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Denis Mitchell (1912 - 1993)

Nansalsa, 1975

P1145

Bronze, signed with initials

Dated and numbered 4/7 to slate base

Records indicate only four of the intended 7 were cast

Height: 28 in (71 cm)

Width: 26.2 in (66.5 cm)

Depth: 6 in (15.2cm)

£ 45000

LITERATURE

Illustrated Glynn Vivian Gallery Catalogue, Swansea, 1979

EXHIBITION

Exhibited - Marjorie Parr Gallery, London, 1975; Festival Gallery, Bath, 1978; Alwin Gallery, London,

1976; Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, 1994; 48th Aldeburgh Festival, 1995; Penwith Gallery, St

Ives, 1996; Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, 1979

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

Denis Mitchell grew up in Swansea, where he took evening art classes before moving to Barnoon, St Ives in 1930 to set up a market garden with his brother. After working various jobs such as tin mining and fishing, Mitchell became assistant to Barbara Hepworth in 1949, the same year he co-founded the Penwith Society, of which he was chairman from 1955-7. Whilst under Hepworth's tutelage Mitchell developed an uncompromising love of pure form and by the late 1950s, had already exhibited many accomplished works in wood, stone and slate relief.

Mitchell moved on from Hepworth's studio in 1958, that same year he executed his first bronze sculpture. It was Mitchell's discovery of the sand-cast bronze technique that solidified his creative process, for it imposed a satisfying simplicity on his evolving repertoire of abstract forms. The grueling task of endlessly re-carving and working a rough bronze cast, allowed him time to engage with the formal and conceptual progression of his ideas.

In 1960 Mitchell became a part-time teacher at the Penzance Grammar School and then later at Redruth School of Art. During this time the artist's reputation as a sculptor grew and in 1967 he gave up teaching altogether to devote himself entirely to his own work.
After viewing the artist's solo show at Marjorie Parr Galleries in 1969, Patrick Heron commented 'Mitchell is the only important British sculptor, junior to Moore and Hepworth, who has never deserted the carved or hand-cut form as the sole vehicle of expression. A sculpture by Mitchell is not a geometrically definable concept. On the contrary, a Mitchell is a form, usually a single rather than streamlined form, enclosed as it were a single skin or surface which weaves and bends and buckles and stretches in a way so subtle, physically and dimensionally that it can still only usefully be likened to organic form…'

Denis Mitchell won the Arts Council Award in 1966. He was made a member of the Board of Governors, Plymouth Art College in 1973 and of the Falmouth School of Art 1977. Between 1957 and 1993 various exhibitions of Denis Mitchell's work were held at the Waddington Galleries, London, Bianchini Gallery, New York, Deborah Sherman Gallery, Chicago and the Penwith Gallery, St Ives, among others. The artist's work was included in the Tate Gallery St Ives' opening Exhibition in 1993 and more recently exhibited there for his solo show 'Ascending Forms' in 2005. Examples of Mitchell's work can still be found in the permanent collection of Tate St Ives.