of both purified desire and unpredictable danger.

Bates's statue presents Pandora before the fall, covetously gazing at the beautiful box in her hands. The relief cycle on the sides of the box illustrates scenes of her creation. Created out of clay by Hephaestus and brought to life by the four Winds, Pandora was adorned by the goddesses before being sent to tempt Epimetheus (plate 3.8). On the facets of the casket, Bates charted Pandora's transformation from statue to living being. Like the first man Prometheus made from clay and like the oft-repeated story of Pygmalion's Galatea, the story of Pandora is a story of sculptural images that come to life.¹⁷ Bates depicted her in

various stages of her transformation from statue to woman on the facets of the casket. The lid shows the last of these, presenting a sleeping Pandora being taken from Olympus by Hermes. Images of her escort anchor the four corners of the box in bronze and gilt. The box thus has a dual purpose: to narrate Pandora's origins as statue and to function itself as the object of the ever-present moment of temptation.

The mythological character Pandora was not an uncommon subject for sculptors (e.g., Jean-Pierre Cortot or Gibson, plate 3.5), but rarely was the story of her creation (as opposed to her fault) foregrounded so explicitly as it was by Bates in the casket. The long, frontal side depicts Pandora in her early stages as an inert statue. (Pandora's hand covers an image of two additional goddesses on this facet.) The bas-relief image of Pandora as a sculpture is immediately recognizable as Bates's life-size statue repeated in miniature on the ivory box (plate 3.10). The small Pandora is in the same crouching contrapposto as the life-size statue; the only major difference is that she does not (yet) hold the box. Upon recognizing



3.7 Detail of casket, front left, from Harry Bates, *Pandora*, 1890. Marble, ivory, bronze and gilt, 94 × 50.8 × 73.7 cm. London: Tate.



3.8 Contemporary photograph of side view of Harry Bates, *Pandora*, 1890.
Marble, ivory, bronze and gilt, 94 × 50.8 × 73.7 cm.

the repeated image of the crouching Pandora on the casket, it is thus suggested to viewers that they are looking at a statue that lacks the divine breath of life that made the mythological Pandora flesh and blood.

Through the parallel with the depicted creation myth on the casket, Bates equates the life-size statue with a mere marble representation of a body – that is, a self-evident simulation. The statue’s whiteness is asserted to be that of the stone in contrast to the organic hue of the ivory.¹⁸ However, this inert statue holds what one cannot help but recognize as an actual decorative object. Even though the box remains somewhat inaccessible because of its integration into the sculpture as a



3.9 Left side, three-quarter view of Harry Bates, *Pandora*, 1890. Marble, ivory, bronze and gilt, 94 × 50.8 × 73.7 cm. London: Tate.

whole, nevertheless it is distinct from the figure of Pandora. The box is a box, and any viewer attentive enough to the details would be able to perceive that the lid is separate and thus able to be removed.¹⁹ The dynamic relationship between statue and object characterizes Bates's sculpture as a whole. He organized the work as a series of internal distinctions between the casket and the figure who holds it: the intricate detail of the former versus the smooth and largely undifferentiated handling of the figure, polychromy versus monochromy, and the warmth of the organic material of ivory versus the inorganic coldness of white stone. As is indicated by earlier works such as *Hounds in Leash*, Bates was certainly capable of



3.10 Detail of casket front from Harry Bates, *Pandora*, 1890. Marble, ivory, bronze and gilt, 94 × 50.8 × 73.7 cm. London: Tate. Photo: courtesy Tate Conservation.

executing the statue of Pandora with a greater degree of surface activation, articulation of detail, and naturalism. Yet in *Pandora* he suppressed that attention to detail, further reminding the viewer that when the marble figural statue is seen in relation to the actual ivory and bronze casket, these two elements are different in kind, not just in colour.²⁰

