

MOORE

HENRY MOORE

An Exhibition of Sculpture and Drawings organised by the British Council for Canada and New Zealand

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1955/56

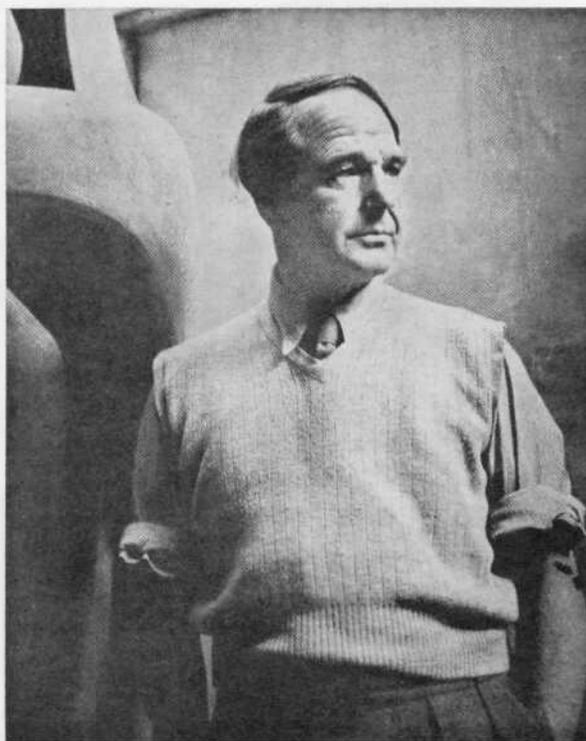
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1956/57

BIB 183232
1956

FOREWORD by Sir Herbert Read

When HENRY MOORE received the first prize for sculpture at the Venice Biennale of 1950 there was a general agreement among the world's leading art critics, not only that this artist had become the greatest sculptor of our time, but also that he was an artist whose images were in some manner peculiarly apt to express a consciousness specifically modern in its range and depth. Moore's work must finally be justified on grounds that are primarily technical and aesthetic, but that would not be a difficult task for all he has done exhibits the same perfect mastery of the plastic values of sculpture—its coherence as mass or volume, its balance and rhythm, the harmonic relationship of part to part, and of each part to the whole. Nevertheless—and this, we may suspect, explains the immediate appeal of his work—these formal elements are always used for an expressive purpose. There is throughout his work a discursive power, an implicit potency, that comes from some deep level of consciousness. His images are archetypal, and are, indeed confined to a very few archetypes. But this very limitation of Moore's subject-matter indicates a concentration of power reaching deep down into the unconscious, rather than an attention dispersed among superficial phenomena. This strength-by-limitation (characteristic of so many great artists) does not come by conscious choice: it is an imperious and almost impersonal impulse that uses the artist as its medium.

The present exhibition covers the whole range of the artist's achievement, both chronologically (from 1927 to 1954) and stylistically (from the near-naturalism of the *Reclining figure* of 1927 and the *Draped reclining figure* of 1952/3 to the geometrical abstraction of *String-figure No. 1*, 1937). The geometrical abstractions are not so characteristic of Moore's style as are what might be called the organic abstractions, represented here by the bronze *Helmet* of 1940 and the



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Animal head of 1951, works that express not some ideal of beauty, but rather an instinctive vitality. But if beauty and vitality are acceptable alternatives in art, the greatest art is nevertheless a reconciliation of these two principles; and it is precisely such a reconciliation that Henry Moore effects in his greatest works. Unfortunately a travelling exhibition can show only a limited number of major works, but the plaster models for the *Three standing figures* of 1947/8, for the *Festival reclining figure* of 1951, and for the *Draped reclining figure* of 1952/3, give an adequate idea of the monumental calm of these great works. An expressive energy, surging from unknown depths, is harmoniously modulated as it flows into the rhythmical structure of the figure, a form that cages but does not kill.

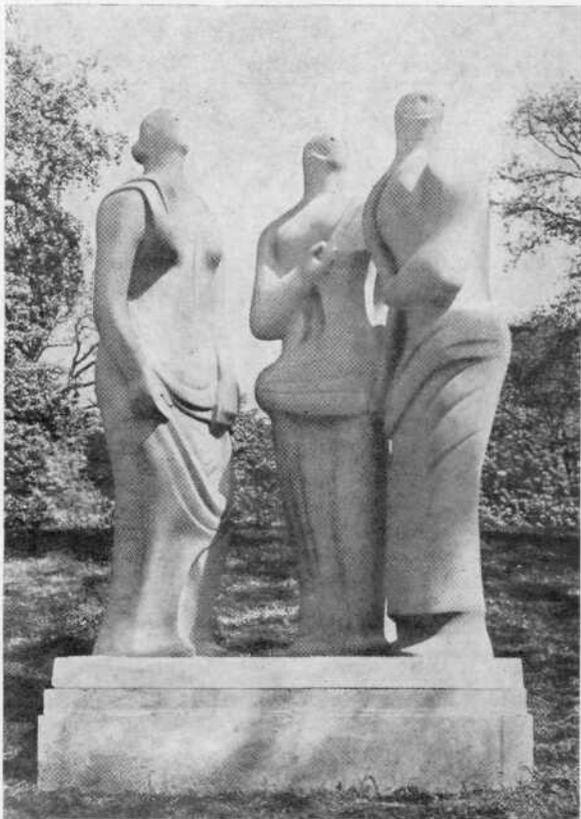
Perhaps I might add a personal note to this

