

# The Studio Assistant

## *Artist-assistant relationships and the lineage of contemporary British sculpture (1960-present day)*

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### Introduction

This research explores the kind of learning that is rooted deeply in the processes of the studio, and in spending time with someone committed to medium-specificity.

Taking Caro and his impact on art education in the 1960s as a pivotal moment in British sculpture, this research looks at contemporary work produced by his studio assistants to reflect upon a fundamental shift from hands-on, process-based studio sculpture towards the expanded field and a post-medium condition.

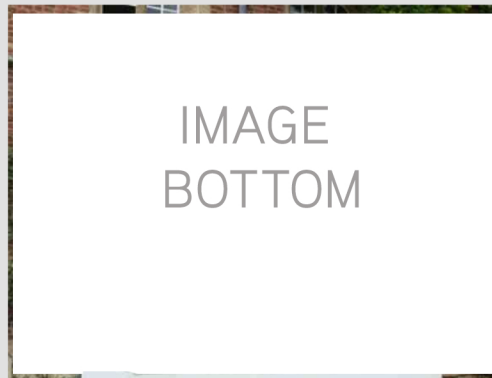
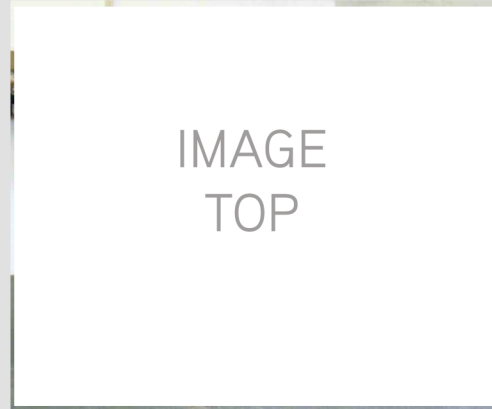


### Aim

We aim to highlight the role of studio assistants within the tradition of twentieth-century British sculpture.

As collaborative practices between artists, or between artist and audience are increasingly paradigmatic

this project looks at the roots of such relationships within the traditional artist's studio system. There are two strands to this theme: the creative role played by the assistant in the production of signature works by the dominant artist, and the kinds of knowledge that are passed on to the assistant. One of the aims for this project is to highlight modes of learning that are evident in master/assistant relationships.



Left image: Caro's studio. Camden, London, 2011  
Examples of work produced by Caro's Studio assistants:  
Top: J. Wallbank. *Untitled* 2010  
Bottom: Professor J. Gibbons. *First Moment* 2007

### Method

Through an extensive series of interviews with Caro's studio assistants and the analysis of contemporary production in relation to the studio experience, we ask is this emphasis visible in the final outcomes themselves?

### Conclusion

As Lave & Wenger (1991) identify, the apprenticeship model relates well to the formal framework of art education where artist practitioners 'externalise' practice, passing on knowledge in 'replicated' industry like environments such as workshops.

Art education has a long tradition of learning by doing and contemporary higher education maintains a traditional structure of 'old timer' (professional artist/practitioner) teaching the 'newcomer' (the student) the master and the apprentice. With the use of assistants, studio experiences and actions are reordered, reshaped and experienced anew. The potential to change the nature of the activity itself through 'shared experience and interactive negotiation' introduces a new dynamic.

### References

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