



[Anish Kapoor](#) : Flashback
at [Manchester Art Gallery](#) until June 5
Reviewed by [Dave Porter](#) ■ March 2011

Billed as the first ever major show of [Kapoor](#) 's work outside London in more than a decade, this collection does not disappoint. It is not so much the number of sculptures which is impressive – you can scoot round the entire exhibition pretty swiftly – but the sheer scale and breadth of his work which leaves you breathless.

Kapoor's stock-in-trade has become the gargantuan public works of art which take over the landscape, whether in Chicago or on the South Downs. Their sheer size simply demands attention.

Working within a staple of materials, Kapoor extends the boundaries of what can be achieved through artistic manipulation of stainless steel, wood and wax. The first room in the show focuses on his smaller pieces. Moon Shadow's crepuscular charm is undercut by the obtrusiveness of wood cutting into wax; the scarlet wax looking for all intents and purposes like it is bleeding.

Turning The World Inside Out is classic Kapoor, a wobbly sphere of stainless steel which looks as if it was designed for water to run smoothly over.

Wit shines through in When I Am Pregnant, a distended belly protruding out of the exhibition wall, a perfect rendition of the pregnant state apart from the lack of belly button. In counterpoint – and directly facing it on the opposing wall – is Void, an inverse image of When I Am Pregnant in a lurid purple.

It is when you enter the second room with its three huge stainless steel creations under the title of Her Blood that you begin to realise the scale of Kapoor's artistic ambition. In two of these, the viewer is caught up in the artwork, our distorted selves reflected back upon us. Maybe it is Kapoor's intention that the viewer becomes part of the art.

These pieces are vast, brooding pieces of silverware which actually come close to resembling huge serving dishes – domesticity writ large. There is a funfair mirror element to these works which unnerves the spectator and forces you to stand back from them in respect.

The smaller pieces in this collection have a lunar quality to their conception – imagine Wallace and Gromit's cheese Moon but carved out of wax and fibreglass and you come close to the idea.

There is also a sensual, female side to Kapoor: a crimson red tongue, curves and crevices which recall the female form, and a flowing line in all the works which evokes human longing and desire.