

Beyond the Visual

Audio guide

**HENRY MOORE
INSTITUTE**

Stop 13. Track 2.

Aaron McPeake, *Rings* 2025

Rings by Aaron McPeake consists of five bronze rings of different sizes suspended from a wooden beam above our heads, which is about 3m long and protrudes horizontally from the gallery wall.

The five rings are hung from the wooden beam in order of size, with the largest at the wall end of the beam. This largest ring is roughly the size of a bass drum or round dustbin lid. The rings get progressively smaller until the smallest ring is the size of a bracelet that could fit around your wrist. The whole structure appears quite precarious: the bronze rings look very heavy and the wooden beam seems to be supporting a lot of weight. Yet despite this, the rings appear as if they are floating in mid air: they are suspended from the wooden beam by strong but fine white cords, which are almost invisible against the white of the gallery walls.

Though varied in size, the rings are all the same shape: flat and rather broad, like a simple wedding band. Their surfaces have a golden sheen to them, but their finish is not even or perfectly polished. Their texture varies, and all have the marks of their making process across the surfaces, so that you can feel pits and bumps all over them. In some places, especially on the larger rings, you can feel the marks from where the molten metal was poured into moulds to create the shape. The rings are made of bell bronze. This results in a surprising variation of

colour, much paler than the dark brown of conventional bronze sculptures. This is because of different quantities of copper and tin in the metal alloy. This gives some of the rings a milky appearance, similar to a new brass padlock, while others have traces of rusty red on their interior. There is no way of telling the age of the rings: combined with the rustic appearance of the wooden beam they're suspended from, they could be ancient, and wouldn't look out of place in a historical museum.

Viewed along their length, the rings form concentric circles, extending like a telescope, or a model of planets in the solar system. Looking through the centre of the smallest ring towards the wall, the rings suddenly appear to be the same size but changing the angle of sight makes them appear like ripples on a pond, or a cartoon depiction of sound waves.

Alongside the rings there are two small wooden hammers that slot into brackets on the gallery wall. These can be used to strike the rings to listen to the different tones they make. The largest ring sounds like a church bell, deep and sonorous, as though the sound is echoing through a valley. Striking the rings has a ritualistic quality, as if the sound is calling people to worship or meditate. The smallest ring has a sound more like a school bell. In between, there is something a little deceptive, because some of the smaller rings have deeper tones than larger rings, which is unexpected. The sound quality depends on a lot of different factors: the kind of alloy the rings are made of, whether they are struck with the hard or soft edges of the hammer, and whether they are struck on the edge or in the middle of the ring.

The vibrations from the largest ring last for some time and can be felt for many seconds if the ring is struck hard. If you place your ear close to the rings you might be able to sense the vibrations also travelling through the other rings, so that each

bell affects the others around it. The rings are initially cold to the touch, but the metal warms slightly the longer you hold it. The metal will react with oils on the skin, leaving a metallic smell behind. If you stand in the gallery long enough while the bells are being struck, you might even be able to taste the metallic smell, as if you've been sucking on an old penny.

End of Stop 13, Track 2.

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