

# Michael Lyons explains his decision to work in steel

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## *Artists' Lives* extract

**Michael Lyons:** Why I should work in steel I don't know but I remember desperately at the moment I really fancy doing some work in stone strangely enough. Partly the background, partly that it seemed new, partly that I'd set off doing something with Roy Kitchen when I was at Wolverhampton and never really pursued it.

But it was this sense of the physical involvement that if you carve a piece of wood, for example, you spend, well you can cut it with chainsaws and things and gnash at it, things that are very big. But it's the kind of involvement with steel that takes the whole of one's being.

I'm not saying that you can't do that with other materials, it would be silly to say that. But there is a very particular involvement with cutting and working with steel, although I must confess I physically don't like working with steel as much as I did. I just don't like doing it, too much like hard work.

[...]

And one of the great things about steel is that, you know, people can use it in all sorts of ways. The bigger things I've done say in China and Mexico, I've like fabricated each, fabricated it into sections.

But with steel you can destroy the whole sculpture. You can start making a sculpture, oh god, I'm just going to cut that whole, the whole centre of this out and change it and moves about, which you can't, I don't think you can do that with

carving. I can probably do it with wood if you peel it all together or something but not with the same sort of intensity that you can say, right, I'm having that out and then that bit will look better and grow. So I think in answer to your original question, a very, very close relationship, very close relationship with the material.

This is a transcript of part of an interview from National Life Stories' project *Artists' Lives*:

Michael Lyons, interviewed by Ann Sproat, 2011-2012 © British Library Board, reference C466/311. Extract from Section 1, Track 16. Starts: 32:36, breaks and resumes: 36:42

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