

Sky Arts to broadcast *Hard Beauty*, a new film about one of Britain's great unsung artists, Helaine Blumenfeld OBE.

Directed by the respected filmmaker Rupert Edwards.

Premiering on Sky Arts on Wednesday 18 April, 10pm.



Tree of Life: Encounter, 2018.

Hard Beauty, the first film about the life and work of sculptor Helaine Blumenfeld, OBE, will premiere on Sky Arts on Wednesday 18th April, 10pm. Directed by the award-winning filmmaker, Rupert Edwards, the film follows Blumenfeld over the course of one year as she works on a monumental public commission, *Tree of Life: Encounter*, for the Woolf Institute in Cambridge.

Helaine Blumenfeld is one of the most respected sculptors of her generation and one of the art world's best kept secrets. She has dedicated the last fifty years to creating large-scale bronze and marble sculptures that lie at the intersection between abstraction and figuration. Blumenfeld's sculptures can be found in prominent public spaces across Britain, Europe and the US, and in museum collections around the world – most recently a piece of hers was installed at the V&A.

Blumenfeld has an unwavering commitment to her singular artistic vision. In an art world preoccupied with the conceptual, she has carved out her own path, devoting her life to creating beautiful forms from



the hardest materials. She has fearlessly embraced the physical and emotional demands of being a sculptor, breaking into a male-dominated field, and sacrificing time with her two sons as they grew up.

Featuring sequences filmed in Paris, where Blumenfeld first learned her craft under the great Russian sculptor Ossip Zadkine; Pietrasanta, Italy – a sanctuary for sculptors since Michelangelo, where Blumenfeld has a studio; and the artist's hometown of Cambridge, this film reveals the story of one of Britain's great living sculptors. It follows the creation of Blumenfeld's sculpture, *Tree of Life: Encounter*, from conceiving the form in clay, to scaling up, 'roughing out' and finishing the marble, to installing the completed 10ft sculpture at the Woolf Institute's new headquarters at Westminster College, Cambridge, in February 2018.

Timothy Potts, Director, Getty Museum, who features in the film says: *"It's quite remarkable that Helaine Blumenfeld, at this stage in her life, is enjoying so much success with new commissions and recognition from major museums, collectors and public institutions. Many artists have successful mid-life careers but their future doesn't always look as exciting as what's come before them. Helaine has avoided that pitfall by continuing to evolve in her artistry; what she's creating now is more ambitious and complex than ever before. I am sure that Helaine's work will survive the test of time and she will have a place in 20th and 21st century history."*

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Helaine Blumenfeld

Helaine Blumenfeld OBE (b.1942, New York) studied Philosophy at Columbia University, New York, followed by Oxford University. She later completed a PhD in Philosophy at Columbia in 1965. Following her studies, Blumenfeld moved to Paris to study sculpture at the Ecole de la Grande Chaumière (1962–63), where she studied with Russian sculptor Ossip Zadkine. Helaine Blumenfeld moved to England in 1969 and soon after, exhibited at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge. 1975 marked a turning point in Blumenfeld's career when she first visited Pietrasanta, Italy, and began carving in marble as well as in bronze. In 1985, she had a seminal joint exhibition with Henry Moore at the Alex Rosenberg Gallery, New York. In 2007 Blumenfeld became the first woman to win the Il Premio Pietrasanta e la Versilia Nel Mondo, adding her name to the list of winners of this prestigious award including Botero, Pomodoro and Marc Quinn. In 2008 the Royal British Society of Sculptors held a major retrospective of her work and, in 2011, Blumenfeld was awarded an honorary OBE to mark her achievements in sculpture.

Blumenfeld has exhibited her work extensively both in the UK, including at Salisbury Cathedral (2013) and London's Berkeley Square (2015), and internationally in Europe and the United States. She has created more than 90 public sculptures, among the most notable are *Tempesta* overlooking Hyde Park i



in London and *Fortuna* in Jubilee Park at Canary Wharf. Blumenfeld strongly believes in the power of sculpture to 'serve the public good', and has been commissioned to create several public sculptures around the world. Today, Blumenfeld lives and works between her studios in Cambridge and Pietrasanta in Italy.

2018 sees Blumenfeld embark on one of the most ambitious periods of her career, with a group show at the Venice Biennale (26 May - 25 November 2018) and a solo exhibition at Ely Cathedral (13 July – 28 October 2018).

About Rupert Edwards

Hard Beauty was directed by the respected filmmaker Rupert Edwards whose art films have won two BAFTAs, a Rose D'Or and numerous nominations for films like *The Passion in Port Talbot* (BBC2), the story of Michael Sheen's epic community theatre project, *The Trouble with Tolstoy* (BBC1) a two part Russian journey into the life and work of the writer, *Man on the Moon* (C4) – an original opera about Buzz Aldrin composed by Jonathan Dove, *A Poet's Guide to Britain* (BBC4) with poet Owen Sheers and *Painting the Johnsons*, (Sky Arts) a portrait of BoJo's mother, an artist whose work documents her battle with mental health problems. He has recently completed writing and series producing Sky Arts upcoming series, *Mystery of the Lost Paintings*.

About Thinking Violets

Thinking Violets is an independent production company that makes popular factual series and documentaries. *Hard Beauty* is produced by Remy Blumenfeld, Helaine Blumenfeld's son, whose previous work includes *The Other Francis Bacon* (Channel 4) and *The Man Who Shot Beautiful Women* (BBC4), a documentary about his grandfather, the photographer Erwin Blumenfeld. www.thinkingviolets.com

About Hignell Gallery

Helaine Blumenfeld is represented by Hignell Gallery in Shepherd Market, Mayfair. Hignell Gallery was established in 2015 by twentieth-century and contemporary sculpture specialist, Abby Hignell. Representing some of the leading figures in contemporary sculpture, Hignell Gallery's roster includes Helaine Blumenfeld, OBE., Johannes von Stumm, Sophie Ryder and Ben Russell.