Bates's choice to stage an internal distinction between simulated body and real box did not go unnoticed by contemporary viewers, who often found it uncomfortable. A reviewer for the *Magazine of Art* in 1890 remarked upon the 'introduction of warmth and colour which at once suggests the necessity for a complete polychromatic system of surface decoration'.²¹ He went on to suggest that at least Pandora's hair and face should be tinted to make the work more consistent. Other commentators agreed, as when the prominent Victorian critic Marion Spielmann noted 'It would, doubtless, have been better had the ivory embellishment been in marble, too.'²² Regarding the undifferentiated treatment of Pandora's monochrome body, Edmund Gosse – the major sculpture critic of the 1880s and early 1890s – dismissively wrote that the sculpture 'is exquisite in feeling and composition, but as Mr. Bates's work is apt to be, unfinished to the last degree, and, indeed, scarcely carried far enough for exhibition.'²³ Critics such as Spielmann and Gosse approached the *Pandora* as they would any other statue, expecting the focus to be on the sculptural body. It was the body, however, that Bates chose to suppress in favour of the decorative object.

One might ask what this box really does contain, yet one would never bring that same level of empirical curiosity to the marble figure and its insides. In effect, Bates staged an ontological distinction between the sculptural representation of the figure and the potentially functional, literal box. In other words, this internal syntactical relation between the components of the sculpture establishes a hierarchy of sculptural 'actuality'. Bates sculpted the box in these particular materials to make it self-evidently both precious and literally present. In this way, he underscored the Pandora myth by making the conceptual focus of the statue the elaborate decorative object which, like Galatea or Pandora herself, crosses the threshold between sculptural image and the quotidian world of living bodies and objects of use.

I use the term 'actuality' to describe those elements of sculptures in which the thing represented (here, a casket) approaches equivalence with the sculptural object itself. Functionality or its potential is often a fundamental condition of sculptural actuality. Coincident with Bates's ivory and bronze casket being a sculpture, it is also a genuine, functional box. It is itself covered with representations, but the reliefs and figures decorating it do not, at base, mitigate its potential to be used as a box. (By contrast, the figural image of Pandora can never be equivalent to a woman of flesh and blood.)

The terms 'literality' and 'objecthood' are often used in twentieth-century art theory to define those art works that do not represent or refer to anything other than themselves.²⁴ For representational sculpture, however, 'actuality' is a more

precise concept because it accounts for the play of representation in relation to the literal existence of sculptures as objects. In regarding actuality as a coincidence of representation and objecthood, my usage has a different valence than that sometimes given to the term with regard to abstract art. Richard Shiff concisely defines actuality in this sense: 'Between moments of "meaning" lie spaces or blanks of immediate experience. Such blanks are actuality.' Later, he deploys the formula sometimes used to define literality: 'It is what it is.'²⁵ My usage of 'actuality' does not exclude its application to abstract art in this sense but widens the scope to include instances of overlap between the sculptural thing and what it depicts. (The sculptural representation of a box is also a box.)

Late-Victorian sculpture actively pursued ways to synergistically coordinate the physically present sculptural object with the credibly rendered bodily image, and I have elsewhere used the term 'corporeality' to summarize this aim with regard to figural statues.²⁶ 'Actuality' demarcates the related quality of represented inanimate objects in sculpture which, like Pandora's box, exhibit an ontological equivalence between mimetic image and material object.

My definition of the term 'actuality' expands upon, yet also departs from, its more limited use in Victorian art criticism, where it often referred to a high degree of verisimilitude. This term circumvented the adjective 'realist', which had connotations of sensationalism and, more specifically, of polemical working-class subject matter in the manner of Gustave Courbet.²⁷ Late-Victorian critics struggled to articulate the corporeal presence of veristic statues, and they used terms like 'vitality' and 'actuality' to indicate a range of impressions. For instance, Walter Armstrong defined the New Sculpture's priorities with this connotation in mind, praising 'the trenchant modelling and regard for actuality on which so much of what is good in the work of Hamo Thornycroft, Alfred Gilbert, Onslow Ford, and Harry Bates, and one or two more depends'.²⁸ Here, 'actuality' is coupled with technical refinement to indicate both the precision with which something is rendered and the unconventionalized objects and details represented. A similar dual meaning can be found in the writings of Marian Hepworth Dixon (the Victorian critic who wrote under the pseudonymous male forename 'Marion'). Discussing the veristic style of Bates's contemporary Ford, she argued that 'Here is one to whom actuality is everything.'²⁹ She later declared of Ford's *Folly* (1886, Tate) that 'There was actuality in that little statue', referring to the refined accuracy with which Ford had rendered the female nude.³⁰ I differ in that my use of the term 'actuality' refers not to the degree of mimetic fidelity but to the equivalence of the representation with the actual sculptural object.

