

# Paolozzi on sale at Bonhams



A rare sculpture titled *Seagull and Fish* by Eduardo Paolozzi, which featured in his first ever exhibition on Cork Street, will be auctioned as part of the Modern British & Irish sale on 29 May 2013 at Bonham's auction room in New Bond Street. The work was a gift from the artist to the British illustrator, Enid Furlonger and is estimated to fetch between £50,000 and £70,000.

Paolozzi was a precocious student of sculpture and while still at the Slade School of Art, held his first ever exhibition in London at the age of 23 at the Mayor gallery on Cork Street, now London's foremost gallery for Dada and Surrealism. *Seagull and Fish* was conceived when Paolozzi was just 22 years old and is one of four concrete sculptures completed by him in 1946. Allegedly, Freddy Mayor was unaware that Paolozzi was still a student when he offered him the show. Soon after the exhibition, Paolozzi left the Slade School without taking his diploma and brimming with anti-establishment sentiment. As a sculptor he was largely self-taught.

*Seagull and Fish* is based on Paolozzi's observations of the natural environment in Newhaven where he grew up. The Mayor Gallery exhibition established Paolozzi's status as a professional artist, as he sold several drawings of Fishermen, fish and other seagull related subjects. The proceeds from the exhibition funded Paolozzi's pivotal trip to Paris, which put him in contact with significant French artists such as Alberto Giacometti, Constantin Brancusi, George Braques and Fernand Leger. This was a crucial point in Paolozzi's artistic career, which contributed to the blossoming of his reputation.

The sculpture was created during a time when Paolozzi was experimenting with cement. He rejected the contemporary trend

in figurative cement sculpture, which was towards a more polished aesthetic pioneered in the late 1920's by Henry Moore. Paolozzi instead employed a rough and messy working approach which went on to influence a generation of other artists. His make-shift style was dictated by his impoverished circumstances, as he was forced to trawl through London with a cart, acquiring the necessary working materials from builders' workshops. Paolozzi's skill in converting rough materials into elegant sculptures is exemplified by Seagull and Fish, which transforms an ordinary subject and material into an enchanting form. Writing in 1947, the art critic Robert Melville compared Paolozzi's work to that of Pablo Picasso, especially to the 'large whorls of Picasso's 1938 series'.

Paolozzi boasts both a fascinating artistic career and a tragic personal history which contributes to his extraordinary approach to art. In 1940, when Italy declared war on Britain, the artist was interned at Saughton Prison. During this time, his father, grandfather and uncle were among the 446 Italians drowned on a ship, the Arandora Star, carrying them to Canada. Traumatized by these events, the artist returned to Edinburgh to begin his artistic career. His reputation has continued to grow considerably since the 1950's. He was awarded a CBE in 1968 and in the 1980's was commissioned to complete the mosaic pattern which decorates Tottenham Court Road Station.