



## Humdinger

**Michael A. Malpass**

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Brush, charcoal, chisel, file, lathe, and potter's wheel, yes, but what is it about artists' tools like the chainsaw and welding torch that fail to impress so many art lovers and critics—as if real art can't possibly come from such a blue-collar, rough-and-tumble background?

In the case of Michael Malpass's sculptures—many featuring hundreds of pieces of scrap metal and weighing several thousand pounds—it is impossible not to recognize his innovations in the craft of welding and blacksmithing as anything other than genius. A master of the sphere, Malpass would sometimes work on the inside of massive sea buoys that had been cut in half. He would literally climb in, weld the intricate pieces together, drag the work out of the buoy, invert it, join the two halves, and painstakingly grind away the welding seams.

Other spheres were more modestly sized but mindbogglingly detailed, even delicate in their spiky assembled parts appearing to explode from the center. General Electric commissioned his work, as did ExxonMobil, Ford Foundation, Pfizer Pharmaceutical, the state of New Jersey, and dozens of other notable entities. At forty-four and at the peak of his career, Malpass died unexpectedly. Authored by his son, *Humdinger* is a compelling photographic journey of this extraordinary artist's life, his work, and techniques.

MATT SUTHERLAND (September/October 2018)

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