brief introduction, for the style of a sculptor, as of a writer, is the man himself. Though his work is among the most inventive and experimental of our time, Moore is not a sophisticated artist. Of very simple origins (his father, as is well known, was a miner), he has retained throughout his career a simplicity of character and honesty of purpose that no amount of success or flattery can spoil. Nor is he a conceited artist—he fully admits his debt to his immediate predecessors and his profound admiration for the great sculptors and painters of the past. The word that most naturally occurs to one in writing about him—and it is a word I have used before—is integrity: integrity of spirit and of vision. It is this quality which, transcending the ebb and flow of inspiration, gives to his work its continuing influence and power.

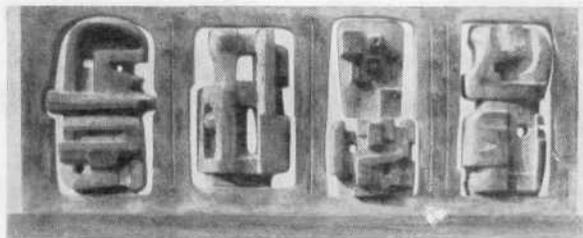
STATEMENTS BY THE ARTIST

Because a work does not aim at reproducing natural appearances it is not, therefore, an escape from life—but may be a penetration into reality, not a sedative or a drug, not just the exercise of good taste, the provision of pleasant shapes and colours in a pleasing combination, not a decoration to life, but an expression of the significance of life, a stimulation to greater effort in living. 1934

(The sculptor) must strive continually to think of, and use, form in its full spatial completeness. He gets the solid shape, as it were, inside his head—he thinks of it, whatever its size, as if he were holding it completely enclosed in the hollow of his hand. He mentally visualises a complex form *from all round itself*; he knows while he looks at one side what the other side is like; he



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identifies himself with its centre of gravity, its mass, its weight; he realises its volume, as the space that the shape displaces in the air. 1937

Sculpture is an art of the open air. Daylight, *sunlight* is necessary to it, and for me its best setting and complement is nature. I would rather have a piece of my sculpture put in a landscape, almost any landscape, than in, or on, the most beautiful building I know. 1951

Almost every sculpture of any size that I have made has been done in the open air. This is why I live in the country . . . the figure, or group I am working on can always be pushed out through the studio's double doors so that I can see what it looks like under the sky and in relation to the scale of the trees. The open air will show up the limitations of any sculpture that does not fully exist in three dimensions. A sculpture fails to be a presence under the diffused light of the sky if it is not fully conceived in the round. 1955

The *Three standing figures* are the expression in sculpture of the group feeling that I was concerned with in the shelter drawings, and although the problem of relating separate sculptural units was not new to me, my previous experience of the problem had involved more abstract forms; the bringing together of these three figures involved the creation of a unified human mood. The pervading theme of the shelter drawings was the group sense of communion in apprehension. But I only want a hint of that mood to remain in the three figures. I wanted to overlay it with the sense of release and create figures conscious of being in the open air; they have a lifted gaze for scanning distances. 1955

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

HENRY MOORE (b. 1898)

Born in Yorkshire, he studied at Leeds School of Art and the Royal College of Art, London. Since 1928 he has exhibited widely, both in Great Britain and abroad. During the Second World War he was commissioned as a war artist when he carried out his well-known series of air-raid shelter drawings. In 1948 a retrospective collection of his work was exhibited at the British Pavilion at the 24th Venice Biennale where he was awarded the International Sculpture Prize.

He was also awarded the International Sculpture Prize when a retrospective collection of his work was shown in the British section of the II Bienal do Museu de Arte Moderna at Sao Paulo in 1953/4.

Since 1946 retrospective exhibitions of his work have been held in New York, Paris, London. Similar exhibi-

tions of his sculpture and drawings have also been shown in Australia, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Yugoslavia.

He has carried out public commissions, the most important being: *Madonna and child* 1943/4, in stone, in the Church of St Matthew, Northampton; *Three standing figures* 1947/8, in stone, in Battersea Park, London; *Reclining figure* 1950/1, in bronze, in the 1951 Festival of Britain; a *Sculptural screen* (10 ft x 26½ ft), in stone, and a *Draped reclining figure* 1952/3, in bronze, both for the terrace of Time/Life Building, London; and *Two seated figures* 1952/3, in bronze, commissioned by the City of Antwerp for the Open-Air Museum, Middleheim. His work is represented in most of the major public collections throughout the world. In 1955 he was made a Companion of Honour.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The British Council wishes to thank Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B., Mr E. C. Gregory, Dr Henry M. Roland, the Gimpel Fils Gallery, London, and also the artist and Mrs Irina Moore for having so generously lent for this exhibition.