Bates did more than give us an actual casket. He staged its actuality in relation to the figural statue. In the difference in materials and colours and through the repetition of the image of the crouching Pandora, Bates bracketed off the nude figure, making it secondary in its immediacy to the casket. While the box is material and present, Pandora is asserted to be removed from that level of actuality. She is immobile and artificial, yet the casket is, for all intents and purposes,

a real casket. The question of why Bates would suppress the vitality of his nude, essentially inverting the hierarchy of sculptural genres that held sway throughout the nineteenth century, remains.

One possible answer to why Bates emphasized the simulated nature of his figure can be found in the late-Victorian debates about the propriety of verisimilitude as applied to the sculptural nude. Whereas nudity had previously been the guarantee of a sculptural figure's universality, timelessness and ideality, late-Victorian sculptors invested the nude with a greater degree of bodily specificity and illusionistic rendering. In effect, this higher degree of particularity and mimetic fidelity to the model's body raised the question more directly of actual, quotidian bodies. Critics voiced concerns that life-size nudes (especially female nudes) were nothing more than re-creations of flesh rather than images of ideals.³¹ This anxiety over the corporeal presence of the sculptural body characterized the first wave of the New Sculpture in the 1880s, and many of the sculptors created works that addressed this issue. For both the critics and the artists, the fear was that the viewer's gaze would degenerate into the merely carnal, effectively reducing the art of sculpture to mere erotic titillation. While late-nineteenth-century sculptors often flirted intentionally with eroticism in their works, in Britain there was a deep-seated distrust of sensuality and of French sculpture (seen by some to be the nadir of these developments).³² In contrast, a greater commitment to the exemplary aspirations of the freestanding statue was often seen as a mode of resistance to the merely sensual or titillating. Seen in relation to these issues, we can recognize that Bates's emphasis on the casket as the present object of desire also has the effect of potentially channelling the viewer's desiring gaze (albeit partially) away from the nude. Relationally, the replication of the image of the nude statue on the casket bas-relief reinforces the ontological distance of the sculptural body from the world of living bodies in which the viewer operates. It is the casket – the embodiment of peril – that confronts the viewer more directly.

A further agenda underwrote Bates's strategy of staging the actuality of the casket. Throughout his career, his work retained a deep commitment to architectural and decorative uses for sculpture. One can understand his devotion to relief sculpture, in particular, as a recognition of the ways in which sculpture could and must be integrated into its physical environment. However, as one contemporary critic noted:

It is in ideal work that the sculptor shows best what is in him. He may prove himself a skilful modeller and a good character-reader in a bust; he may even show his sense of style; but his imaginative faculties, his sense of poetry, his power of composition, his elegance of handling – in short, the qualities which make the sculptor a great artist – these can only be seen in ideal work.³³

The freestanding statue remained the format through which a sculptor made his or her name – especially in the active and competitive climate of the Royal

