

Beyond the Visual

Audio guide

**HENRY MOORE
INSTITUTE**

Stop 2. Track 1.

Hello. My name's Joseph Rizzo Naudi. I'm a blind writer and I'll be introducing you to this sculpture called *Elephant*, made in 1981 by Barry Flanagan.

Elephant is, as the name suggests, a sculpture of an elephant. It's quite a small elephant, around 50cm tall, and it's made of bronze. In this exhibition you are invited to touch the sculpture and feel the elephant's rough surface. The elephant's ears are flat to its body. Its trunk is slightly bent in the middle and points downwards, matching the form of its smaller tail at the other end of its body. The elephant's four legs are joined at the sculpture's base, to create the impression that the elephant is balancing on a small, round podium, as though it were about to perform a circus trick.

Flanagan was born in Prestatyn, North Wales, in 1941 and died in Ibiza in 2009. One of Britain's most significant sculptors, his work was seen as radical and independent from the start. He studied at St. Martin's School of Art in 1964, later teaching there and at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. Flanagan represented Great Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1982 and was awarded an OBE and elected to the Royal Academy of Arts in 1991. Flanagan participated in an exhibition called *Revelation for the Hands*, which took place next door to us at Leeds Art Gallery in 1987. The exhibition featured work by Barbara Hepworth, Jacob Epstein and Henry Moore, and blind and partially blind visitors were invited to touch the sculptures.

The elephant is made of cast bronze. During the casting process, molten metal is poured into a mould through small channels called sprues. Sprues are normally removed from a sculpture after it has been cast, but to make this elephant, Barry Flanagan has very cleverly incorporated the sprues into the sculpture as the elephant's trunk, tail and legs. As you touch the sculpture, you might be able to get a sense of how the molten bronze flowed through Flanagan's mould to form the shape that's under your hands. Although he worked in many different materials throughout his career, Flanagan loved the casting process and the experience of being in the heat and noise of the foundry.

Here is the artist describing this in a radio interview with Andy Holden for Resonance FM, recorded in 2008:

Barry Flanagan: "Well, the medium bronze is the kind of touchstone. People are aware of bronze as a medium and immediately rather interested in the procedure. Yes, I usually say I favour bronze because I find the foundry and the working atmosphere as exciting as standing in the wings of a theatre or, you know, the sort of first night buzz or, you know, the creative atmosphere."

Andy Holden: "Is it sense of being maybe a part of a larger process of some kind of working with people as much as being rather than being the isolated thing?"

Barry Flanagan: "Yes, it's the choreographic buzz. And the integrated actions of people who know what they're doing and driving towards same objective. That I do find exciting. Once a sculptor's out of his garret or his basement and he's in the foundry working, well, I identified that with the working process and dealing with materials, irrespective of the artist's

contribution, dealing with the materials and seeing a project through, that to me loosely is a kind of a trade.”

[Music]

This is a transcript of an audio guide produced by Henry Moore Institute for the exhibition *Beyond the Visual*, on display from 28 November 2025 to 19 April 2026. For more information visit henry-moore.org/beyond-the-visual