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## Nick Hornby, sculptor



Nick Hornby photographed by Holly Falconer, 2010 (© Holly Falconer, 2010)

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Cast in pristinely white synthetic marble, artist Nick Hornby's multifaceted, abstract structures blend familiar fragments from a variety of art historical references.

### Studying fine art

After completing a foundation year at [Wimbledon College of Art](#), Hornby went on to study at the [Slade School of Art](#), graduating in 2003 with a BA in Fine Art.

"My undergraduate was a bit of a disaster. I couldn't seem to reconcile my attraction to the formal, with my interest in the conceptual."

During his MA at [Chelsea College of Art](#), Nick's work developed further. He began to find it easier to think about both aspects at the same time.

"My work completely changed during my MA. If the challenge is to develop a sustainable practice, push too much too quickly and the work becomes vacuous. Don't push at all and without finding opportunities your work never germinates."

Nick graduated from Chelsea in 2007, his final MA show consisting of a life-sized lateral section of a 727 airplane. The sculpture, constructed from timber and paint, was subsequently selected for the exhibition 'Anticipations' at Selfridges and was later installed at Sony BMG's headquarters in London.

### A prize-winning art career

Over the past few years Hornby has been the recipient of numerous art prizes – including the BlindArt Prize, the Deidre Hubbard Sculpture Award – and has been short-listed for many others.

"After my MA I applied for everything, no matter how small, or how seemingly unrelated it was to me." Nick believes that writing a good application can be time-consuming, but having "good images, a neat and simple CV and website are really important."

In 2008 he was awarded the Clifford Chance Sculpture Award, an annual award sponsored by the global law firm. "Clifford chance was a wonderful experience, and the prize money I re-invested into the next project."

Where does an idea come from? Is it the sum of many other ideas? Is it always borrowed or stolen?

Nick's work was exhibited in the company's London offices and during the exhibition was interviewed about his practice by author Nick Hornby. "We had a rather surreal conversation in front of 200 people on the top floor of a huge skyscraper with views across London."

Disaster struck in the final days of the exhibition: "a fat-cat lawyer sat on my table sculpture and broke all the legs. It was terribly sad, but the insurance paid for a few months studio rent."

## The process of creating a sculpture

Nick's sculptures have been described as 'digital hybrids', melding modern technologies and traditional casting processes in their production. His works are first imagined digitally using computer-aided design (CAD), before cast and then finished by hand.

Earlier sculptures were constructed using commonplace materials such as timber, MDF and plaster. Recent works, such as those exhibited in his 2010 solo show Atom vs. Super Subject at Alexia Goethe Gallery, are cast in synthetic marble – a composite of ground marble and resin.

"Resin is a really nasty material to work with – toxic and smelly. It is murder to work with because it takes half an hour to cure which means it runs and dribbles."

Synthetic marble is incredibly strong, unlike MDF which may warp or bend, or plaster which can crack and shatter.

"If you want to engage with audiences and be able to crate things up and send them abroad, then knowing that a piece will look the same when exhibited as it did when it left the studio is really important."

For his solo show at Alexia Goethe, Hornby created 12 sculptures, each made up of the intersection of 3 or 4 famous sculptures by artists such as Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Constantin Brancusi and Auguste Rodin. His aim was not so much to complicate ideas of authorship, but to 'try to implicate the viewer in the construction of meaning.'

Nick's work pose numerous questions: where does an idea come from? Is it the sum of many other ideas? Is it always borrowed or stolen? Nick has 'just scratched the surface of some of these questions.'

## Taking up an artist's residency

In 2009, Nick travelled to Mumbai to undertake a residency at the [Institute of Contemporary Indian Art](#). "It was only for a few weeks, but it opened up a number of questions and conversations."

Residencies provide artists with new networks and contacts, enabling them to focus on their practice over an extended time period.

Most recently, he has been on a six month residency at [Eyebeam](#), an art and technology centre in New York. Located at the heart of the Chelsea Gallery District, Eyebeam's residencies focus on the enabling and supporting of research and production of initiatives that query art, culture and technology.

"I have a desk space, workshop, two laser cutters, 3D printer, a huge shared space to test ideas full size and most importantly, a critical peer group."

The benefits of undertaking a residency are very different for each individual. Residencies often provide artists with new networks and contacts whilst enabling them to focus on their practice over an extended time period, away from day-to-day pressures.

"I came with a clear idea of what I wanted to do: to research the Boolean operation in relationship to sculpture, technically, philosophically and poetically, and go on to design a new body of work."

By doing the residency, Nick has "had the time and space to meander and fail and test some tangents. I will be very sad to leave, but plan to spend quite a lot of time here in the future."

During his six months at Eyebeam, Nick has been developing a new body of work which appropriates from architectural rather than art historical sources.

"Imagine: The Guggenheim, carved open by the pantheon, in a baroque footprint. I'm interested in the public domain, and therefore, both making works which the audience can de-construct (so having fragments which can be recognised) and also making works which can stand up to their environment.

His designs he says, have become "fairly huge - 20 to 100 foot tall. We shall see..."