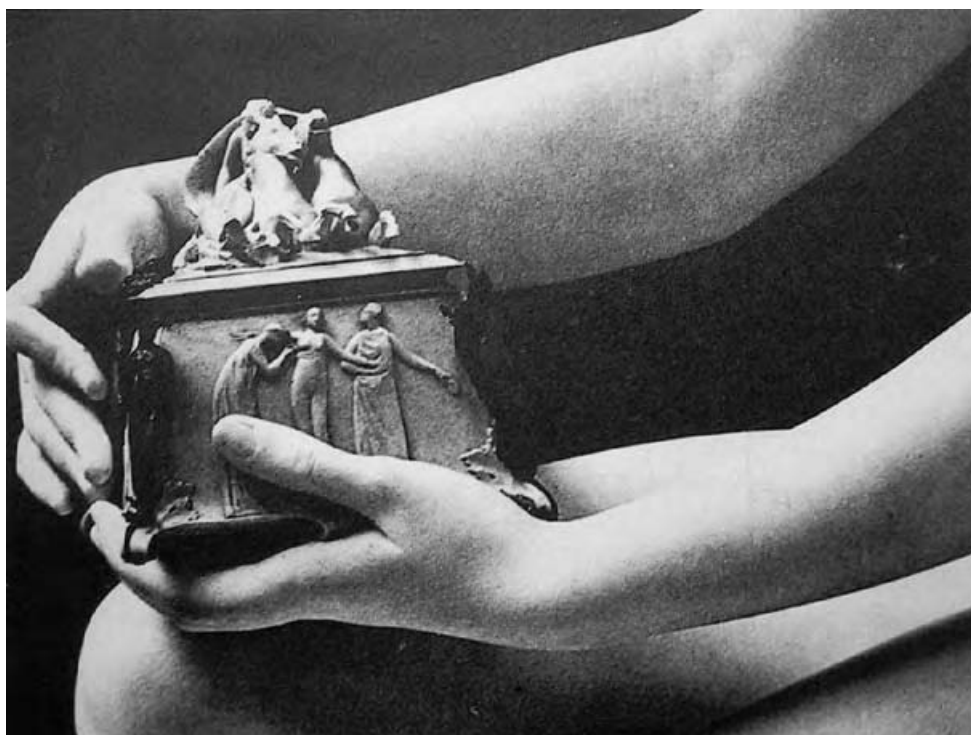
Academy of the 1880s and 1890s. Bates's first major freestanding work, *Hounds in Leash*, translated his graphic dynamism into three dimensions, and he was criticized for it. *Pandora*, however, demonstrated a complex three-dimensional composition (the 'crouching contrapposto') that was nevertheless asserted to be subsidiary to the potency of the decorative object that forms its nexus. Drawing on his early career in the applied arts of sculpture, Bates's positioning of the decorative object rather than the nude as the conceptual and visual focal point of the sculpture was polemical.

In this regard, we can see *Pandora* as Bates's statement in favour of the burgeoning movements that sought to integrate the fine arts into the arts of design. He was considered a central figure in these developments. In the 1880s the Arts and Crafts movement (under the influence of William Morris) organized itself around new exhibition societies and groups, initiating a widespread re-consideration of the hierarchies of artistic production. After Bates's return to London, he quickly became involved with this endeavour, becoming part of the managing committee of the first exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1888.³⁴ In conjunction with his activity in the movements supporting decorative and applied arts, Bates sought ways (as with the *Pandora*) to reinvigorate the medium of sculpture by association. As for many of his peers, sculpture was not to be subsumed by the applied arts but would remain a viable and distinct practice.³⁵ Bates emerged as one of the most visible proponents of a sculpture informed by, and engaged with, decorative arts issues. Despite the fact that his output was relatively small and his career short-lived compared to his contemporaries, he was, for this reason, widely considered to be one of the central figures in the modern movement in late-Victorian sculpture. After his death in 1899, William Goscombe John wrote to his fellow sculptor James Havard Thomas about the importance of Bates for contemporary sculpture, '[I]t has been a great loss, for the tendency of Bates was a good influence, particularly at the present time.'³⁶

Furthermore, the pivotal importance of *Pandora* in Bates's own self-positioning comes into greater focus when we recognize that the casket incorporates references to his earlier major works. The horses carrying the sleeping Pandora from Olympus reprise the form of the charging dogs in *Hounds in Leash*. Viewed head on, the rearing horses look comparable in organization to the earlier sculptural group (plates 3.3 and 3.11). The reclining form of the sleeping Pandora atop the lid of the casket, as well, relates directly to the sleeping Psyche on the tripartite *Story of Psyche* reliefs of 1887 (plate 3.2 and 3.10). Along with the representation of the marble statue of Pandora, these references to Bates's major works of the previous years reveal the casket as a composite object, encapsulating Bates's career up to 1890. Significantly, he located this summary of his career on the decorative object.

