

# Tempo

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## Social realist

Bits-and-pieces exhibit leaves much of Peter Howson unexamined

By Alan G. Artner  
Art critic

**P**eter Howson is a British painter who embraces social realism with a vehemence comparable to that of artists of Germany's New Objectivity movement in the 1920s.

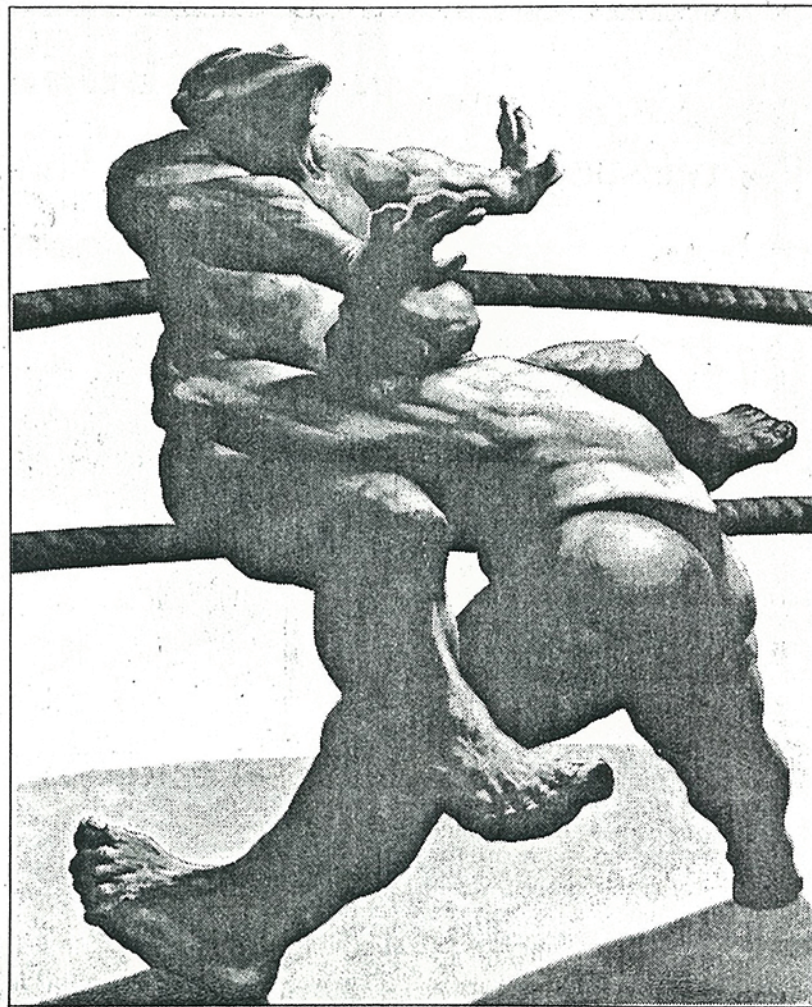
His first solo exhibition in America, at the Lannon-Cole gallery, 365 W. Chicago Ave., shows the influence of Max Beckmann and George Grosz as well as—curiously—any number of later sculptors who symbolized social ideals in angular, chunky, “heroic” figures. Some of the pieces have the grittiness of British plays and films of the Angry Young Man variety. Others are more allegorical, aspiring toward contemporary history painting.

The brute physicality of Howson's world at times suggests an extreme, virtually Dickensian, form of criticism. Yet spectators feel the artist has directed it away from the figures he depicts, perceiving them to be the results, not the cause, of an inhuman system.

Unlike Sue Coe's art, however, the dark-toned paintings and drawings do not seem to conduct a social crusade, and several works look more “about” the rendering of sculptural form. Still, decisions about this will have to be held in

### Art notes

abeyance owing to the bits-and-pieces character of the exhibition, which communicates something of Howson's range but perhaps not his emphasis overall. (Through May 9.)



“The Wrestlers” (1990) by Peter Howson.