



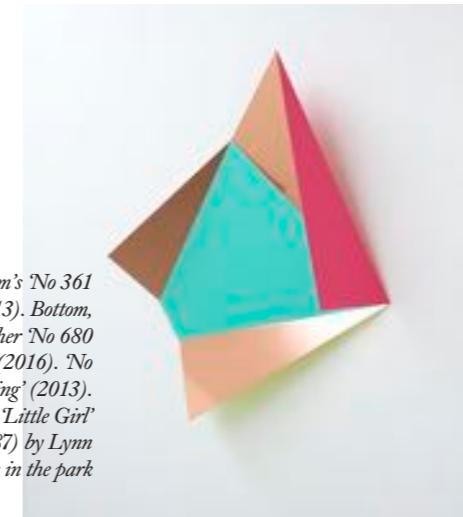
Rana Begum photographed in the Camellia House at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park

INTO THE LIGHT

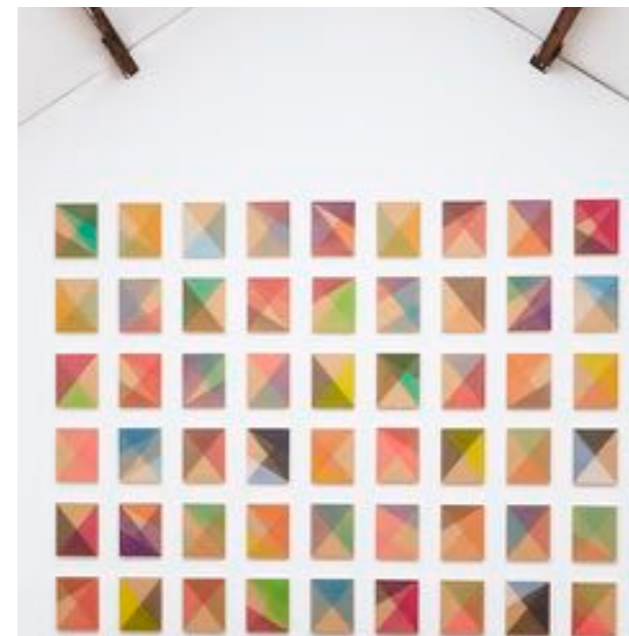
Rana Begum reveals why her role as guest curator at Yorkshire Sculpture Park has transformed how she views her own bold, bright, geometric art

BY CATRIONA GRAY PHOTOGRAPHS BY HARRY CROWDER

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Right: Begum's 'No 361 SFold' (2013). Bottom, from left: her 'No 680 Painting' (2016). 'No 408 Painting' (2013). Far right: 'Little Girl' (1987) by Lynn Chadwick in the park



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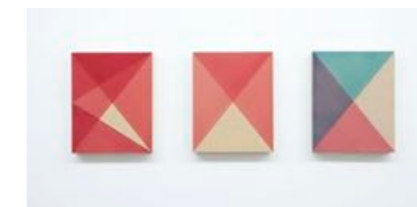
t's a crisp, misty morning at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, where the rolling green hills are not just home to sheep, but to some of the finest examples of contemporary art. As you walk through the fields, past pieces by Barbara Hepworth, Ai Weiwei and Sophie Ryder, a series of sunflower-yellow boxes by the conceptual artist Rasheed Araeen come into view, silhouetted on the horizon. Small enough to be lifted by a child, the metal frames are currently being stacked into a towering totem by a couple of visitors. It stands like a giant sentinel in front of the Longside Gallery, the location of a new exhibition to celebrate the museum's 40th anniversary, curated by the British artist Rana Begum, who has made the train journey north to visit her ambitious project.

'That's amazing,' exclaims Begum, darting forward, her phone aloft, to take a video. 'I've never seen anyone approach Araeen's installation in that way before.' Born in Bangladesh, but now a Londoner through and through, Begum has been a practising artist since attending Chelsea College of Arts in the 1990s.

Her work is geometric and abstract, often characterised by the use of industrial materials and the precise application of colour. Light is important: she is perhaps best-known for her *Folds* pieces, wall-mounted sheets of brightly painted metal, which are carefully creased to create reflections that imbue the origami-like shapes with a remarkable sense of life and movement. Begum is as bold and sharp as her art, and



Above left: Rasheed Araeen's 'Zero to Infinity' (2016-2017); and above right: 'Backdrops' (2015) by Charlotte Moth, both selected by Begum for the current exhibition





fizzes with energy, a necessary attribute given how busy she has been in the past months. In March, she unveiled a \$100,000 commission in Dubai after winning the coveted Abraaj Group Art Prize; her debut museum exhibition opened at the Sainsbury Centre in Norwich in May; and most recently, she was asked to curate this show at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park using the Arts Council Collection.

This was her first time curating, but she decided against seeking advice or undertaking extensive research, instead relying on her instincts. 'I wanted to show how I look at things, so none of the works have labels,' says Begum. 'It's so the viewers can really experience it for themselves, without being led by the title or the name of the artist.'

Begum spent weeks leafing through the catalogues of the Arts Council's vast collection. Although she tried not to look too closely at the captions, she ended up including six items by her former college tutors: Noel Forster, John Carter, Estelle Thompson, Gary Woodley, Tess Jaray and Roger Ackling. 'It was a complete coincidence,' she says, laughing. 'Clearly, they've been a lasting influence on me.'

She also commissioned three new works by emerging artists, including a clever installation that manipulates reflected light by Charlotte Moth; and a huge abstract piece by Flore Nové-Josserand, part of which had to be painted directly onto the wall. 'I felt as if it was vital to include the next generation,' she says. 'It was a way of showing the connection between what is being made now, and what has gone before.'

Although none of Begum's own work is included, her touch is still felt throughout, in the original way she has grouped the exhibits. The vast space is broken up by three painted geometric shapes that extend down the length of the wall and project out as a display platform, each a pastel shade of pink, blue or lemon. They act as subtle barriers, warning the public away from fragile 3-D pieces, while linking smaller 2-D works together. It's an inspired visual trope that fosters a sense of cohesion, while inviting the visitor to view the exhibits in an entirely different way.

'This project has given me an outsider's perspective on my own work, and it's definitely going to affect how I show my art in the future,' says Begum. 'The fact that I was allowed to experiment – and the artists were open to it – has encouraged me to do the same. I'd like to let go of my own creations a little bit and see what could happen.'

Occasional Geometries: Rana Begum Curates the Arts Council Collection' is at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (www.ysp.org.uk) until 29 October.



'The project has given me an outsider's perspective on my own work'



Begum in front of Barbara Hepworth's 'The Family of Man' (1970). Below: 'Sitting' (2007) by Sophie Ryder in the park



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Jesse Darling's 'March of the Valedictorians' (2016), chosen by Begum for the show. Left: Begum's 'No 574' (2015). Top left: her 'No 529' (2014)