The multiple, overlapping agendas Bates addressed with *Pandora* served to establish his own position in relation to debates about sculpture at the time. The

innovations in sculptural style and technique that emerged in the 1880s, in turn, incited new investigations into the roles for sculpture both inside and outside the gallery. As Susan Beattie has argued, a central contribution of the New Sculpture of the 1890s was the development of new ways that sculpture could operate in public and in private.³⁷ Building upon the debates about the nude, Bates intervened in order to place the applied arts at the conceptual centre of his view of sculpture.



3.11 Contemporary photograph showing detail of casket side from Harry Bates, *Pandora*, 1890. Marble, ivory, bronze and gilt, 94 × 50.8 × 73.7 cm.

T.J. Clark has argued that the concept of the ‘decorative’ was of urgent concern to symbolists and others exactly at this moment, 1890–91. The ‘decorative’ in the early 1890s was a synecdoche of more fundamental concerns about art’s possible relation to a public and its aspirations to a wider social relevance.³⁸ While stylistically illusionistic, Bates’s work (like that of many of the sculptors of the 1890s in Britain) engaged with the burgeoning symbolist movement and its concerns in an expanded sense.³⁹ Similar to debates in France and England to which Clark refers, Bates’s work, too, sought out the decorative as a means to cross the threshold between the rarefied realm of art (here exemplified by the neoclassical nude) and the practical and actual world of objects and use. Bates put statue and object into productive tension in *Pandora* in order to make a case for

the latter. He staged the issue of actuality as a means to highlight the distinction between what sculpture had been and what it could be.

Bates created the *Pandora* as an ambitious and strategic work. He exploited the unstable boundaries between sculptural representation and functional objects through the intermediary of the decorative as a means both to amplify the Pandora legend and to intervene in contemporary debates about sculptural representation. More fundamentally, *Pandora* exemplifies the need for a language attuned to the dynamics of three-dimensional representation. Because of their obdurate existences as three-dimensional objects as well as images, representational sculptures have the potential to activate their own materiality or physical presence. Bates's staging of actuality in the *Pandora* is one such strategy, and its lessons extend far beyond the immediate historical context of late-Victorian Britain to illuminate the parameters of sculptural representation more generally. That is, Bates's concerns with the relationship between objects and sculptural images offered a defining instance of sculptural actuality which has correspondences, in turn, with subsequent modernist experiments in objecthood and literality. However, Bates's statue demonstrates that such propositions can occur both within and without the bounds of verisimilitude, and it should be recognized that sophistication in sculpture theory can and did manifest itself in works that look 'traditional' by modernist standards. With an appropriate conceptual framework in place for evaluating sculpture in terms of both its degree of mimetic fidelity and its physicality, 'conventional' nineteenth-century figurative sculpture begins to look richer, more varied, and ultimately more relevant to wider investigations into the status and practice of representation.

Notes

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- 1 See New Museum of Contemporary Art, *Hans Haacke: Unfinished business*, New York, 1986, 260–5.
- 2 See David Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905*, New Haven and London, 2004; Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture*, New Haven, 1983; Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* New Haven, 1982.
- 3 On Bates, see Walter Armstrong, 'Mr. Harry Bates', *Portfolio*, 19, 1888, 170–4; E.J. Winter Johnson, 'Mr. Harry Bates, A.R.A.', *Artist*, December 1897, 579–88. One of the most useful discussions of *Pandora* to date is Robert Upstone's entry in Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone, *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860–1910*, London and Paris, 1997, 247–8.
- 4 Other sculptors, such as George Frampton and Frederick Pomeroy, also apprenticed at architectural firms, but for a less extended period of time. C.J. Allen appears to have been one of the few sculptors who had a comparable early training to Bates (with whom he overlapped at Farmer and Brindley for a few years c. 1879–82), though he remained largely based in London. On Allen, see Matthew Clough, ed., *C.J. Allen 1862–1956: Artist and Teacher*, Liverpool, 2003.
- 5 With regard to his particular engagement with the decorative, the most apposite comparison among Bates's contemporaries may be made with Edward Burne-Jones. For an overview, see Alan Crawford, 'Burne-Jones as a decorative

