

# Simon Hitchens

Simon Hitchens has been making sculpture for over thirty years and has spent his creative life exploring the connections between the human and the inanimate. His large-scale public works, frequently combining rock with resin or bronze, have immense presence and are made to resonate and interact with their location. Place and landscape - he comes from a long line of landscape painters - are crucial to his work. The land itself in the form of rock is integral to many works, carved in his early work, added unaltered in his later sculptures. A passionate climber, rocks have been a lifelong source of fascination.

Hitchens' work explores the contrast between the transience of human life and the longevity of rock and mountains. Rock is central, sourced directly from the landscape or from quarries. In drawings he uses stones to record the movement of the sun throughout the day, so it too is linked to transience and the passage of time.

Time is a crucial element in Hitchens' drawings: human time, celestial time and geological time. He is a perfect fit for the upcoming show at RWA Bristol, *Cosmos: The Art of Observing Space* curated by artist Ione Parkin. He will be showing *Passage*, a monumental cast concrete sculpture and *Orbit*, a suite of twelve durational drawings.

*Passage* is the result of years of experimentation, exploring the nature of the materials he uses and researching how to make his cast concrete works. Technically there is only one small part of the process that involves actual casting, but he enjoys the riff on the word 'cast' since it is making visible the cast noon shadows of an ancient and now absent rock.



'PASSAGE' (Cast concrete, 2025)

The twelve drawings for *Orbit*, record a year of observing the rising and setting of the sun as it arcs overhead, at equally spaced monthly intervals and using the same stone he found on site. "By returning to the same geographical location every month, these drawings demonstrate how the tilted axis of the Earth affects our seasons as it orbits the sun throughout the year, drawing our attention to things larger than ourselves."

He draws alone with rare interventions - the occasional intrigued farmer, flies and bees. In the country his companions range from sheep to pheasants and skylarks, although the loudest dawn chorus came from the parakeets, when making a recent drawing in Regents Park!

A huge amount of planning and research goes into sourcing his locations. He needs to be able to observe the rising

and setting sun unimpeded by a mountain, tree, or building for the whole day. Each day before dawn, he travelled to his location and drew until the sun went down. His non-stop drawings, over sixteen hours in summer and around eight in winter are made with a rotting pen. They trace the line of the shadow of the stone repeatedly as the sun ceaselessly changes position. They record the absence of light at that particular moment. It takes supreme control and an iron nerve knowing that a single pause or error could invalidate the day's work. It can be gruelling and relentless and some days he desperately wanted a cloud to obscure the sun. But he seems to have nerves of steel and his exquisite drawings, made with the human hand, appear flawless.

The *Orbit* drawings will be exhibited in *Cosmos* in the form of an ellipse showing very clearly the extraordinary changes created by the shadow of a stone through the cycle of the months. They record both absence and presence and they reveal Hitchens' core raison d'être. "I explore the nature of being through making my work."

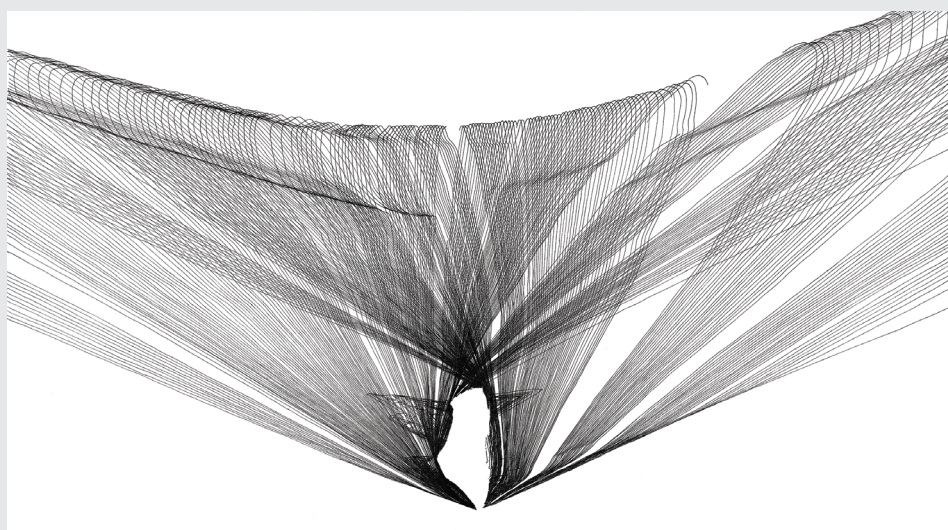
Fiona Robinson

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'ORBIT 4 - OCTOBER'