

**James Capper**  
**Frieze Sculpture 2018**  
**Regent's Park, London**

The ingenuity and sophistication of biological lifeforms has long inspired advances in human technology, and current research in engineering and mechanics continues to look to the organic world to solve complex challenges. James Capper's ambitious, multi-scale *WALKING BOAT* sculptures - researched, drawn and developed over the last 10 years - are embedded in this reciprocal dialogue between biomechanics and the human.

As early as the year 231, Chinese army commanders had modelled an "artificial cow" for the efficient transportation of food to faraway troops. Fast-forward to 2018, we have designed soft-robotic pneumatic systems with the exact anatomy of a living octopus, designed to reach difficult surgical zones or to overcome complicated obstacles in search-and-rescue missions. The history of evolution is echoed in James Capper's frequent aesthetic and conceptual reference to the organic or biological, pitched alongside an interest in technology, innovation and the systems of heavy industry. His unique sculptural language evolves along different modular chains he terms 'Divisions', a network of interrelated sculpture families each grouped according to specialised application. *WALKING BOAT* sculptures are part of the *Offshore Division*, designated for use on and off water.

The colonisation of land by aquatic lifeforms has a long evolutionary history. Beginning some two billion years ago, multiple genealogies chart species-formation as each made the macro-ecological jump onto the earth and an uninhabitable world flourished with life. Protected by a newly formed ozone layer, early invertebrates and amphibians bravely leapt into the dark terrene, and their newly encountered ecosystem soon demanded a chassis capable of symmetric, mechanised movement.

James Capper has developed a wide variety of sculpture components which are attachment parts for his large mobile works but can be shown and viewed autonomously. In the *Offshore Division* these are called *TREADPADS*, disc-shaped feet which permit a full-scale sculpture to be fully mobile. *TREADPAD* diameter depends on the size and weight of the larger sculpture it carries, and the shapes patterning the surface of the pad - diamond, convex, frustum - are determined by the terrain on which it is active - rock, sand, shingle: all James Capper's works are sculpture and sculptural tools in - or ready for - action.

Removing himself from the utilitarian lexicon of professional engineering and the deterministic narratives of evolutionary biology, Capper's functioning works stand as an aesthetic representation of the complex character and reciprocal relationships between technology, organism and craft. Recalling the eccentric personas of Werner Herzog's Fitzcarraldo or Wes Anderson's Steve Zissou, James Capper's vision for his *WALKING BOAT* sculptures confronts the precarity of humanity's technological desire, articulating the mutual cooperation of mechanical and organic lives.

**James Capper** (b. 1987, London) studied at Chelsea College of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. His work has been widely exhibited around the world in museums, not for profit institutions and galleries. Solo presentations of his work include *RIPPER TEETH IN ACTION* at Modern Art Oxford (2011), *DIVISIONS* at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2013), *SIX STEP* at Rio dell'Orso with ALMA ZEVI for the Venice Biennale (2015), *PROTOTYPES* at CGP London (2016), *ATLAS A SPOLETO! / TELESTEP A SPOLETO!*, Anna Mahler Association project for the Mahler & LeWitt Studios & Festival dei Due Mondi, Spoleto, Italy (2016), *SCULPTURE & HYDRAULICS* at The Edge Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts, University of Bath (2017) and *JAMES CAPPER* at Bathurst Art Gallery, New South Wales, Australia (2017). The youngest ever artist to be awarded the prestigious Jack Goldhill Prize for Sculpture from the Royal Academy of Arts, London, he has major sculpture projects in 2018 including: *AEROCAB* with 3-D Foundation in Verbier, Switzerland, *Blue Flame* with Forth Arts in Sydney, Australia, and *MUDSKIPPER, WALKING WORKBOAT* in London. Two pairs of *TREADPADS* have been commissioned by Derwent London for their new Brunel Building in Paddington which will open in 2019.

### Works on display:

James Capper

*TREADPAD B - PAIR 1*

*WALKING SHIP 80 TON*

*STANDARD DISPLACEMENT 4 LEG (DIA 1400)*

2018

140 cm diameter

Powder-coated steel

James Capper

*TREADPAD B - PAIR 1*

*WALKING SHIP 150 TON*

*STANDARD DISPLACEMENT 4 LEG (DIA 1800)*

2018

180 cm diameter

Powder-coated steel