- artist', in Stephen Wildman and John Christian, eds, *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, New York, 1998, 5–23. Bates, in fact, often adapted elements from Burne-Jones's work, especially in his relief sculptures. In general, for a discussion of sculpture and the engagement with the decorative object at the end of the nineteenth century, see Martina Droth, 'Small sculpture c.1900: the "New Statuette" in English sculpture aesthetics', in David Getsy, ed., *Sculpture and the Pursuit of a Modern Ideal in Britain, c.1880–1930*, Aldershot, 2004.
- 6 Walter Armstrong wrote, '[A]s soon as [Rodin] saw what his pupil could do, and what his ambitions were, he declined all return for his trouble beyond the pleasure of watching its fruition.' ('Harry Bates', 171) Armstrong was a very reputable critic and wrote a series of articles on the emerging sculptors of the 1880s: Thornycroft and Bates in 1888, Onslow Ford in 1890. On Armstrong, see Marion H. Spielmann, *Sir Walter Armstrong, H.R.H.A., 1850–1918*, London, 1918. This small book was a republication of an essay from the *Fortnightly Review* of the same year.
 - 7 'The sculpture of the year', *Magazine of Art*, 12, 1889, 369.
 - 8 'Sculpture of the year', *Magazine of Art*, 13, 1890, 364.
 - 9 There is some confusion about the date of *Pandora*, which is sometimes erroneously given as 1891 or 1892. The marble work was exhibited in 1890 at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, as multiple accounts attest. See [Edmund Gosse], 'Sculpture at the Royal Academy', *Saturday Review*, 69, 28 June 1890, 794; 'Sculpture of the year', 1890, 364. I have yet to find an adequate explanation for why the work was purchased the year after its exhibition at the Royal Academy. Customarily, Chantrey Bequest purchases were directly related to the summer exhibitions (though this practice was not required by the terms of the Bequest).
 - 10 'Sculpture of the year', 1890, 364.
 - 11 Claude Phillips, 'Sculpture of the year', *Magazine of Art*, 14, November 1891, 403. Phillips here refers to Bates's submission of the bronze cast of *Hounds in Leash* the year after *Pandora* was seen at the 1890 exhibition.
 - 12 Margaret Thomas, *How to Understand Sculpture*, London, 1911, 102. I am grateful to Martina Droth for bringing this reference to my attention.
 - 13 Richard Jenkyns read the anomalous style of *Pandora* as a metaphor for the stylistic transitions of the 1890s: 'In Bates's piece a bland nude descended from neo-classicism contemplates a writhingly "aesthetic" casket; the woman is made of marble, the box of bronze and ivory. Shall she open it and release the slithery complexities of the decadence? Shall the soul with all its maladies pass into her pale chalky body and tinge its vacancy with the colour of the modern world?', *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian art and the classical inheritance*, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, 113–14. Jenkyns rightly noted the internal contrast between the whiteness of the statue and the chryselephantine decorative object. He failed to recognize, however, the degree to which Bates's handling of *Pandora* was anachronistic in relation to the developments in sculpture style of the 1880s that Bates both participated in and, in *Pandora*, deliberately avoided.
 - 14 I use the term 'chryselephantine' for economy's sake, even though the ivory box has additions of both bronze and gilded bronze. The initial state of the object may have had a different polish or effect to that at present. A contemporary review of the piece mistakenly referred to the casket as being 'fashioned of gold and ivory', in 'Sculpture of the year', 1890, 364.
 - 15 'Sculpture of the year', 1890, 364.
 - 16 Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, revised edn, London, 1960, 2 vols, 1:145. Pandora was the wife of Epimetheus. She was given to him by Zeus as part of his plan for revenge against his brother Prometheus for giving fire to mankind. The 'box' (*pyxis*) of Pandora was originally a large jar (*pitchos*) until the early sixteenth century. For a discussion of the Pandora legend and its iconographic transformations, see the classic study by Dora Panofsky and Erwin Panofsky, *Pandora's Box: The changing aspects of a mythical symbol*, 2nd edn, New York, 1962, esp. 14–26.
 - 17 For a discussion of this trope, see Kenneth Gross, *The Dream of the Moving Statue*, Ithaca, 1992.
 - 18 Angela Rosenthal has recently argued that the Pygmalion myth has been used in the articulation of whiteness as a racial category in the eighteenth century, demonstrating that the pure whiteness of the statue is the pre-animate, and therefore not bodily receptive, ideal rather than the flesh and blood woman. Bates's *Pandora* draws upon this trope, using whiteness here as a sign of the sculpture's very lack of vitality. See Angela H. Rosenthal, 'Visceral culture: Blushing and the legibility of whiteness in eighteenth-century British portraiture,' *Art History*, 27:4, 2004, 563–92.
 - 19 This fact is confirmed by photographs taken by Tate Conservation.
 - 20 In her history of the New Sculpture, Susan Beattie noted this internal differentiation as well: 'The precious materials that Mercié, Gérôme and Barrias used primarily for decorative or life-like effects are introduced here, as in the work of Gilbert or Frampton, in order to bring sharply into focus the unearthly, dreamlike quality of the figure. Like the use of colour in symbolist painting, they serve to emphasize its

