

Sculptural Values: Carving, Modelling, Making (Leeds, 30 Sep 26)

Leeds, Henry Moore Institute, Sep 30, 2026

Deadline: Aug 3, 2026

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About the symposium.

How do we address questions of matter, process, facture, climate, fluidity and scale in premodern sculpture today? What languages of art history and criticism might enable us to hold such qualities within description and to do so with verve? What deeper fantasies lie within materials? What inner ferments does the artwork externalise?

This event for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) is part of a Research Season at Henry Moore Institute that centres on the idiosyncratic sculptural imagination of the English critic Adrian Stokes (1902–72). A key voice in mid twentieth-century sculptural and architectural criticism, Stokes uniquely combined a disparate set of compelling concerns: modernist values of direct carving, speculative psychoanalytic thought, a sensitivity to the vitality of natural materials, and a deep understanding of pre-modern sculpture in its continual reanimation. The workshop will engage, both directly and indirectly, with some of Stokes' key terms, but no prior familiarity with his writings is necessary.

The workshop brings scholars working on premodern sculpture together to re-assess Stokes' primary distinction between "carving" and "modelling" as part of a larger discussion of sculptural values. How does the division Stokes maintained between aesthetics and process, implicit in his definitions of the two terms, challenge the assumptions of new methodologies such as affordance theory, material engagement theory, eco-criticism etc? How should we approach Stokes' *Stones of Rimini* (1934), Stokes' best-known study, anew after the material and now ecological turns in art history? Can we still speak of "calcareous" versus "siliceous" traditions? Is limestone really the "humanistic" rock? Was Stokes right to locate an origin for the Ionic volute's scroll in ammonite fossils, and what other natural derivations might we add to his way of looking at architectural forms? What does it mean to bestow a tempo on things? Other of Stokes' values to be discussed include "immediacy", "turning out" and "massiveness".

The workshop will include a group discussion of pre-circulated excerpts from *Stones of Rimini* (1934) as well as an exhibition tour of Sagarika Sundaram at the Institute. Together, we will apply Stokes' values (especially questions of tactility, external/internal, soft/hard, permeability etc) to critical assessments of Sundaram's sculpture.

We seek to embolden new voices in sculptural criticism and to stretch permissible modes of art writing. We invite submissions for 15-minute academic papers or creative responses related but

not limited to the following themes:

- Poetics of sculptural criticism/description/analysis
- Ecological and geological approaches to writing about sculpture
- Encounters with an object in situ
- Imaginings of space and place
- Climate and weather with regard to sculpture
- The persistence of pre-modern sculpture into the present

Submit a proposal

We welcome submissions from a broad spectrum of critical and creative practice for individual 15-minute papers or a full panel. Applicants are kindly asked to submit:

- a brief abstract (no more than 250 words)
- a short biographical note (100 words)

The deadline for proposals: Monday 3 August 2026, 17:00

Please email your proposals to: research@henry-moore.org

If you would like to apply in another format, such as video or audio, this is also welcomed. Please contact research@henry-moore.org if you would like to discuss this.

Speakers will receive an honorarium of £100, and travel and accommodation costs within the UK will be reimbursed.

Reference:

CFP: Sculptural Values: Carving, Modelling, Making (Leeds, 30 Sep 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 7, 2026 (accessed Jul 8, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52900>>.