SCULPTURE

1. Reclining figure 1927 concrete 25 in. long
2. Girl with clasped hands 1930 Cumberland alabaster 16½ in. high
3. Composition 1933 carved concrete 23¼ in. high
4. Carving 1934 Travertine marble 18 in. high
5. Mother and child 1936 Ancaster stone 17¼ in. high
6. String-figure No. 1 1937 cherrywood and string 20 in. high
7. Reclining figure 1939 bronze 11 in. long
8. The helmet 1940 bronze 12 in. high
9. Family group 1946 bronze 9½ in. high
10. Three standing figures 1947/8 plaster cast of original group in Darley Dale stone in Battersea Park 84 in. high
11. Rocking chair No. 3 1950 bronze 13 in. high
12. Internal and external forms 1950 plaster 78 in. high
13. Reclining figure (internal and external forms) 1951 bronze 21 in. long
14. Festival reclining figure 1951 plaster cast of the figure in bronze commissioned for the Festival of Britain 87 in. long
15. Animal head 1951 bronze 11 in. long
16. Two seated figures (King and Queen) 1952 bronze 10¼ in. high
17. Ladderback mother and child 1952 bronze 15¼ in. high
18. Goat's head 1952 bronze 8½ in. high
19. Time/Life screen 1952/3 bronze 39 x 15¼ in. model for screen in Portland stone (10 ft x 26½ ft) on the terrace of the Time/Life Building, London
20. Draped reclining figure 1952/3 plaster cast of the figure in bronze on the terrace of the Time/Life building, London 62¼ in. long
21. Reclining figure No. 2 1953 bronze 36¼ in. long
22. Three standing figures 1953/4 bronze 29 in. high
23. Standing leaf figure No. 1 1954 bronze 19 in. high
24. Standing leaf figure No. 2 1954 bronze 19 in. high
25. 12 maquettes in bronze

DRAWINGS

26. Seated figure (drawing from life) 1928 chalk and wash 21½ x 13½ in.
27. Two recumbent nudes 1928 collage, charcoal, and wash 9 x 14 in.
28. Study of seated nude 1932 chalk and oil wash 22½ x 15½ in.
29. Studies for bones (pages from a sketch book) 1932 pencil and pen 9½ x 6¼ and 10¾ x 6¾ in.
30. Reclining figure and ideas for sculpture 1933 pen and wash 22 x 15 in.
31. Ideas for sculpture 1933 pen and wash 22 x 15 in.
32. Seated figure (drawing from life) 1935 wash 21½ x 14½ in.
33. Reclining figure 1935 chalk and wash 14 x 20½ in.
34. Drawing 1936 chalk, pen and wash 13¼ x 17¾ in.
35. Two stone forms 1936 chalk, pen and wash 19½ x 13½ in.
36. Drawing 1937 chalk and water-colour 14½ x 21¼ in.
37. Ideas for metal sculpture 1937 chalk, pen and wash 15½ x 22 in.
38. Drawing for sculpture (reclining figures) 1938 pencil and conté crayon 22 x 15 in.
39. Two heads (drawing for metal sculpture: external and internal forms) 1939 chalk, pen and coloured inks 10½ x 15 in.
40. Reclining figure (drawing for sculpture) 1939 chalk, pen and wash 11 x 15 in.
41. Drawing for sculpture (pointed form) 1940 chalk, pen, pencil and wash 10 x 17 in.
42. Standing figure (studies for sculpture in wood and metal) 1940 pencil, pen, chalk and water-colour 10 x 17 in.
43. Two standing figures (drawing for sculpture combining wood and metal) 1940 chalk, pen and water-colour 19½ x 14¼ in.
44. Standing figures (drawing for sculpture) 1940 chalk, pen and water-colour 10½ x 14½ in.
45. Two women on a bench in a shelter 1940 chalk, pen and wash 13½ x 16 in.
46. Study for the two sleepers 1941 chalk, pen and water-colour 15 x 21½ in.
47. Tube shelter perspective 1941 chalk, pen and water-colour 17 x 16½ in.
48. Two women in a shelter 1941 chalk, pen and water-colour 18½ x 17½ in.
49. Arrangement of figures 1942 chalk, pen and water-colour 13 x 21½ in.
50. Studies of miners' heads (2 pages from sketchbook) 1942 chalk, pen and wash 9½ x 6¼ in.
51. Studies of miners working (2 pages from sketchbook) 1942 chalk, pen and wash 9½ x 6¼ in.
52. Miner drilling in drift 1942 chalk, pen and wash 9½ x 6¼ in.
53. Miners waiting to go into cage 1942 chalk, pen and wash 9½ x 6¾ in.
54. Three seated figures 1944 chalk, pen and wash 13 x 22½ in.
55. Drawing for wood sculpture 1947 chalk, pen and water-colour 11¼ x 9¼ in.
56. Seated figures 1948 chalk, pen and water-colour 21¼ x 22¼ in.
57. Standing figures 1951 pencil, chalk and wash 11½ x 9 in.

PANELS

58. Reclining figure 1944 linen 72 x 104 in.
59. Two standing figures 1944 linen 104 x 72 in.