- very remoteness from the material world.' *Sculpture*, 167. Whereas Beattie was primarily concerned with the statue and its evocation of mood, I will contend that the conceptual focus of the work centres not on the statue but on the box itself and (to use Beattie's terms) its proximity to the material world.
- 21 'Sculpture of the year', 1890, 364.
 - 22 Marion H. Spielmann, 'British sculpture of today', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 16:11, 3 April 1909, 385.
 - 23 [Gosse], 'Sculpture at the Royal Academy', 794.
 - 24 While both 'objecthood' and 'literality' have proved to be useful analytical terms when discussing the ways in which minimal art objects purged themselves of illusion, allusion and reference, it must be acknowledged that neither is a stable trait of art works. A standard critical position with regards to minimalism has been to underscore the incompleteness of literality and objecthood and to stress the impossibility of fully banishing signification and allusion. See, for instance, Michael Fried, 'Art and objecthood', *Artforum*, 5:10, June 1967, 12–23; Rosalind Krauss, 'Allusion and illusion in Donald Judd', *Artforum*, 4:9, May 1966, 24–6; Rosalind Krauss, 'Objecthood', in *Critical Perspectives in American art*, Amherst, 1976, 25–7; Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The critical perspective*, Seattle, 1990, esp. 101–112; Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: figurative, modernist, minimalist*, New Haven and London, 2000, 178–206; Dominic Rahtz, 'Literality and absence of self in the work of Carl Andre', *Oxford Art Journal*, 27:1, 2004, 61–78. My thinking on this issue has also benefited greatly from reading David Raskin's 'Illusionism in Krauss and Judd' (ms.).
 - 25 Richard Shiff, 'Autonomy, actuality, Mangold', in *Robert Mangold*, London, 2000, 47 and 50.
 - 26 Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 9–13.
 - 27 For a discussion of the term 'realism' as applied to ideal sculpture, see Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 96–104, 119–41, or "'Hard realism": The thanatic corporeality of Edward Onslow Ford's *Shelley Memorial*', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 3:1, 2002, 53–76.
 - 28 Walter Armstrong, 'Sculpture', *Art Journal*, 49, June 1887, 100.
 - 29 Marion [Marian MacMahon] Hepworth Dixon, 'Onslow Ford, A.R.A.', *Magazine of Art*, 15:10, September 1892, 326.
 - 30 Marion [Marian MacMahon] Hepworth Dixon, 'Onslow Ford, R. A.', *Art Journal*, 60, October 1898, 295. It should be noted that the present argument is a revision and expansion of my earlier discussion of this quotation in Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 128.
 - 31 See Getsy, *Body Doubles*, esp. 87–117, and, in general, Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: sexuality, morality and art*, Manchester, 1996; and Alison Smith, 'The "British matron" and the body beautiful: The nude debate of 1885', in Elizabeth Prettejohn, ed., *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and aestheticism in Victorian England*, Manchester, 1999, 217–39.
 - 32 There are multiple instances of this rhetorical posture, despite the admitted technical debt owed to French sculpture during the period. Examples include Walter Armstrong, 'Mr. Hamo Thornycroft, R.A.', *Portfolio*, 19, June 1888, 111–15; Alfred Gilbert, "'Couleur" in sculpture', *Universal Review*, August 1888, 524–7; 'Sculpture of the year', 1890, 361–6; John Hamer, 'Our rising artists: Mr. Albert Toft', *Magazine of Art*, 25, 1901, 393–7.
