

Artists in their studio

## NICK HORNBY

Continuing her series, Emily Tobin visits the sculptor in his Notting Hill studio, where he works with marble, resin and bronze

PHOTOGRAPH JOSHUA MONAGHAN



Nick Hornby's studio has all the trappings of a deconsecrated chapel or, perhaps, a neo-gothic house. Ogee arches adorn the balustrades of the two mezzanine levels, there is a fireplace in the centre with a vast stone lintel and the plaster walls reveal sections of exposed brickwork. 'I think it's rather pertinent,' says Nick – because, in fact, the entire space is artificial, created at the whim of one of his predecessors. 'It is a breeze-block warehouse, clad in a theatrical stage and performing as a gothic, church-like space,' he explains.

The studio is hidden behind large wooden doors in Notting Hill, the area of west London in which Nick has spent almost all of his 39 years. 'It's a really cosmopolitan neighbourhood. We have the community that runs the carnival, the oldest Sikh place of worship in London, David Hockney used to live nearby and Bridget Riley isn't far away.' The borough also exhibits a huge range of architectural vernaculars: 'They tried many styles for social housing, so there's low-rise, mid-rise and high-rise, some mock Georgian terraces and some Egyptian-looking façades.'

Nick grew up in a neo-gothic Victorian house. 'There was antique furniture, heavy old doors and all the ornamentation was made up of incredible S-shaped scrolls and geometry,' he recalls. 'The piano legs were dodecagons – 12-sided structures that held this large weight and seemed to defy gravity.' These early decorative motifs now reoccur in Nick's work: he creates sculptures that tread the line between figuration and abstraction, sourcing silhouettes from art history to produce forms that shift and distort as the viewer moves around them. While Nick uses cutting-edge technology to design his three-dimensional works, they are handcrafted in bronze, marble or resin.

When I visit, he is working on a piece that took its starting point from the 19th-century German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*. He has reworked the figure of the wanderer and intersected it with a line from a Wassily Kandinsky drawing, combining these two seemingly polarised elements to create something entirely new.

Nick's studio is populated by these sleek, rippling forms, which change identity depending on the angle they are viewed from. They are mercurial by nature. 'My sculptures perform as modernist pieces,' he explains. 'They're designed using 21st-century technology disguised as 20th-century objects.'

From this month (July 13–October 27), one of Nick's works will be on show as part of the annual *Open 21* exhibition at Mostyn, Llandudno, the largest publicly funded contemporary art gallery in Wales. [nickhornby.com](http://nickhornby.com) | [mostyn.org](http://mostyn.org) ▷