 - 33 Marion H. Spielmann, 'At the Royal Academy exhibition, 1901. VI – Landscapes, sea-pieces, and sculpture', *Magazine of Art*, 25, 1901, 503.
 - 34 'Art Chronicle', *Portfolio*, 19, 1888, 223. For a discussion of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, see Peter Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts*, Palo Alto, 1985, 171–261. In its second year (1886), the Art Workers' Guild also elected the relative newcomer Bates. He was one of two sculptors inducted that year (W.S. Frith being the other), but he resigned the same year. Although the specific reason for Bates's resignation that year is not clear, members sometimes left the Guild because of the pressure of the time commitment, Bates was re-elected in 1890, but again resigned the same year. See H.J.L.J. Massé, *The Art-Workers' Guild 1884–1934*, Oxford, 1935, 137 and 40.
 - 35 As Martina Droth has recently argued, it is imperative to recognize the difference between the contemporary developments in the New Sculpture and the Arts and Crafts movement. While the New Sculpture drew upon the concepts and momentum of the Arts and Crafts movement, it is nevertheless inaccurate to consider the transformations in sculpture theory and practice in the late-nineteenth century to be derivative of it. Instead, the New Sculpture had the stated aim of revitalizing the medium of sculpture out of a rejection of neoclassicism. Droth writes, 'Unlike neoclassical sculpture, which operated within a rarefied, self-contained sphere, insulated by a narrowly-defined aesthetic reference system that underlined its separateness from the world, the New Sculpture reached outside of conventional boundaries and actively engaged with the material world, thus addressing, rather than staying aloof from, contemporaneous political and critical issues affecting art practice.' (Martina Droth, 'The ethics of making: Craft and English sculptural aesthetics c.1851–1900', *Journal of Design History*, 17:3, 2004, 223.)

- 36 William Goscombe John to James Havard Thomas, 14 April 1899, James Havard Thomas Papers, Tate Archive (collection 924).
- 37 Beattie, *New Sculpture*.
- 38 T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes in the history of modernism*, New Haven and London, 1999, 129–34.
- 39 The classification ‘symbolist’ is a problematic one for art in Britain. A substantial amount of the art that has been understood to engage with Symbolist concepts and priorities in Britain does not pursue the anti-realist stylistic strategies of its French counterparts, best exemplified perhaps in the work of Paul Gauguin. This is especially true of sculpture in Britain, which prioritized verisimilitude in these years even as

it aggressively transformed subject matter along symbolist lines. Beattie has consequently seen symbolism as one of the central components of late-Victorian sculpture: ‘Seizing a new vocabulary where they could – from Stevens and Watts, from French romantic realism, from the late Pre-Raphaelite painters, pragmatic in aim and committed only to self-determination, Alfred Gilbert and his contemporaries in England evolved a language of sculpture more consistently symbolist in spirit than any in Europe.’ (*New Sculpture*, 135.) The case for an expanded definition of symbolism in the British context can be found in Wilton and Upstone, *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts*, esp. 11–33 and 47–63.